



WINE ENTHUSIAST[®]

MAGAZINE

WINNING THE WINE GAME

Sports figures nationwide are branching out into premium winemaking.

Making ultra-premium wine is a dicey game for amateurs. Unlike 18 holes or four quarters, winemaking is a 24/7 operation. But the competitive spirit that drive sports figures on the golf course, ice rink or stadium often spills over to their wines.

Greg Norman is no hacker in the winery. He beat Arnold Palmer to market with his Australian portfolio in 1999 and soon added California wines to Greg Norman Estates. Though his wife, tennis champion Chris Evert, forfeits the winemaking challenge, daughter Morgan-Leigh Norman works on his marketing team.



Olympic gold medalist **Peggy Fleming** blazed trails on the ice and in the wine world with her Choreography Cabernet blend and Victories Rosé, which supports breast cancer research. The skater shares hands-on vintner duties at Fleming Jenkins with husband Greg Jenkins. "Making wine is like skating—it's not instant success. We continually work to get our estate grapes into top shape," says Fleming.

San Antonio Spurs Coach **Gregg Popovich** agrees. As part owner of A to Z Wineworks in Oregon, his Rock and Hammer Pinot Noir wine mirrors his philosophy of constantly drilling skills to dominate the basketball court.

Joe Montana humbly puts half his name on a wine label with Beringer Vineyards. A fan of Beringer Private Reserve, Montana contacted winemaker Ed Sbragia, who also owns Sbragia Family Estates, about making wine. They now blend Montagia Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon every fall with Montana's wife and daughter.

In March, Montana's former 49ers general manager, **Carmen Policy**, will release his first Casa Piena Yountville Cabernet Sauvignon. Rather than a sports theme, Policy picked an Italian phrase meaning "full house" to honor his three sons and two daughters.

Hall of Fame Chicago Bears Coach **Mike Ditka** (pictured) runs a different route with labels such as Mike Ditka Kick Ass Red from the Mendocino Wine Company. "Looks can be deceiving. People ask why I didn't put my name on a line of beer, but I've enjoyed red wine for a long time."

Ditka summarizes the link between winemaking and sports. "They're both competitive, complicated and highly enjoyable. It takes an expert to do either job well."

