

Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve

14/04/2024 Three Grand Slam titles and the first German woman to be ranked number one in the world since Steffi Graf: Angelique Kerber has made history in her sport - and after 18 months of maternity leave is now back on the court. Her next big serve will be at the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in Stuttgart. Porsche paid her a visit at her tennis academy in Poland.

Shiny trophies from Rio, New York, Melbourne, and Wimbledon and huge posters highlight her major successes. The career of one of the most successful female tennis players of our time took off here in the Polish town of Puszczykowo, to the south of Poznań. Today, at the tennis academy she herself founded, Angelique Kerber is working toward a very special moment: her return after 18 months of maternity leave.

Tennis was no longer the center of attention

We get together with Kerber shortly before she heads to the 2024 Australian Open, where she will finally be playing in a world-class tournament again. She seems focused, at peace, and highly motivated. Her daughter, Liana, was born in February 2023, changing just about everything in her life. For the first time in many years, tennis was no longer the center of attention. “The break was a huge

adjustment," says Kerber. "But the time with my daughter was also a wonderful gift." The experience has taught her a lot. For example, patience is more important than perfectionism. "After all, there's now someone in my life who's much more important than I am," she explains laughing. "Top performance is also possible with less sleep. And a little more flexibility and spontaneity are good for me anyway."

There was never any doubt in the 36-year-old's mind that she would return. "I missed the competition and emotions. You can't find that anywhere like out on the court."

Before competing again in a Grand Slam tournament in January, she played her first matches in the United Cup in Sydney, where she achieved her first win as a mother. She beat Australian Ajla Tomljanović in the semifinal. She returned to the big stage a few days later at the Australian Open, but had to admit defeat after about two hours, losing in the first round to US American Danielle Collins in three sets. "It wasn't my best tennis," Kerber told journalists afterwards. "Still, I gave it my all. It's a challenge, but I welcome it."

Here in Melbourne, Kerber played her way to the top of the world rankings in 2016 when she won her first of three Grand Slam titles. Victory in the US Open followed in the same year. Then the big triumph at Wimbledon in 2018. She has a total of 14 tournament wins as a professional player under her belt. But Kerber internalized long ago that losses are another part of her sport.

"Tennis is also a mental game. A few percentage points can determine whether you win or lose," she explains to us during our visit to Poland. "Accepting that is the recipe for success. My losses are a part of me and have brought me to where I am today."

Peace and quiet between tournament

The academy is located at the edge of Wielkopolski National Park, with its many lakes and hiking and bicycle trails. Seclusion, quiet, and nature – everything you need to focus entirely on training. Kerber's grandfather Janusz Rzeźnik built the first tennis courts here for his talented granddaughter in accordance with international standards more than 20 years ago, which is what launched her career. She has experienced every phase of her career here, both highs and lows. "I'm so thankful to my grandfather," says Kerber, who was born in Germany, but is also a Polish citizen and has since made Puszczykowo her home base. "I can always come here to train professionally in peace and quiet between tournaments."

The academy is located at the edge of Wielkopolski National Park, with its many lakes and hiking and bicycle trails. Seclusion, quiet, and nature – everything you need to focus entirely on training. Kerber has expanded her training center extensively, which now boasts eleven inside and outside courts featuring a variety of surfaces, a gym, saunas, a hotel with restaurant, and spacious lounge areas, which offer the ideal training conditions for Kerber and others.

The doors of her academy are open to talented newcomers as well as guests. Whether beginner or

professional, young or old, everyone is welcome. The center also hosts international tournaments twice a year. But why is Angelique Kerber returning to the center courts of this world if she's already achieved everything there? She emboldens young women with her strong message. "I want to show that it's possible for mothers to return to their careers even in professional sports," she explains. "We now see more and more women like Naomi Ōsaka and Elina Switolina returning to tennis after maternity leave and even bringing their children to tournaments. That would've been unimaginable not that long ago." In the 1980s, pregnancy would put an end to the careers of professional female players. "To this day, many women still find it difficult to balance family and career in many fields. I'd like to be a source of inspiration to them and free them of this worry."

Same power and precision as before

She receives support from her partner, her team, and her family. Her mother, Beata, manages the academy, and her grandparents occasionally stop by and have lunch with trainers, managers, and their granddaughter in the casual setting. "I wouldn't have been able to return without all the help," says Kerber. When you see her out on the court serving balls with the same power and precision as before, you'd never guess she had taken some time off. When things are going really well, she disappears into her own world. "I concentrate entirely on this one moment and push any other thoughts and problems to the side," Kerber explains. "It's not always easy to do that. Still, I need to go out, make an appearance, and play a good match."

Ambitious, full of energy and dynamism, and always focused on maximum performance. Her temperament is also a good match for the vehicle she drives to the academy: a Porsche 911 Turbo (992). "I've always been fascinated with sports cars, which is why it has been such an honor to be part of the Porsche family for almost ten years," emphasizes the brand ambassador. "Power, performance, and the drive to continue improving - that's a good fit for me."

Where do you go when you've already made it to the top? Kerber has a clear answer: "To the court. It's the matches that inspire and motivate me," she says. "Regardless of how much time I have left in the sport, I want to savor every moment in this chapter of my life and take full advantage of what's possible." Her love of the sport has a firm hold on her. And there are more than enough opportunities this year to embrace this love.

The Porsche Tennis Grand Prix is the next highlight and will be held in Stuttgart on April 13. A home match for Kerber, who will compete here for the 13th time; she has won the trophy and coveted prize car twice – a 911 Carrera 4 GTS Cabriolet (991) in 2015 and a 718 Boxster S the year after. "Playing a tournament like this in front of a home audience, friends, and family is a huge motivation and something truly special," says Kerber. "And the main prize in 2024 is the new all-electric Macan, which of course offers even more incentive."

Summer Olympics in Paris

Only about three months later, the next event will begin, something that female athletes like Kerber are not often granted: the Summer Olympics in Paris. Kerber views this as an opportunity and challenge, as she has approached her activities with a different attitude since her daughter, Liana, was born. “If it doesn't work out with the Olympics, I've still achieved everything I dreamed of as a child,” she says. “No one can take that away from me. Anything else that follows is just a nice bonus for me.”

Info

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Consumption data

718 Boxster S (WLTP)*: Fuel consumption combined: 10.4 – 9.6 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 235 – 218 g/km; CO_2 class: G

911 Turbo (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

Image Sublines

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Angelique Kerber, Porsche Brand Ambassador, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Anticipation: After maternity leave of 18 months, Angelique Kerber is training at her tennis academy for a comeback.

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Coach Torben Beltz, Angelique Kerber, l-r, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Sparring partner: Kerber has celebrated her greatest triumphs with her successful coach, Torben Beltz, and will continue to train with him for her return.

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Angelique Kerber's Wimbledon trophy, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Triple: In 2016, Kerber reached the final at Wimbledon for the first time and finished runner-up. Two years later, she won the last of her three Grand Slam titles there.

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Angelique Kerber's tennis academy, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Wall of fame: The professional player's trophies are on display in the lounge areas of the Angie Kerber Tennis Academy. She has a total of three Grand Slam titles and 11 other tournament wins under her belt.

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Angelique Kerber, Porsche Brand Ambassador, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Trademark: Kerber is right-handed, but plays tennis with her left, and is best known for her powerful forehand and leg strength.

Path: Angelique Kerber: The Second Serve/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Angelique Kerber, Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, 2016, Porsche AG
Subline: Porsche and trophy: In 2016, Angelique Kerber won the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix for the second time in a row. The prize in addition to the trophy: the then new 718 Boxster S.

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