

## From Yale and Oxford to school of hard golf

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EAST LANSING, Mich. As speeches were winding down at the 1991 Yale graduation, Heather Daly-Donofrio should have been just another starry-eyed student with a diploma in hand. Instead, she was strolling down the back nine wielding a pitching wedge and eyeing par.

Academics always had a place in Daly-Donofrio's life, but the textbooks usually were tucked somewhere behind the putter. Her educational pedigree \_ attending Oxford in England in 1990, graduating cum laude from Yale \_ suggests something else.

But just when she was poised to be the next Ivy League doctor/lawyer/stockbroker, her career path dog-legged. The history major got the golf bug. And although she has struggled on the LPGA Tour going into the Oldsmobile Classic this week, her heart has stuck with fairways instead of Fortune 500s.

"After graduation it was easy for me to go get a job or it was easy for me to go to graduate school," Daly-Donofrio said. "That's what everybody did. That's what was expected.

"It wasn't easy for me to get my game to the level to where I could play out here. That's a much bigger challenge than going off to law school or taking a job on Wall Street."

The risks are comparable. Tee shots can sink just like junk bonds, dragging a player into the depths of the LPGA money list. That's where Daly-Donofrio is these days. Entering Thursday's first round at Walnut Hills Country Club, she ranks 139th out of 206 players. In 17 tournaments, she has earned \$23,540.

Not exactly a typical salary for a Yale grad.

So why stay in golf? It's partly addiction, partly love, but mostly sensible calculation. She spent 1999 splitting time between her head coaching duties at Yale and a full LPGA schedule. That ended with her resignation from Yale in April, in hopes she could spend more time with her family and on the course.

In her one season as coach, Yale won five of 10 tournaments, including the Ivy League championship. Still, the job took too much time away from the LPGA Tour. She intends to instruct the team on occasion, but her sights are set on her game for now.

"I've sort of struggled all year," she said. "My coaching schedule was tough in the spring, and I didn't get the practice I normally get. I didn't get the lessons I normally get, and I missed some tournaments. I've just been behind the eight-ball all year."

She isn't happy with her swing, but she has been seeing a specialist to correct the problem. Still, it's not as if things haven't been tough before. She didn't even pick up a club until she was 15 and had no professional lessons until 20. To put that in perspective, the LPGA's top rookie this year is 19.

Daly-Donofrio's rookie LPGA season was in 1998, at age 29, although she had played a few tournaments earlier. She doesn't have any doubts she can fix her problems.

"Golf is the type of sport you can catch up in," she said. "I'm not totally caught up because I'm still far down on the money list.

"I fell in love with golf. If I lose that I stop playing. There's no point in being out here if you don't have that bite."