

In the film, “The Legend of Bagger Vance”, a caddy appears at dawn, quiet, steady, certain, reminding a struggling golfer to find his “authentic swing.” Before I understood that metaphor, I was awake and fully dressed rushing my mother out the door to the golf course before the sun rose. I had no real knowledge of the game, only YouTube videos and a determination to make money. Well, as the protagonist of the film searched for his lost rhythm, I found myself in search of mine.

Imagine this: a short, brown-skinned girl of Trinidadian descent, eccentric, with two afro puffs crowning my head, undeniably the only person on that golf course who looked like me. In fact, I was not only the black person, but the only girl trying to work in a white male dominated field. The caddymaster barely acknowledged my presence, often asking, “You’re not here to caddy, are you?” The question echoed like doubt on a tee box. Still, I kept showing up.

I sacrificed summer freedom to commit to caddying. For five days out of the week, from 6:30 a.m. to 4p.m., I sat in the hot caddy shack waiting for loops that often went to white boys who arrived later but the way they looked was always on time. For three years, I watched Bobby laugh easily with my white counterparts while I sat quietly, studying the course, memorizing yardages, and refusing to disappear.

The historical fictitious story of Bagger Vance teaches that the game is already inside you, you just have to clear away the fear and listen. Caddying taught me something similar. It is not just about carrying clubs or calculating distance. It is a social puzzle, knowing when to speak, when to stay silent, how to read frustration, how to steady someone else’s nerves, to be present in time and space. Eventually, the loops began to come. With each round, I grew sharper, wiser through

basic observation. My ego no longer depended on recognition. I owned who I was and where I came from. I had found my swing.

The most important lesson was to step into unfamiliar spaces with quiet confidence. With that lesson learned, I have traveled to the Netherlands on a cultural exchange. I camped for a week in the mountains in Wyoming with students I had never met. Through the S.O.A.R. program, an organization to fight antisemitism and racism, I engaged in open dialogue with students from a private Jewish school, discussing W.E.B. DuBois' concept of "double consciousness" and shared my lived experience, demanding respect through not only my words but through my presence.

Last year, I volunteered to write about US tariffs for my school newspaper. I began with no real background knowledge, but through research I discovered a fascination with government and international trade. What once felt foreign became compelling. From standing unnoticed on the caddy deck at sunrise to entering conversations across cultures and countries, I have learned to claim space with humility and determination. Just as the golfer who must trust their swing before others do, I had to first trust my voice before it was affirmed, because there are no invitations. I must claim my space and know I belong.