

More than his putting stroke

With a growing roster of interests, it might be time to start referring to Weir as both golfer and businessman

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NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, Ont. — Mike Weir is the first to point out that he's not getting any younger.

But when you see him deftly work his way through a room of dignitaries or hear him speak about his budding golf course design business, he doesn't exactly seem like an aging athlete on the verge of fading into oblivion. In fact, the 38-year-old looks more entrenched than ever with an evolving career that hinges on more than just his wedge game or putting stroke.

With a growing roster of interests away from the links, it might be time to start referring to the Canadian icon as both a golfer and a businessman. Even Weir admits the transition is inevitable.

"When you're pushing 40, you've got to think about what you're going to do when you're done (playing)," he said Monday. "I still feel I can play for a long time, but you've got to set yourself up and be smart."

[Mike Weir's evolution](#)

Mike Weir is taking his wine production and affiliation to Chateau des Charmes after three years with Creekside. Weir's growing business empire also includes a clothing line and will soon delve into golf course design.

To be clear, the lefty from Bright's Grove, Ont., hopes his health allows him to play at the highest level of pro golf for at least another 10 years. At the same time, it's hard to ignore the growing role of business in his life.

Weir was the guest of honour at the beautiful Chateau des Charmes vineyard in the heart of Ontario's wine country for Monday's announcement that he would be moving his operation there after three years with Creekside. The importance of his presence in the region was evidenced by the wide spectrum of people from within the province's wine industry in attendance — not to mention the handful of local politicians.

And that event was only part of the reason for this week's business trip to Ontario.

On Tuesday, he'll conduct one-hour interviews with five Canadian golf course architects who are vying to become his design partner. Each of the men has already submitted plans for a course that could be built adjacent to the Predator Ridge resort in Vernon, B.C., and will essentially be pitching themselves to Weir.

His objective is to establish a long-term partnership with someone he can trust and lean on, similar to what Ben Crenshaw has successfully done with designer Bill Coore over the past couple decades.

"That would be ideal — to have a guy that's going to be there for me," explained Weir. "When you jump around with different guys, you kind of get different flavours of golf courses all over the country.

"I want people to recognize my golf courses and have a feel for how it might be different than somebody else's."

The design business is likely to become the crowning jewel of Weir's off-course activities, which is why he's waited until now to get it started.

His agents at IMG have received many proposals over the years and not just from within Canada. Weir has also been invited to take part in projects in places like China, Korea, Belize and the Caribbean.

However, none of those offers came along at the right time.

"Since probably '99, there have been opportunities thrown my way through IMG for course designs," said Weir. "I was like, 'No way I'm ready for that yet.' I was still trying to establish myself on the tour and didn't want to be distracted by that. And I also didn't really have the experience."

"Now that I've been 10 years out there and played a number of majors and courses all over the place, I feel like I'm ready to give my point of view. I feel like it's the right time."

Not only has he played more courses and formulated a personal taste, Weir also feels he has a better understanding of how to balance his time.

Even with his new interests, Weir's main focus is going to remain on his golf game.

"As long as I'm healthy enough to keep pushing and I don't feel like I'm fading away, I'm going to keep going," he said. "The exciting thing for me with the change in my swing is I've been able to practise more. I'm not the most natural golfer in the world so I have to work really hard at it."

"To be able to do that now and be mostly pain-free and see myself moving back up the world rankings, I feel like if I can stay healthy for the next 10 years I can still be very competitive."

Weir has made almost \$24-million (U.S.) in official earnings over the past 10 years and established himself as the most successful Canadian golfer ever.

As he pushes for similar success in his business ventures moving forward, he'll continue to lean heavily on the people that have supported for a number of years. Weir's brothers Jim and Craig each play a role in his off-course dealings along with Brad Pelletier, IMG's managing director in Toronto, and several others.

"I have a great team," said Weir.

In addition to the new course design business, they help oversee a winery that will soon include a retail and hospitality space alongside Whirlpool Golf Club in Niagara. There's also his successful clothing brand, various sponsorship deals and a charitable children's foundation.

Weir had none of this in mind even as recently as 15 years ago, when he was struggling to earn enough money to cover expenses and dreaming about one day reaching the PGA Tour.

"I just wanted to play golf, I never thought of the business side," he said.

Times have certainly changed.