

HERE WE COME 2022: BECOMING MOMENTUM MAKERS

In December, I had a fun lunch with my new buddy, Dallas attorney, Tom Barron, a "Rona" friend I met virtually during the pandemic.

We have a lot in common, mostly our love for the law and sports. As we chatted, TB mentioned "make it take it" basketball games. To include everyone, "make it take it" means you only keep the basketball if you keep scoring or rebounding when you miss. "Make it take it" is a game of momentum, a battle of wills.

Our conversation led me to think again about the key life skills I learned from sports that propels me as a commercial and employment litigator and problem solver. Here are some of those lessons.

#1 Momentum Makers.

Any trial attorney knows the importance of momentum. You can feel it when you have a witness on the ropes during cross-examination. You can step away from the podium without your notes when you are in the zone during the closing argument. You can read the non-verbal communication cues from opposing counsel, the judge, jurors, and your staff signaling success. It is exhilarating!

Sports taught me that momentum is not a random force. **We create momentum when we prepare, work hard, become strong enough to choose to be vulnerable, and maybe fail along the way.** But, what is another winning side effect of momentum making? Confidence!

Then, the opportunity presents itself when you have to step into the moment - a client interview, the court argument, a witness examination. You are propelled by the hard work and confidence you have created. It does not matter if we are talking about a court of law or a basketball court. Preparation creates the confidence you need so you can shine in the moment.

In 2022, create your own momentum. It takes self-sacrifice, but anyone who has been "in the zone" in their profession knows it is worth the investment.

#2 Follow Your Shot.

Momentum is not always on your side.

The judge throws out a key piece of evidence at a summary judgment hearing. Opposing counsel does not agree to a discovery extension before the holiday break. A client decides to hire different outside counsel. If you are in the game long enough, you know you win some and lose some. And, sometimes, you can find yourself in an inexplicable losing streak. Nothing you do to change the situation will work!

When momentum is against you, your focus should immediately become how you will rebound from the setback. In basketball practice, we had this "follow your shot" drill. Right after you shot the basketball, you had to immediately move to the basket to rebound, even if you thought you made it. This exercise required you to change your focus to prepare for the future instead of thinking about the past. Standing and watching to see if you made it was not an option - unless you wanted to get benched!

By changing your focus, you can get into position to react to whatever happens next. Commercial and employment litigation is an anxiety-ridden high-stakes occupation. Being able to react and rebound from setbacks takes grit and a will to win despite the odds. Remember, there is always another way to score; you have to follow up and fight for it.

#3 Win. The Right Way.

We learn more about ourselves when we are faced with obstacles. Our colleagues and clients see who we truly are by watching us deal with challenges. Did we play by the rules or cheat? Did we point fingers or accept responsibility? Is our approach to rebound quickly or wallow in defeat?

We all have the same question to be answered: Do I want this person on my team? I had one teammate at Wake Forest, and when I think of her, I remember that she always cheated when practice got hard. It was always someone else's fault. Unfortunately, that is how I remember her over twenty years later.

As Ret. Chief Justice Carolyn Wright-Sanders proclaims - protect your bar card with your life. **Do not embrace a "win at all costs" mentality. During difficult times, your reputation is on the line.** Don't take a cheap shot. Instead, take that opportunity to be a momentum maker! #thelonggame



AMY M. STEWART
FOUNDING PARTNER

2022 Pre-Game Pep Talk

Wishing you success in this "make it take it" world. I pray you create the momentum to enjoy the wins, rely on your endurance to overcome the setbacks, and build the strength to win the right way.

NEED TO HUDDLE?

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