

# Sports Illustrated

Jason Kidd: Blazing Sun  
Ichiro Suzuki: Mysterious Mariner

## Dawnte Culpepper

of the Vikings:

"I want to  
be the best  
Ever!"

and effective, but a fair negotiator. Her persona is well suited toward being friends one moment and being cutthroat the next."

Such praise makes Orender nervous. She prefers to share the credit and is quick to stress the support she receives from her husband, Morgan Guy (M.G.) Orender, the president of Hampton Golf, Inc., who was recently elected vice president of the PGA of America. There is, however, no mistaking who is the majority partner in this relationship. "Donna's the president," says the 6' 3", 320-pound M.G. "I'm the greatest corporate spouse on the planet."

He says that by the time Donna walks through the front door of their Jacksonville Beach home—still doing business on her cell phone—he has fed their three-year-old twin sons, Jacob and Zachary, put them to bed and has dinner waiting.

GOLF WAS not always a passion for Orender. Her father, the president of an industrial-coating company, and mother, an art broker, had three daughters. Donna was the oldest. She grew up in suburban New York City playing stickball with the neighborhood boys, rooting for the Knicks and the Mets, and worshipping Phil Jackson.

## Woman's Work

MOST GOLF INSIDERS agree that Donna Orender is the most powerful woman in the game. Here are the next nine most influential women in golf, including Nancy Lopez (above).

**2. Judy Rankin**, ABC Sports commentator. An LPGA Hall of Famer critically acclaimed for her television work, she captained two victorious U.S. Solheim Cup teams and is trusted by all in the game.

**3. Mary Lou Bohn**, vice president of advertising and communications for Titleist and Cobra. A seven handicapper from a golfing family, she directs the largest advertising budget in the sport.

**4. Alice Dye**, course architect. An Indiana Amateur champion (seven times) like her husband, Pete, she was the first woman to join the American Society of Golf Course Architects, in 1982.

**5. Kendra Beard Graham**, USGA director of women's competition. She oversees eight USGA championships, including the U.S. Women's Open and the Women's Amateur. A rules aficionada, she also officiates at the Masters and the British Open.

Orender showed her business savvy early on. After graduating in 1979 with a degree in psychology from Queens College, where she was a 5' 7" point guard on the basketball team, she was drafted by the New York Stars of the now defunct Women's Pro Basketball League. Only 21, she showed up for a meeting with the team's owner with a lawyer friend and negotiated the second-highest contract on the team. "I would have been the highest-paid player, but the team really needed a center," she says proudly. Three years and two trades later, the league folded



DARREN CARROLL

**6. Crystal Fricker**, president of Pure-Seed Testing, Inc. A plant breeder, her grass-seed company in Canby, Ore., serves as the golf industry's leading biotech research facility.

**7. Nancy Lopez**, LPGA member. Often called the Arnold Palmer of women's golf, the Hall of Famer remains, at 43, one of the most popular players in the game.

**8. Peggy Kirk Bell**, teaching pro. A former LPGA player, she owns Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club in Southern Pines, N.C., host of the 1996 and 2001 U.S. Women's Opens.

**9. Jan Beljan**, course architect. A senior associate at Fazio Golf Course Designers, she assisted on the design of more than 30 courses, including the PGA Golf Club at the Reserve in Port St. Lucie, Fla., and PGA National in West Palm Beach.

**10. Judy Bell**, former USGA president. The first woman on the powerful executive committee, she now serves on the \$50 million For the Good of the Game grants committee. —Y.Y.

and Orender took a job as a production assistant for ABC Sports. After a stint at Sports Channel and two years of running her own marketing company (Primo Donna Productions), she took over *Inside the PGA Tour*. Despite a limited knowledge of the game—it took her 100 hours to edit and produce her first show—Orender quickly made her mark. "She's an inventive thinker," says Terry Jastrow, president of Gaylord Event Television, which produces eight events sanctioned by the Tour. "She was always thinking outside of the box, which is what propelled her along."

That a woman from New York who never even played the game until her late 20s (she's now a 20 handicapper) has reached such a lofty level speaks more to Orender's ability than to any overarching trends in the sport. "The golf culture is a different type of business," says Michael O'Connell, who joined PGA Tour Productions in 1991. "You've got a bunch of blue-coat types. It's a men's club, and here comes this powerful, New York Jewish woman telling them what to do. She has had to fight harder than anybody else." Pointing to the \$1.5 million studio the Tour built in '97, he says, "A lot of Donna's will made this possible."

That will is part of Tour lore. In May 1997 Orender, Tour commissioner Tim Finchem and Ed Moorhouse, the Tour's chief legal officer, met with network execs in New York City to close the biggest TV deal in golf history. Orender, 8½ months pregnant, sat on Finchem's right in a reclining chair brought in specially for her. Before the three-day negotiations began, Finchem leaned over and said, "Gee, Donna, shouldn't you be at a hospital or something?"

"I'm not going anywhere," she said. M.G. made sure a doctor was on call because, he says, "she would have had the kids right there on the conference table if they hadn't gotten the deal signed."

BACK AT Tour headquarters, lunch is over and Orender is back in her office. She's upbeat, going on about the "tremendous buzz and healthy state of the game." In the span of 10 minutes she shoots an e-mail to an executive at ESPN, requests an oral report from one of her employees and plans a trip to Buenos Aires for the upcoming World Cup. "You need Rollerblades to keep up with her," says one Tour official.

A moment later she's up and out of the office chasing Finchem, and another project, down the hallway. □