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A close-up portrait of Nicola Breytenbach, a South African supermodel, with long, wavy blonde hair. She is wearing a black, sequined, sleeveless dress with a large, ornate silver brooch at the neckline. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

american beauty

She's the South African supermodel who married her American prince. Now Nicola Breytenbach, 31, and her husband, businessman Ben Steiner, are expecting their first baby, a girl.

Our cover model spoke to us from their home in New York.

You're in your third trimester; how has your pregnancy been so far?

Great! Everything has gone smoothly, although there are all those things everyone warns you about and then when they come they're so unexpected! I've been quite emotional. I was also very nauseous and tired in my first trimester; that tiredness is returning now. My second trimester was wonderful.

Have you gained much weight?

So far I've gained around 11 kilos with nine weeks to go, so I should stay within the normal range of 11 to 15 kilos. Our baby is growing so much now. Ben is a big guy, so she's not going to be small.

How have you kept in shape?

I'm doing yoga twice a week although it's not really my thing. I prefer to be more active and get my heart pounding. But I feel this is about all I can manage. I'm swimming a bit, too. It's great because it makes me feel weightless, a huge relief when you're carrying extra weight. In the earlier part of my pregnancy, I was walking twice a week on a treadmill for up to 40 minutes and taking part in Physique 57 classes. They're completely designed for women and focus on your butt, stomach and thighs. I can't do those anymore now though! I also did some weight training with a trainer, which really helped with the back pain I was experiencing in the second trimester.



MODEL MOVES: Nicola in a Versace campaign; Ben and Nicola in her courtise Versace gown; kissing during a holiday on Fisher Island off Miami (where the Steiner family has a home); and at a fundraiser with Cassie and Kim Kardashian.



PHOTOGRAPHY: OPENING IMAGE - ANTHONY FRIEND; SUPPLIED

Have you got modelling work lined up for after the birth of your baby?

No, no, I'm going to take at least six months off. I've wanted a baby for so long that I really want to take as much time as possible to focus on her. It will also depend a lot on when I'll feel comfortable leaving her.

What's been the biggest change to your lifestyle during your pregnancy?

We're very sociable. We used to go out for dinner maybe four times a week and get together with friends over the weekend. We've completely cut that out. I used to be a night owl, going to bed at around midnight or 1am and then sleep late, but now I find I'm in bed early and awake by 6.30am. It's amazing how your body naturally prepares itself. I'm feeling much healthier and more energetic for it.

How has your pregnancy affected your relationship?

It's a whole new level of bonding when you know the two of you have created a new little person. Sometimes I feel like he's more excited than me. Like with shopping; we'll go into a shop and he'll run around insisting on all the things our baby has to have.

Have you spent a fortune shopping for maternity clothes?

Do you guys have A Pea in the Pod maternity shop? Well, I was dying to shop there; it has

gorgeous maternity clothes. I bought a pair of maternity jeans at three months, and then another pair at four months. I was hardly even showing. I grew out of both of them! I bought stuff way too early. Now I prefer to buy non-maternity clothes, maybe in a few sizes bigger. Long maxi-dresses and stretchy, black yoga pants are great. It can get expensive, especially when you're only going to wear them for such a short time.

What about the nursery? Is that done?

Yes, it's a very simple pink and white theme. I was going to do the whole nursery with a safari feel; it's important to me that she keeps her South African roots: Eventually, I decided to go with pink and white but, instead of little fairies or princesses, I'll bring animals in on pictures on the walls.

Why did you want to find out the sex of your baby?

I'd never be able to wait. We wanted to do the nursery and buy clothes. But she was always in a funny position so it was impossible to tell at one of our routine scans. We don't have ultrasounds here as often as in South Africa. Our doctor only does them when he has to; otherwise, he just checks the heart-beat. At about 17 weeks, I found a place in Brooklyn that would do the scan for me. Ben was not very happy; we had to travel for about an hour at eight at night and when we got there it looked a bit dodgy. But we

were obsessed with knowing what we were going to have.

What kind of birth are you hoping for?

