

Anna Kournikova
International Tennis Icon

An internationally-recognized tennis star, Anna Kournikova remains a well-known figure today despite retiring from the sport in 2003. As a former World #1 doubles player and #8 singles player, as well as a certified trainer, a healthy lifestyle has always been an integral part of Kournikova's life. Since leaving tennis she has become a global voice of children's health, sportsmanship and spirit, helping in the fight against obesity.

Born in Moscow, Russia, Kournikova's passion for tennis and being active began at the age of five when she picked up her first tennis racquet. She began to learn the sport at Sokolniki Park and became a member of the prestigious Spartak Tennis Club, coached by Larissa Preobraschenskaja. A short time later, at the age of eight, Kournikova began appearing in junior tournaments, and by the following year, was attracting attention from tennis scouts across the world. Kournikova signed a management deal at age 10 and relocated to Bradenton, Florida to train at Nick Bolletierri's tennis academy.

Following her arrival in the United States, Kournikova exploded onto the tennis scene, making her the internationally recognized tennis star she is today. At 13 years of age she won the European Championships, the Italian Open Junior tournament and went on to capture the prestigious Junior Orange Bowl. By the end of the year Kournikova secured the #1 singles ranking and was crowned the ITF Junior World Champion. She became the youngest player ever to win a Fed Cup match at the age 14.

After her success in the juniors, Kournikova turned pro in 1995 and the following year she won two ITF singles tournaments. Kournikova then battled through four qualifying rounds at the U.S. Open to reach the fourth round of the main draw in her first-ever Grand Slam Tournament. Kournikova was the recipient of the prestigious Sanex WTA Tour Most Impressive Newcomer Award that year.

In 1997, Kournikova reached the semifinals of Wimbledon and became the second woman in the Open Era to reach the Wimbledon semi's in her career debut. A year later, Kournikova broke into the world's top 20, at #16. At The Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne, Florida, Kournikova defeated four consecutive top 10 players in a four day period in singles play. She then beat Steffi Graf on grass, a feat only two other players accomplished in the 1990's. That same week, Kournikova broke into the top 10 for the first time in her career.

At the end of 1998, Kournikova finished at #13 in the world in singles and #10 in doubles. Her career continued to bloom during the next two years, with a yearend ranking of #12 in singles and #1 in doubles in 1999, and #8 in singles and #4 in doubles in 2000.

Retiring in 2003 due to injury, Kournikova continued her commitment to tennis by participating in World Team Tennis matches that celebrate the sport and bring together legends, current players, up-and-comers and fans. In addition, she participated in tennis exhibitions throughout the world to support various charitable organizations.

In 2011, Kournikova shifted from the tennis world and joined NBC's acclaimed series *The Biggest Loser* as their newest trainer. On the show she assisted contestants in their quest to reach a healthy lifestyle. Kournikova's passion for health and fitness is also strongly reflected in her work for children through various global organizations. She has worked with the Boys & Girls Club of America focusing time and attention to programs dedicated to promoting an active lifestyle for youth, and she also helped launch the Cartoon Network's "Move it Movement" campaign to get kids active during the summer months.

She has also worked with PSI, a U.S.-based NGO focusing on children's health around the world. On her trip to Russia, Kournikova visited three different cities to help bring awareness to protect Russian youth from life threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS and to encourage comprehensive support services and healthy lifestyle alternatives. She also traveled with PSI to Haiti where she worked with their ground partners to promote safe water drinking and malaria prevention. Kournikova is an active participant in the USO, having gone to various military bases around the world to meet the troops and speak to children about staying healthy and active.