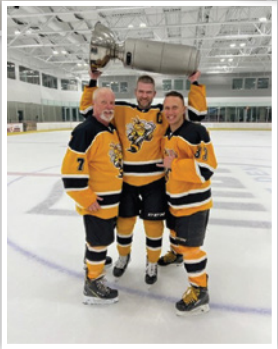


The Road To **Justice** Starts Here



finally!

By Attorney Michael T. Gibson

On September 25, 2016, my Men’s League hockey team, the Yellowjackets, won our league championship. This came at the end of my second year playing adult recreational hockey. As I held up the trophy that night, I remember thinking that we would win this thing again multiple times. We had a great team, and a talented group. There was no way we would not be back here, and in short order.

Over the course of the next six full calendar years, the Jackets made the championship game 6 times twice in 2017, once in 2018, twice in 2021 and once previously in 2022. We lost every single one of these. We also had an undefeated season in 2019, where we lost in the first round of the playoffs to a team that did not win a regular season game that season. We were also dominating the league in 2020, when the pandemic broke out, and ended our season prematurely. Last spring, our team dominated the regular season, finishing with only one loss, and usually winning our games by 5 goals or more. But in the semifinals, we somehow lost 6-5. As the years passed, the majority of our team members that won in 2016 left the team. In fact, during the Fall 2022 season, there were only 4 of us left from that team.

In the fall of 2021, I took over as team captain. I was elected by my teammates to serve as the same. I accepted the captaincy with one mission – to win another title. And shortly thereafter, I got to work on filling out our roster with players that I thought could help us get over the hump, and win the trophy we desperately sought to win again. And since that point in time, we have made the championship game every season but one. And some of those were really close. We lost in the Winter 2021 championship by a single goal in a game that went to overtime, and had to be decided in a shootout. We then lost the 2022 winter championship by a score of 7-5. That was a crazy game, that saw us give up two goals in the first minute of the game, and at one point, we were down by 5 goals. We managed to score 5 goals in 5 minutes in the third period of that game to tie it. But we could not hang on, and a couple of late penalties doomed us.

We entered the Fall 2022 season coming off a disappointing loss in the semifinals the season before. Our best two players were forced to leave the team and move up to a higher level. So we entered the season not really knowing what to expect. I added a few veteran players. Guys I had played with in my 35+ league. While they were all older than what we would normally add, I thought each of these guys were solid, two-way players. They didn’t have the speed and skill that the guys we lost had. But they were solid positionally, and they were dependable. We weren’t going to be as flashy and fast, but these guys would always be in the right spot. Combining that with a defense that has been together for five seasons plus, and is always ranked at the top of our league, I thought we had enough to take another run at that elusive championship.

The start to the season wasn’t anything exciting. We lost our first game, and we didn’t look good doing the same. I moved a few guys around in different positions, and started incorporating the new guys. Over the course of the next five weeks, things really turned around. And you could start to see the makings of the team coming together. We started winning again. And then we started dominating games again. Suddenly, I slowly started letting the thoughts of us winning it all creep into my head. But as the season went on, we started rotating wins and losses. We also had a few guys dropping off. At our age, life takes over sometimes. I myself missed three games due to coaching my son’s travel hockey team,



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honestidad, las leyes y la justicia

Por Juan Jose Rodriguez, Abogado de Enlace

Usualmente no escribimos sobre estos temas, pero recientes eventos me han motivado a escribir esta columna. Recuerdo como si fuera hoy, el día que le notifique a mi pastor / guía espiritual, que deseaba estudiar leyes y ser abogado. Reacciono como si le estuviera diciendo algo en contra de la iglesia. No tengo espacio para describir la conversación que tuvimos, pero fue algo que marco mi vida. Lo principal que dijo fue que el convertirme en abogado era el sinónimo de renunciar a mis creencias en Dios: es decir, según él, los abogados son tan deshonestos que el solo hecho de ejercer la profesión, me iba afectar espiritualmente, al nivel que me iba a convertir en un hereje, enemigo de Dios y negar los principios Bíblicos que tanto yo había seguido desde mi niñez.

