

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Woman in Charge

Suzy Biszantz of the Greg Norman Collection hasn't had any trouble as a woman in the golf industry

By BOB SELIGMAN

In a business perceived for its male domination and dearth of females in upper-level management positions, Suzy Biszantz, the President and CEO of the Greg Norman Collection, a leading apparel manufacturer, says she doesn't think it's that hard to be a woman in the golf industry today.

"I don't think it's been an advantage or a disadvantage. I really try not to think about it too much," says Biszantz. "Companies are successful when they have a diverse set of people to pull the best ideas from. I don't feel like it's been tough to succeed in the golf industry. Whether you're a woman or a man it's an industry that's very competitive and a lot of people want to be in it, so it's challenging as any job in the sports industry is."

"I also think age can be as hard as gender, or harder," adds Biszantz, who was 31 when she took the reins of the company five years ago. "Sometimes because I was younger doing more of a senior management job, there might be a little bit more of the question of whether I had the experience to get the job done. I really haven't focused in it."

"If it was impossible for women to get ahead in the golf industry I wouldn't have had the great opportunities I've had. I've worked for some great companies in the industry like EP Pro and Ashworth."

It's not surprising that the California-raised and New York acclimated Biszantz has successfully bucked the trend of women not rising to the top of the golf industry. After all, she grew up with the industry.

Suzy is the daughter of Gary Biszantz, co-founder of Cobra Golf. As Cobra ascended to become one of golf's



Suzy Biszantz has followed in the footsteps of her father, Gary, as a success in the industry.

premier equipment companies, she was accumulating business acumen from listening to her father's dinner-table conversations and picking up his knowledge and passion for business and success.

"My father was a really amazing mentor and example and an entrepreneur," says Biszantz. "He's just incredibly talented, driven, and motivated. At the same time, he has the highest set of scruples, morality, integrity, and generosity of anybody I know."

Suzy says she tries to emulate those characteristics.

"I have so much ahead of me and I'm in the just trying stage and seeing what I can do professionally," says Biszantz, one of six daughters. "I think what he did is so different than what I did, even though someone might say I run a company and he ran a company or I'm a CEO and he was a CEO. I feel there's such a

big jump between what I do, where I work for a large company [Greg Norman Collection has been owned by first Reebok, then adidas, and now MacGregor Golf during her term] and what he did, where you start a company and are an entrepreneur. I have such a deep respect level for people who take a chance. He put all his finances on the line to get that company [Cobra] going back in 1978."

One thing Suzy definitely shares with her father is his love of horses. After selling Cobra Golf, Gary Biszantz turned his attention to what Suzy says is his real passion: thoroughbred racing. Gary owns Cobra Farm (naturally) in Lexington, Kentucky. One of his horses, Old Trieste, led after the first mile of the 1997 Kentucky Derby,

before fading in the stretch. Father and daughter co-own one horse, an unraced filly named Lizzy Van Lew. When she was married two years ago, it was at Cobra Farm.

"I see it [horse racing] as a hobby and an interest," says Biszantz. "While I really enjoy the golf industry, a lot of my best friends are people I've met through the horse industry. It's exciting just to be able to attend some great horse races."

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California, she has grown accustomed to the New York lifestyle to the point where she now sees herself as a New Yorker. She enjoys the pace and energy of the city; the many restaurants; Central Park; the shopping; and the people, who she considers to be talented, brilliant, driven, and diverse.

"You meet people all the time in Manhattan and they have something interesting going on with their life," says Biszantz. "It's kind of a place that makes you feel you can do anything."

Including you, Suzy?

"I do," says Biszantz. "I always wanted the opportunity and felt I could run a company, but this experience has been so positive and reinforcing it's opened my mind up to the fact that individuals can really achieve whatever they want to." ■

Bob Seligman writes about golf from his home in Suffern.