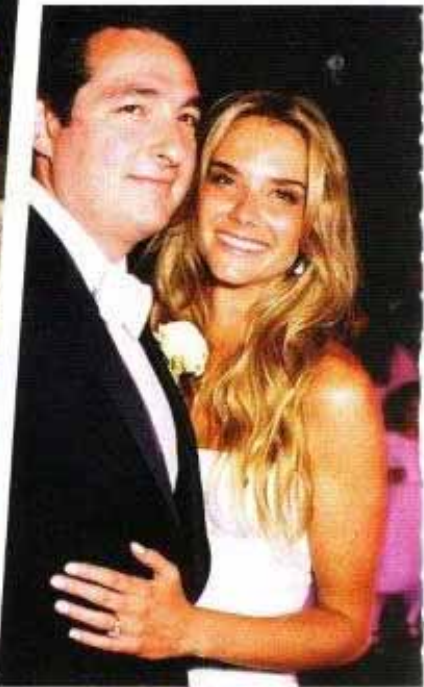
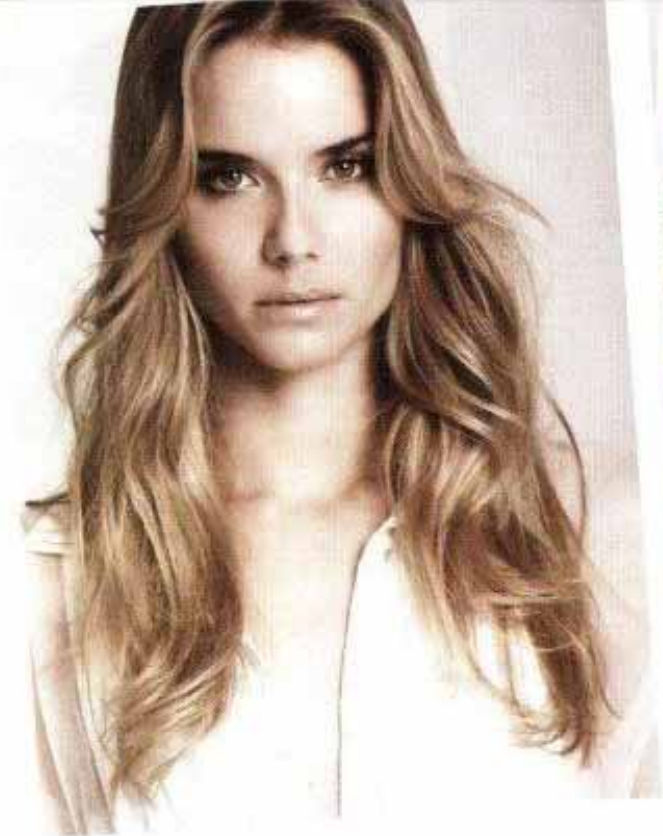
I hope to have a natural birth but as long as she's safe and healthy, that's all that matters.

Have you been preparing for the birth?

[Laughs] We went to antenatal classes at around four-and-a-half months; it was too early. Now I'm reading a book on the birthing process so I can remind myself what I learnt in the antenatal classes. But I go to everything. I'm going to do a few breast-feeding classes, too. Ben also has lots of books on his nightstand that he asked me to get for him and that he is actually reading.

What about names - any ideas yet?

I've been going through a big baby name



book. We have a few but we won't decide until we've seen her. If I thought of a name and told everyone, friends would start calling her by that name before she was even born. That would be weird. We'll definitely wait until she's born to name her.

How have you coped with all the advice you're given as a pregnant woman?

Actually, I've been asking other mothers and my girlfriends for lots of advice, and what they have to say is great. Even the random advice I get from strangers, I sometimes take to heart. But you should only take on what you feel is right. One woman was telling me the best product to buy in a shop but I still ended up buying the one I wanted. My mom's just been out here from Vienna and I'll definitely take her advice. Take the advice that seems important to you and see how it goes.

You were raised in the wide open spaces of Durban and the Netherlands. How do you feel about raising a child in New York City?

I would prefer not to raise a child in New York City long-term. Ben and I have always planned to move back to Europe in the next five years so that she is not brought up here. I feel that it's very important that she is exposed to more culture, diversity and also nature. We would like to move to Switzerland, where we can have a big garden at home and also be close to the mountains where we can get away on

weekends for skiing or other activities. In the meantime, we are looking to buy a house in Long Island so that we can get away from the city whenever we want and she can be outside as much as possible. So much of my childhood was spent outside and I believe it is very important. I don't want her inside the apartment watching TV or running around the streets all the time.

A glimpse into Nicola's diary at www.nicolabreytenbach.com

The Wedding (25 June 2008)

Our wedding was everything I ever hoped for and more. Even though it rained we were prepared and everything from the Friday-night dinner to our honeymoon has just been bliss. Ben and I felt so loved to be surrounded by our friends and family. So many people flew thousands of miles to wish us well that it left me a feeling of truly being privileged. The reception was amazing... we only got back to our hotel at 5am!

Happy 2008! (25 March 2008)

Things have been a bit manic! For Christmas and New Year I was lucky enough to be at home in SA for three weeks. I spent Christmas with my family in Hermanus and then Ben and I rented a beautiful home in Bantry Bay. We had a couple of friends from the States join us and had a truly special time. On the 4 January I had my 30th birthday and Ben threw an extravagant "Great Gatsby" themed party. It was unforgettable.

Rugby Obsession (14 October 2007)

I have become completely obsessed with

*PICTURE PERFECT:
Nicola during an assignment;
Ben and Nicola
leaving for Ivona Trump's
wedding; and at their own
reception in St Tropez
last June.*

the rugby! I am so proud of our SA boys and their performance against Argentina. I have to admit I was a little nervous at first. It didn't help that I was all by myself at home in Washington DC watching. So there I was screaming and jumping up and down like a crazy person in my living room watching the performance of a lifetime! 🏉

all about Nicola

October 2008 Nicola gets involved with the Diamond Empowerment Fund, a non-profit international organisation that raises money to empower economically disadvantaged people in African nations. Visit diamondempowerment.org

June 2008 Nicola and Ben Steiner tie the knot in St Tropez, France.

January 2007 Nicola is on the cover of *Cosmopolitan's* biggest-selling issue.

October 2006 Nicola gets engaged to Ben, her boyfriend of seven years.

1995 Nicola starts modelling after her mother's hairdresser convinces her to see a modelling agent.

1991 Nicola moves to The Netherlands with her mom and stepdad.

1978 Nicola is born in South Africa.