Aquí estamos, unos 47 años después de esa conversación, y puedo decir con toda firmeza que no fue así, sino lo contrario. El haber estudiado Leyes, y ejercer en el campo legal por tanto tiempo me ha dado la oportunidad de tener los conocimientos y entender el proceso para ayudar a otros, darle la mano al que esta necesitado e orientarles. Poniendo la modestia aparte, he podido, con la ayuda de Dios por supuesto, ayudar aquellos que, en tiempo de necesidad, estaban desesperados buscando orientación y asistencia legal.

Uno de los argumentos que mi guía espiritual enfatizaba es que todos los abogados son unos mentirosos y deshonestos. Esto no es correcto; aunque es cierto que no todas las verdades se divulgan a menos que se haga la pregunta, es al contrario ya que utilizando la verdad es una de las herramientas que se usan para alcanzar justicia. ¿Cuántas personas no hemos representado que falsamente la han acusado – por ejemplo, de haber tenido la culpa en un accidente, cuando después hemos encontrado que la razón de tomar la decisión fue porque el policía que investigo el accidente no hablaba español y solo le creyó a la versión del otro conductor que solo hablaba inglés? La realidad es que en este campo legal el ser honesto, y decir la verdad es lo que realmente favorece el ganar los argumentos y eventualmente los casos.

No me viene a la mente quien fue el autor, pero en una ocasión vi un dicho en la pizarra de un prócer boricua que dijo: *“Sigue tu camino siempre que sea la verdad y la justicia quienes te escolten.”* La palabra de Dios también nos insta el hacer justicia y ser honestos cuando nos dice: *“Pero tú, oh hombre de Dios, huye de estas cosas, y sigue la justicia, la piedad, la fe, el amor, la perseverancia y la amabilidad” (1 Timoteo 6:11)* De la misma manera otro versículo Bíblico que tiene mucho significado es el siguiente: *“DIOS prefiere que practiquemos la justicia y la honradez en lugar de los sacrificios.” Proverbios 21:3.*

Gracias a Dios, al analizar mi carrera puedo decir con toda honestidad que hasta aquí Dios nos has ayudado a utilizar nuestras fuerzas, energías y conocimiento en la búsqueda de la Justicia para aquellos que se la merecen. Que Dios les continúe bendiciendo a todos. ■

“Finally!” continued from page 1.

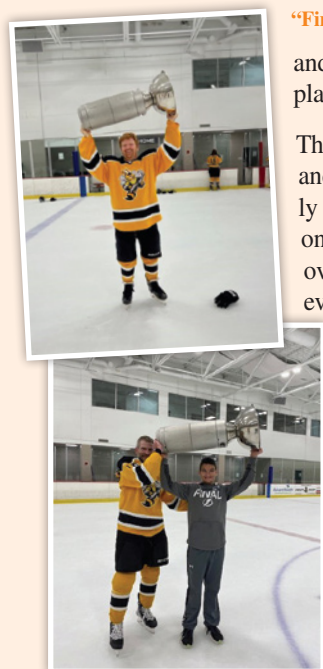
and conflicts between our schedules. But we picked up a few big wins at the end of the regular season, and we entered the playoffs as the number one overall seed.

The amazing part of this playoff run is that we were the only top seed to win in the first round. The three other top teams all lost, and all of them in overtime. In our first game, we played the lowest ranked playoff team. We were down a goal with approximately 30 seconds to go in the game. The other team made a rush down the ice, took a shot that our goalie saved. Tom, the fastest guy on our team picked up the rebound, and went end to end down the ice and scored, getting us to overtime. We stayed tied through overtime, and the game went to a shootout. In the 8 years I have been with the Jackets, I think we have only one shootout victory, ever. As Captain, I got to choose who played in the shootout and in what order we went. Usually, teams like to go second, so you know what the other team did. Well, that never worked for us, so I chose for us to go first. I sent our best skater out and he scored. On the third and last shooter, Bill, our most senior player, turned to me and said “You know I am 5 of 6 in my career in these.” I looked at him and told him to go make it 6 out of 7. And he did. Game over, and we are moving on.

