Golf & Tennis Challenge: One Professional Talks Utilizing the Sports to Further Career Goals

'Golf provides the opportunity for young people to learn life skills'

by Cedric 'BIG CED' Thornton  Posted: October 6, 2014

Golf was once an exclusive sport that only appealed to a certain class of people but then barriers were broken and the appeal has expanded in recent years. There was a time where Blacks were only allowed on the course as ‘the help’ or if they were lucky, a caddy. Things have changed and hopefully more paths can be blazed in the near future.

One professional has decided to take it upon herself to make a change herself. Clemmie C. Perry, a newbie golf enthusiast, has started, not one, but two organizations that she says will change the perception amongst people of color. She made a special visit to the Black Enterprise Golf and Tennis Challenge this past Labor Day Weekend to meet some people with Black Enterprise and to also further her cause by networking with other like-minded individuals.

Perry spoke to BlackEnterprise.com about how she became interested in golf, her purpose for attending the Golf and Tennis Challenge and why she founded her organizations.

BlackEnterprise.com: What led you down the path to take an interest in golf?

Clemmie C. Perry: In 2012, I had an opportunity to play with a friend, who was a golf enthusiast. Later that year, my youngest brother retrieved a set of discarded golf clubs in the trash for me to use. Another brother gifted a golf lesson and I was hooked and driven to share the experience with other women of color to learn the game of golf.

I also gained interest in the vast business opportunities and a new network of people in the golf community to share common goals and interest.

You have an organization, Women of Color Golf (WOCG), could you explain what it is, what you do and what you hope to achieve?

WOCG was created as a pathway for Women of color to gain exposure to and learn the game of golf. Our goal is to offer an affordable outlet to participate in the game. WOCG hopes to achieve and develop a platform for women of all colors to access and find like-minded individuals to enjoy the game of golf.

The perception can be that golf has been traditionally seen as a sport where there are few people of color, but it seems the tide has turned vastly. Why do you think that is?
There are many African-American golf pioneers that have a historical importance and numerous contributions to the expansion and development of golf in the United States. To name just a few, they include African American golfers such as William “Bill” Powell, Jim Thorpe, Calvin Peete, Lee Elder, Charlie Sifford and Jim Dent. These individuals positively impacted the golf community despite the pervasive prejudice and racism of the Jim Crow era.

When Tiger Woods won the Masters and other professional golfers of color begin to be covered more prominently on network TV; it made the game more appealing to Blacks. Nearly two decades after Tiger Woods’ arrival, golf still struggles to attract minorities.

How important is it to have young people learn the game and principles of golf?

Golf provides the opportunity for young people to learn life skills, such as practice, respect, perseverance, and honesty, preparing them to meet the challenges of today’s world with confidence.

You also have Girls on the Green (GOTG) program, why was this started?

Girls On the Green Tee (GOTGT) is designed to encourage and promote girls ages 7 - 14, in disadvantaged situations to learn and play the sport of golf and to integrate mentors and coaches that will focus on initiatives to prepare girls to live and work in a diverse, rapidly changing world. By exposing these young girls to golf and various golf facilities, they will have an opportunity to broaden their view of the world.

Is WOOG affiliated with anyone and/or any organizations?

Yes, WOOG has a created a mentoring relationship with two African American female LPGA professionals in the Florida area.

- Paula Pearson- Tucker, LPGA Teaching and Club Professional and head golf professional for the City of Lauderhill. She is the Founder of Fore Life Inc., a not-for-profit organization she founded with Football Hall of Fame, Lawrence Taylor. Fore Life, Inc. uses golf and its decision making skills to help vulnerable youth from underserved communities survive and succeed.
- Alice Brown is a certified LPGA/USGTF (Ladies Professional Golf Association / United States Golf Teaching Federation) professional. Alice is also a Level IV-Master/Examiner/World Teaching and Club Professional. Alice is currently subcontracting with WOOG to provide golf instruction to young girls in an alternative school in the Tampa Bay area.

WOOG is affiliated with the First Tee of Tampa Bay.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start an organization similar to this as far as them being able to get it running and making it work for them.
WOCG has a staff of qualified professionals and consultants that are available to discuss the startup process. We can be reached at: info@womenofcolorgolf.org. In general, to start an organization, you must understand and define your why and the reason you want to start an organization and be passionate about the work! Begin with the end in mind. Understand and define your roadmap. Compose a team, of advisors, you can trust. Be prepared to work through failures and celebrate success.

In 10 years, what are WOCG and GOTG doing and what have they achieved?

WOCG would like to expand nationally and work with motivated donors, sponsors and organizers to create a movement for WOCG to leverage local and national resources, technology, mentors and educational resources to grow the game of golf for women. WOCG has brought 50,000 new women to golf. GOTG is a nationally recognized program; supporting over 10,000 girls annually. WOCG has a membership of 100,000+

Why is the Black Enterprise Golf and Tennis Challenge important for people to attend?

In my opinion, the Black Enterprise golf and tennis event is the premier event venue for professionals to network and meet individuals from all over the country to socialize and broaden your business relationships in a relaxed, fun and recreational environment.

How did you benefit from attending the Golf & Tennis Challenge?

WOCG was able to connect with several professionals in the golf industry, certified teaching golf professionals and golf companies, to discuss opportunities to make the game more inclusive to minorities and women. WOCG will work with some of the connections we made to create a movement to encourage Women of Color to play recreational golf and to understand the vast amount of business benefits that are available to them on the green.