



Swing shift

Australia's Karrie Webb is determined to be a dominant force in the world of women's golf for many years to come.

words Paul Prendergast photography Limetree Events

Ball after ball, hour after hour, Karrie Webb toiled away in growing heat on the range under the watchful eye of her long-time mentor, Ian Triggs. After a session that lasted the length of a round of golf, it was off to the practice green to work on her putting for over an hour.

This was Webb's first session of the year in early January as she prepared for her 17th season on the LPGA Tour. She was back a few days later, this time starting what was to be a five-hour session at noon in the blazing Queensland sun. It's a remarkable insight into the work ethic and dedication of the woman who has won seven Major Championships, and over 50 tournaments around the world, since turning professional in 1994.

After her off-season break where she admits to doing 'nothing', Karrie has embarked on a campaign to improve not only her golf swing but changes in her body to support the vision that she and Ian have for her game into the future.

"I've been working on my fitness for the past ten years and lately I've been focusing on the weaknesses so that with the changes I'm making now, my body is stable enough to do it," she explained. "It may not look it but we've made some significant changes in my swing. We started that in late October last year because I felt that even though I won twice, it was probably the poorest ball striking year of my career.

"I'd gotten into some bad habits which you don't see until it's too far gone, so we thought we'd see most of the year out then make the changes before I started doing a lot of work in January (for the new season)."

Asked to elaborate on what some of the changes are brought a broad grin to Karrie's face.

"I don't know if you have enough tape!" she laughed. "Lots of little things, some things I haven't ever done in my life before. It's only early days so it's going to be a work in progress."

Karrie's pursuit of further goals as she heads to the 'back nine' of her career have lead her to make some difficult but necessary changes to her early season schedule this year. To enable her to be fresh for the season's first Major Championship at the Kraft Nabisco Championship in late March, Karrie took the tough decision to skip the RACV Ladies Masters on the Gold Coast.

"It's disappointing to miss the RACV Ladies Masters but it's all around the scheduling," she explained. "My body doesn't love four tournaments

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– KARRIE WEBB

in a row and last year, I played four in a row, had a couple of weeks off then played three in a row.

"By the time I got to Nabisco, I was exhausted and I don't have too many more of those [the Majors] left," she said. "I'm closer to the end of my career than at the start so I don't want to waste those opportunities."

The evidence of her desire to continue to be a dominant force in the game certainly shone through when talking to Karrie and also Ian. There was a quiet determination and confidence in her voice when discussing the future and the chance to continue to build on her already lofty stature in the sport.

"I'd love to think that I've got another good few years yet, where I'm one of the top handful of players in the world consistently," she said. "I think I can get my name on the leaderboard on

any given week but it's about doing it consistently, where people know that if it's there, it's not going to go away.

"If I can get these changes sorted and then learn to trust them on the golf course, I really believe I can have that run or I wouldn't be playing. I'm going to work hard to try to achieve that." ●



KARRIE'S OLYMPIC SPIRIT

Karrie recently took some time out of her busy schedule to support a fellow Australian – beach volleyball champion Natalie Cook – by generously agreeing to have a round of golf with her auctioned off for the Natalie Cook Olympic Fundraising Campaign.

Sanctuary Cove residents Anne and Robert Hill were the successful bidders and spent a very enjoyable day on The Palms golf course at Sanctuary Cove with Karrie and Natalie, who is also a keen golfer.

A gold medallist at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, Natalie is hoping to make it to a record fifth Olympic games later this year. We wish her well in her London campaign – follow Natalie on www.teamnat.com.au