

Learning to Play the Long Game

By SARA J. O'BRIEN

When I was in law school, my parents bought me a set of golf clubs and said, "if you're going to be a lawyer, you better learn to golf." I've dabbled over the years, but never truly committed to learning the fundamentals needed to play a respectable game. My drives were far from straight, my irons always overshot, and my putts often came up short. I knew that playing was the only way to improve my game, but I was not confident enough in my ability to even steadily score triple bogeys, to sign up to play in scrambles or tournaments with other lawyers.

Two years ago, putting my fear of embarrassment aside and upon encouragement from a few friends, I signed up to play in the YLS Annual Pro Bono Golf Scramble, my first ever full round of golf. To say I was nervous would be an understatement. I thought for sure I would spend my afternoon searching the weeds for my golf balls, and that this would be the beginning of the end of my golfing career. Much to my surprise, I had a blast (and I only lost two balls)! Another year went by before I pulled out my clubs once more and signed up for the 2023 Pro Bono Golf Scramble. I wasn't much better, but I had just as much fun.

This spring, the YLS was able to revitalize the Women's Professional Golf Event at Lyman Orchards, a formerly annual event that has not been hosted since before the COVID-19 pandemic. This event is a favorite of many women attorneys, as it provides them with tailored golf instruction and clinics with Lyman's PGA and LPGA instructors, before sending participants out to the course to practice their newly learned and polished skills

in a golf scramble setting. As a registrant myself this year, I was excited to attend and finally learn to hit the ball with some consistent accuracy, and while I did learn some tips and tricks to improving my shot, I quickly learned this morning of instruction wasn't going to be enough. If I truly wanted make golf a regular pastime of mine, and maybe even golf with some colleagues from time to time, I would need to commit to playing the long game. Learning to play golf takes time, but the investment of practice now will ultimately result in success, it just won't be immediate.

The Honorable Judge Arterton joined us for lunch at Lyman Orchards that day and shared some of her experiences over the years as a woman in the law. Notably, Judge Arterton spoke about how the law had impacted the game of golf, especially for women. Women were not always allowed to participate in the game of golf, or to even enter the club house facilities. The injustice was noted, and women played the long game to make a worth-

while change in the world of golf.

The long game does not only apply on the golf course. One of the most common pieces of advice I have received throughout my career is that practicing law and being an attorney is all about playing the long game. Expertise in the field, building a network of colleagues, and establishing a book of business all take time to master, but are certain to bring success in the future, if you put in the effort now. Similar to my golf game, success was not immediate, but it is achievable. We did not become attorneys overnight. Although we may have learned the law, the art is in the practice of law, the ability to connect with others, and the confidence to market yourself in the community, all of which requires a commitment to playing the long game.

Playing the long game does not mean that you have to have your legal career completely mapped out, or that you cannot change course or direction throughout your career. In fact, Chief Justice Robin-

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son, in announcing his retirement at this year's Connecticut Legal Conference, stated that "change is good." Change helps people to grow and develop new skills. Change develops resilience and creates new opportunities. Change permits people to refocus their priorities, gain new perspectives, and build confidence. Change is one of life's very few certainties, but change is good for us, it's good for our organizations, and it's good for our legal careers. Changing course, whether that be a new job or learning a new practice area, does not mean you've given up the long game or that your work

and accomplishments to date are meaningless. Everything you do prepares you for the next step in your own career. It's all about the long game.

As the 2023-2024 bar year comes to a close, and we welcome the transition of officers for the YLS, I am grateful to this year's YLS Executive Committee and Officers for all of their hard work and dedication to the YLS and CBA. Each of you played an integral part in the success of this organization. Together, we have successfully hosted 18 CLEs and nine social/networking events; organized the an-

nual pro bono golf scramble and reception; provided outreach and networking opportunities to the local law students from Quinnipiac and UConn Law; raised \$2,500 for the Feeding Families Foundation; organized the Women's Professional Golf Event at Lyman Orchards; provided more than 1,000 hours of pro bono and/or community service hours to communities throughout the state; and so much more! I would also like to extend a special thank you to the CBA staff for their continued support and encouragement of the YLS through our efforts to engage all young lawyers throughout Connecticut. In the words of Chief Justice Robinson, "change is good," and the annual change in elected officers is good and healthy for an organization. I look forward to the new perspectives and opportunities that next year's Executive Committee and its officers will bring. Thank you to the members of the CBA and YLS for the opportunity to serve as your YLS chair this year. It has been an honor. ■

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