As the playoffs progressed, I suffered an elbow injury playing in my 35+ league. What started out as a minor annoyance soon became pretty significant. In the course of one week, I went from having some minor elbow discomfort, to having limited mobility with that arm, and significant pain and swelling. It was bad enough that my primary doctor referred me to an orthopedist to deal with the same. At one point, I was having a difficult time putting a shirt on over my head. Still, despite the fact that I had limited mobility with the arm, I did not miss a minute of the playoffs. I played through the injury and the pain. There was one game in particular that the pain was radiating down my entire arm every time I used it. Every shot I took hurt, and every pass I made hurt. But despite the pain, I played about 30 minutes and helped my team win that game. And that win put us in the Finals.

The week of the Finals, I got an MRI on the elbow and follow up with the ortho. Turns out I have a loose piece of bone fragment in my elbow. It happened due to arthritis that has developed there. I may have to have surgery down the road if it worsens, but for now, he gave me a cortisone shot, and cleared me to keep playing. It was a huge relief to know that the injury wasn't anything that would require surgery, and that I was good to keep playing.

The day before the game, I did everything I could to keep my mind off of it. Luckily Eme had a dance recital. So, most of the day got eaten up watching her perform. The day of the game, I did my best to go through my normal pregame routines. Stretch, warm-up, meal, music on in the



winter fun

WITH THE GIBSON FAMILY

By: Attorney Michael T. Gibson

No easing into the new year for this family. Between travel hockey tournaments and dance competitions, we are running seven days a week in this house. To start off, Brady's hockey season really picked up these past two months. We have participated in two tournaments, and concluded our regular season. We qualified to make the State playoffs! Brady has been on fire, scoring 7 goals and 7 assists in his last four games. He has really worked hard this season, and it is great to see him having success. Meanwhile, Eme and Jen participated in a dance conference, and have been busy with extra practices for competition season. Eme has a solo dance this year, and from watching her practice, it is looking great. Despite being our kids' Uber drivers every weekend, Jen and I did find a night to sneak out and get in a Valentine's Dinner. Date nights are hard to come by with all the activities going on, so we enjoyed an evening out. And finally, reality is setting in that we will soon have a high schooler in the house, as we took Brady to his High School orientation at Winter Park High School. Brady will be a part of the 100th graduating class from Winter Park. While we are a little in shock that our first born is going to high school, we are excited for this new chapter in his life. We know a lot of you have a household like ours, and are juggling keeping up with the kids and work. It goes by really quickly, so enjoy the same. ■

"Finally!" continued from page 2.

car, and then gametime. We gave up the first goal of the game, five minutes into the game. At that point, I will admit, some doubt crept in my mind briefly. When you have lost this game 6 times in a row, it is natural. But even though we were down at the end of the first period, I felt we had this one. We just had to keep playing. In the second period, we got a powerplay goal to tie the game. Then, we got another goal. I made a play to keep the puck in the zone and got it to my defense partner, who made another pass, and then it was in the net. Now we were up 2-1 heading into the final period.

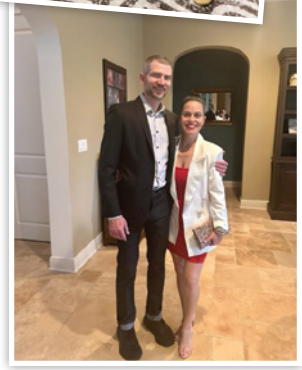
The final period was a back-and-forth affair until we scored with about seven minutes to go. I yelled down the bench that we didn't need any more goals and for everyone to focus on defense. And focus on defense we did. We were clinical in those last seven minutes. The other team only got the puck in our zone three times in that timespan, and each time, we had plenty of yellow jerseys around them, and we suppressed all of their shot attempts.

