

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH  
Bobby Dodd Institute Breakfast, 2/20/03

It is very exciting for Georgia Tech to be a part of the Bobby Dodd Industries' 2003 Breakfast with Champions. We join with you in saluting Tom Graf for his many years of advocacy on behalf of Atlanta's disabled citizens. And I want to recognize and thank Wes Durham and the Georgia Tech pep band for getting us into the spirit of this special occasion.

Georgia Tech and BDI share the legacy of a champion named Bobby Dodd. We called him the "Grey Fox," and he spent his entire coaching career at Georgia Tech. He was an outstanding mentor to young people because he believed in them. He was quick to praise their accomplishments, and he knew exactly what to say to restore their self-confidence after they'd made a mistake. He wanted each one of his players to be their personal best, whether on the field or in the classroom, and he gave them the help and support they needed to succeed.

Bobby Dodd signed on with Georgia Tech as a backfield coach on the day after Christmas in 1930, and in 1945 he became head coach. His 22 years as head coach were the golden era of Georgia Tech football. His 1952 team won the national championship, and between 1952 and 1956 he achieved a national record that still stands today of six consecutive appearances in the most prestigious bowl games of the day, including the Sugar Bowl, the Orange Bowl and the Cotton Bowl.

But he later said that his favorite team was the last one he coached in 1966. He described them as "a squad I never expected to do better than 7 [wins] and 3 [losses], but one that came up with a 9-1 record simply because the players put more into the game than they had to give." That is the definition of a champion – someone who puts more into the game than they have to give.

Bobby Dodd understood how hard it could be to achieve your personal best in every aspect of life. Georgia Tech is a pretty rigorous place. The academics are hard. Everybody has to take calculus. And Bobby had trouble finding outstanding linebackers who could also succeed in class. So he worked very hard to make his players into good students as well as good athletes. Players were not allowed to cut classes, and their academic progress was closely monitored. Tutoring was available every night. Players who were unable to graduate in four years were brought back for a fifth year on scholarship, and every effort was made to help them graduate.

In those days, Georgia Tech was a member of the SEC – the Southeast Conference. When the SEC put a limit on the number of athletic scholarships its member universities could have, Bobby Dodd did not want to give up his policy of allowing athletes to continue on scholarship until they graduated. So Georgia Tech withdrew from the conference. That's how much emphasis Bobby placed on helping his athletes succeed at a personal level. He knew that if he helped each one of his players to be their personal best, his team would do well.

Even as he was coaching Georgia Tech football teams, Bobby Dodd was actively involved in promoting services for Atlanta citizens who had disabilities. And he had the same philosophy

with these special citizens as he did with his football players – to help each one achieve their personal potential. He helped to found Bobby Dodd Industries in the 1960s, to help persons with disabilities find value within themselves and learn to be successful.

Today Bobby Dodd's ideals are still carried out at Georgia Tech and at the Bobby Dodd Institute. At Tech, we know that the vast majority of our athletes will not have pro careers, and their college education will be the most important factor in their future. So all of our athletes participate in the Total Person Program, which helps them learn to succeed in all areas of their lives. This program provides academic support, wellness counseling and career placement services. It teaches life skills and leadership abilities, and encourages community service. It gives students the skills and encouragement they need to be their personal best.

Bobby Dodd Industries has the same goal – to help people with disabilities become well-rounded, productive persons who are prepared to be their personal best and contribute to society. BDI clients learn life skills, take job-readiness classes, and receive computer and customer service instruction.

Atlanta has nearly 400,000 people with disabilities, and their unemployment rate can run as high as 50 percent. BDI understands that the best way to improve this picture is to give teenagers who have disabilities the tools they will need to succeed before they graduate from high school and venture out into the world. This is the goal of the Explorers Program, which gives special education students from high schools a half-day of academics in the classroom and a half-day of hands-on training for the work place.

One of the great champions in the world of sports was a famous baseball player named Lou Gehrig. He had to retire from the game when he developed a disability, which is now known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It is a progressive deterioration of nerves and muscles, and it gradually paralyzes the person who has it. At the last game he played, Lou Gehrig made a brief farewell speech to his many fans, and he concluded with these words: "I might have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for!"

That is what Bobby Dodd Industries says to its clients: "You might have had a tough break, but you have an awful lot to live for!" And then BDI helps its clients prepare to make the most of their lives and be their personal best. So that, like Bobby Dodd's favorite team of 1966, BDI clients have the skills and abilities to put more into the game than anyone is expecting. And that makes each one of them a champion.