BLOGS

Qarib Qarib a Success Story: How Toshali Pattnaik Chose Law as a Career?

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*This preparatory article has been authored by **Toshali Pattnaik**. Toshali completed her **LL.M. (Master of Laws) from NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad**, and her **B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) from National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam**.*

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CLAT UG wasn't just another competitive exam; it was one of the pivotal moments in my life. I started out aiming for medicine, but it was my dad who nudged me towards law. He saw something that I didn't fully understand at the time.

Growing up, I had a natural affinity towards the social sciences. While other students struggled with memorization and recalling dates, years, and other numerical figures, I was the geek who remembered the page numbers (yes, like 'Chatur' from 3 Idiots).

Naturally, he believed I would do well in a field like law, also given how rebellious and freedom-loving I was as a child. The idea of doing law was subtly slipped into my life one evening, when he broke the news of enrolling me in the crash course of a local coaching institute. The fees for the programme would have funded 5 attempts at the NEET Medical Exam!

Baffled by his sudden investment, I hesitantly went to the coaching to attend the demo classes. Truth be told, I was instantly hooked.

The logic, the law, the maths, and the grammar sections felt very natural to me. I felt a calling towards law, something I had missed since my matriculation. So, I decided to give it a shot.

My First Exposure to CLAT Coaching

My CLAT UG preparation journey started pretty confidently (or may I say, delusionally). I had not fully comprehended the vastness of the syllabus and the competitiveness of the exam at this point of time. I had just finished my 12th boards and was happily strutting to coaching classes where I topped effortlessly. But one fine day, my world cracked open.

We had a joint session with students who had been preparing for 2 years and 1 year for CLAT UG. Even though I didn't find 'them' intimidating, their preparation journey made me realize how far behind I am. They had sat through several mock tests, quizzes, and had followed current affairs for the GK section for the past 2 years.

I was 10 days into the programme, and hadn't taken a single mock exam. Panic set in, as I had only 22 days left for CLAT UG. But as Kratos (from God of War) reminds us, *"In moments of crisis, panic does nothing. Harness it. Let it serve you."* That became my mantra – and instead of letting fear paralyze me, I turned it into fuel.

Turning Panic into Preparation Strategy

I planned my day meticulously. Since I did not have a computer or laptop back then, I stayed in the coaching institute after class hours and used their computer lab to appear for mock tests and quizzes. My first mock exam made me realize my strengths and my weaknesses. I could complete English and Legal Reasoning before the allotted time.

Logical Reasoning and Maths took time, but I got most of the questions right. The part I struggled most with was GK- Both static and current. I knew it would be challenging to collect all the major occurrences of the last 2 years, and if I focused too much on it, it would cripple my confidence. So, I planned my day as follows:

My Daily Schedule for CLAT UG

6.30 AM to 12.30 PM – Classes, during which I focused on Legal and English and revised aggressively during breaks**.**

1 PM to 7 PM – Mock tests, practicing new questions for each section, quizzes, and noting down new information. I had specific slots for Logical Reasoning and Maths.

8 PM to 11 PM – GK- Static and Current. I know my schedule probably looked crazy – cramped, unrealistic, maybe even unsustainable. But at that time, I had tunnel vision. Like a horse with blinders, I saw only one thing: the exam. I wanted it as badly as I wanted air. And since it was just 22 days of grind, compared to the year-long slog most students endure, I figured it was a fair deal for a shot at the seat thousands were chasing. But of course, determination alone wasn't enough. I had to lean on the right resources to channel that energy effectively.

Resources and Strategy

***Legal Aptitude*:** Legal Aptitude Workbook by A.P Bhardwaj (Pearson), Study Materials, Mock Tests, and Previous Year Question Papers (4 years)

***Logical Reasoning, English, and Maths*:** Study Materials, Test Papers, and Previous Year Question Papers (4 years).

***G.K.*:** The Hindu, Pratiyogita Darpan, Study Materials, Quizzes and Mock Tests, and Previous Year Question Papers (4 years).

Had I had more time, I would also have gone through:

***Logical Reasoning and Maths*:** Study materials for CAT and CLAT**.**

***GK*:** The Hindu (2 Years/1 Year), Pratiyogita Darpan, Static GK from any standard publisher, multiple quizzes, and mock tests.

The most important step in the preparation journey is to commit to intensive practice with past years' papers. For any competitive examination, previous year question papers are like a compass. Solving them repeatedly showed me the recurring patterns and helped me predict tricky questions that examiners love to set. Mock tests were my reality check.

If I spent an hour appearing for a mock exam, I spent another two hours dissecting each question, noting each mistake, and understanding the logic. If you think about it, the process sounds tedious and lengthy. The trick is to 'Do without (over)thinking.'

CLAT UG Exam Day Experience

After 22 days of relentless grind, the D-day arrived, and no number of mock tests could have truly prepared me for it. The exam was scheduled in the afternoon, at a centre about 30 minutes away. Against better judgment, I woke up at 4 am and started revising (most would advise against it, but for me, it was routine).

We left home two hours before the exam, yet traffic stretched the commute longer than expected. Eventually, I reached the centre, cleared document verification, and found myself seated in the exam hall. Those two hours inside flew by faster than I could have imagined.

I had gone in with a plan to attempt maths and logical reasoning first, and then move on to the rest. In hindsight, it was the worst strategy I could have chosen. My biggest regret was leaving Legal Reasoning, my strongest section, for last.

I ended up not attempting 20 marks there. 20 marks that I would have likely secured. 20 marks that could have shifted my rank dramatically. This misstep taught me a hard lesson: strategy matters as much as preparation.

What I Learned (and what I recommend)

1. Start with your strongest section. Be fast and accurate. Don't linger here.
2. Place the challenging section in the middle. The confidence from finishing your strengths will carry you through.
3. Save the weakest section for last. By then, adrenaline and momentum will help you wrap it up. Skip what feels uncertain to avoid negative marking and save time.

So, after all this, did I crack the exam? In a way, yes. I secured a seat at a National Law University. It wasn't the one I had dreamt of at the time, but it turned out to be exactly what I needed. That seat shaped the person I am today.

The momentum I built during those 22 days carried me through 5 years of law school. I had trained myself to grind, to stay resilient, and to make things happen. Challenges came, of course, but I learned not to overthink them. That mindset kept me moving forward.

Right after CLAT UG, I shifted my focus to other competitive exams I had prepared for. That helped me avoid obsessing over every mistake I might have made. I even began revising for the next CLAT attempt, just in case. In fact, I completely forgot about the results until the day they were declared. My mantra was simple: Fire and Forget. And the rest, they say, is history.

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