

## ***When Girls Win: A Collaborative Event Between The Niners and CWGA***

“Your body plays the game; your mind determines the results!”

These are the words of MJ McCloskey, author of *When Girls Win* and NCAA 2023 Coach of the Year. MJ is celebrated for building a women’s golf program from the ground up at George Fox University as well as leading her team to the top-ranked spot in the country and winning 13 NCAA D-III Conference championships and a National Title against all odds!

If you believe the universe has a way of bringing people together in a gravitational pull of spirit, the Rise and Shine breakfast, a collaboration of Charbonneau women’s golf clubs, was a force meant to happen. About three years ago, CWGA member BJ Shrock and Niners member Judy Williams signed up to play in a Staggette Scramble at Willamette Valley Country Club. They only had three players and the Pro of the club assigned their fourth player—MJ McCloskey. BJ and Judy had no idea who this fourth player was, and while they were happy to have a full team, they only hoped she could contribute.

As BJ reports in her introduction of MJ McCloskey on April 26, 2024, not only did MJ hit drives that made their drives look like chip shots, but MJ shared some excellent words of wisdom, and most importantly they enjoyed each other’s company (and won)! Years later Coach McCloskey emails BJ telling her about her new book *When Girls Win*, and BJ decides to bring the book to share at the CWGA winter luncheon. The seed is planted, and soon, the idea of bringing MJ McCloskey to speak at a collaborative event for The Niners, CWGA, and Lake Oswego Golf Club is born.

The morning of the breakfast, over seventy women gather to listen to MJ speak about the importance of mindset. Her inspirational message is a testament to why women of MJ’s caliber are the ideal coaches, teachers, and mentors of future generations of women. Despite the obstacles and concerns of fellow coaches that a golf team in her conference didn’t have what it took to compete as a national contender, MJ grew a winning women’s golf program at George Fox University by building a powerful mental framework, then modeling that mental toughness for her players.

Mindset is the set of beliefs that play a pivotal role in what we want and whether we achieve it. If we have a fixed mindset, we believe that our abilities and talents cannot be changed no matter what we do. If we have a growth mindset, we believe that our talents and abilities can be developed over time through hard work and positive self-talk.

“We believe that the impossible is possible and our passion leads the way in helping us to maneuver around the obstacles and break through resistance,” MJ says.

To illustrate growth mindset, MJ gives attendees a sample of the activities she uses with herself and her team. First, we investigate how failure teaches resilience and makes us stronger for the next time. We draw a circle and write within it the factors we can control in golf, such as our focus, patience, positivity, and having fun. Outside circle, we name all the things on the golf course over which we have no control, but might blame for bad shot, such as the weather, noises, teammates talking, or endless waiting to hit your next shot. We discover that accepting responsibility for our game is crucial to taking our game to the next level.

In another activity, MJ asks us to write affirmations about our game and explore the effect of the positive self-talk on the course. How many of us have stepped up to a shot with negative self-talk? I’ll never do well on this hole. I can’t make it over the water. I’m horrible at reading long putts. Instead, MJ emphasizes that writing affirmations that reflect what you aspire, sets the stage for positive self-talk. For example, writing that you are a focused putter and good at reading the greens might very well change your mindset about how you putt and approach practice. Positive self-talk and the stories we tell ourselves on the course are key to positive results.

As MJ speaks, she shares with us the mentors who made a difference in her journey. One person she mentions is her high school basketball coach at St Mary’s Academy, who happens to be one of our very own CWGA members, Kathy Kinyon. What an honor it is to be in the audience and recognized as part of the journey of this very successful woman. It goes to show that the impact we have on each other is greater than we often imagine.

A huge thank you to BJ Shrock, Judy Williams, The Niners President, Cathy Loffink and CWGA Co-Presidents, Amy Day and Carol Riley for giving us the opportunity to be inspired and mentored by this passionate, accomplished woman, author, coach and golfer, MJ McCloskey. If you missed this presentation, pick up a copy of her book, *When Girls Win*. There is much to learn and practice for ourselves not only in the game of golf, but in any aspect of life. There is also so much we can pass on to our daughters and granddaughters.

In MJ's words, "I invite you to walk tall with gratitude, faith (in yourself), and perspective---in any pursuit. It is there you will find your own magic."