I got on the ice with about a minute, thirty left in the game. As the final 15 seconds ticked down, I had all I could do not to jump up and down, and begin the celebration. I had waited for that moment for six years, and I had long thought about that celebration before each of our previous championship losses. There had been so many, I purposely did not let those thoughts enter my head before this game. As the final seconds ticked away, we cleared the puck down the ice, and knew it was over. I threw my stick and gloves off and ran and jumped into the arms of our goalie. The bench emptied out onto the ice. From there, I proceeded through the handshake line, and hugged every single one of my teammates. For so long, I had been trying to get to this moment for so many of them, many of whom had never won a championship. So, I took my time, embracing each one of them and thanking them for believing in me and coming to this team and making this a reality. We had won so many games together, but never the big one. But finally, after numerous disappointments, we were champions. The last hug in that line, was my son, Brady. We have shared such a deep bond over the game of hockey. In a lot of ways, hockey has been at the center of our father and son relationship. And to see his excitement for me in that moment, it meant the world to me to have him there.

The captain always gets to raise the championship cup first. As I skated over to get the same from our league director, I paused and told him I wanted to wait for all my teammates and their families. So we gathered everyone. And I skated to them. "Congrats boys, we finally did it," was my proclamation that I screamed as I hoisted the trophy over my head. I couldn't lift it fully over my head thanks to the elbow, but I was also feeling no pain in that moment. And in that moment, all of the losses, the heartbreak, and the pain we felt in those previous championship losses went away. For one night in our lives, and for one brief moment in time, we were the best, the champions.

In the greater scheme of life winning an adult rec league hockey championship doesn't mean very much. But there are some definite life lessons learned in this journey. The first is to never give up. If at first you don't succeed, or if you fail, even six times in six years, consecutively, keep trying. And lastly, love the process. We all focus so much on the outcome of whatever we are doing, that we miss loving the process to get there. So much of this journey, in my hobby life, was learning what it took to win. And despite numerous setbacks, we just stayed at it. We were the butt of a lot of jokes from other teams, and even our league directors that we just could not get it done in the Final. Now, we were the ones with the final laugh. And finally, sometimes in life, we don't always get what we are chasing when we are chasing it. But sometimes, you get the same when you least expect it. I don't know if this was our most talented team. But in the end, it was the team that had the will to get it done.

So, whatever goals you are chasing in life, my advice is to stay at it, no matter the setbacks or obstacles. If the Yellowjackets can finally win it all, so can you! I enclose some pics from our championship celebration. A lot of older guys looking like little kids. ■





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finally!



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wind hazards

OFTEN OVERLOOKED WHILE DRIVING

According to the Federal Highway Administration, unfavorable weather conditions are a contributing factor in over 20% of U.S. vehicular accidents — and that includes wind, which is often overlooked.

March and April are two of the windiest months of the year, at least in temperate zones, due to still-frigid northern air masses clashing with ever-warming southern air masses. But strong winds can crop up throughout the year. Cars buffeted by forceful winds can make it a chore for drivers to stay in their lane. Dirt, dust, or snow may be blown into the air, reducing visibility. Objects might be whipped onto the road, which can lead to swerving, loss of vehicle control, or entering the path of another driver. Wind-driven projectiles might shatter a windshield — a potential emergency.

Box trucks and tractor-trailers are another matter. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration states that winds (gusts or sustained) of 25+ mph can have a detrimental impact on driver control; a truck's large side surface area gives wind some good leverage. Trucks might sway, which could shift the weight of incorrectly loaded cargo and create a hazardous situation, or even tip over. Sudden braking due to control issues may lead to underride accidents or jackknifing. Open loads sometimes fall onto the roadway, jeopardizing others.

Good counters to windy conditions include lowering your speed, maintaining a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you, and checking the weather forecast before departing.

Drivers are ultimately responsible for their actions, including taking weather conditions into account. If you are injured due to the negligence of another driver, contact our office to protect your rights. ■



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