

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE  
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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DAN GABLE

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TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

Today I'm hoping to entertain you a little bit and to try to educate you a little bit about how I think and just talk some philosophy. But today I'm going to act like this room -- I know I'm not used to this big of a wrestling team because we're usually about 30-35 athletes in a room that's quite a bit smaller than this.

But today I'm going to act like this group is my team. And with that in mind, it gives me a better chance to talk from the heart, and it gives me a better chance to try to get inside your heads to be able to help you for the future as well.

I kind of looked at my career as an athlete and coach, and I never really analyzed it as it was taking place, just moving on to the next. And I'm kind of in that in my life right now but it's a different ballgame as far as what I'm trying to do.

I use the term "escape." It's a wrestling term. It's not worth a whole lot of points in wrestling, but it is an essential. And if you can't master the essentials, you will never be good in probably anything you want to be good in.

I give the credit in my career from the beginning from my mom and dad, my personal family when I was a kid, all the opportunities that they gave me and how they instructed me, whether it started at home, in the YMCA, or through some of the great coaches and teachers that I've been able to have. But I also give the credit today back to what I call a new family, my wife and children.

So basically I've had credit -- I give credit to family from the beginning and family current. It's from family to family.

And there's no better way of being motivated in your life than being involved and having support from the people that love you and that you love.

I look back at my career and I look at certain things within that family that made a difference. I carry this little green book around and I give speeches, or when I just want to find the answers to situations. It's a book written a long time ago. This is actually probably the third book that I've actually been through because I wear them out.

The book is called "The Heart of a Champion." It's by an Olympic champion, Bob Richards. He is also a minister. I call it my sports Bible. It's fantastic from successful sports stories to a strong faith in many avenues.

I watched Bob Richards, who was the first person ever on the Wheaties box, speak and bought one of his first books back, I believe, in 1964. And after I stepped down as the head coach of a college and went on to more of just Olympic coaching in the last few years, I went back to this book just to kind of analyze my mentality, what allowed me to go for 35 years, 10 years as an athlete and 25 years as a coach, and to be dominant in that profession.

It didn't take my long to realize, as a kid, what I was reading what affected my mentality to get to the point that's different than most. In fact, it only took me -- if you open it up to the first page in Chapter 1 to realizing what I was reading, as a kid, that helped shape my life.

It says, "We all want to be successful." It says, "We all want to go to the top. We all have these great aspirations and great goals." It says, "There are certain basic qualities and characteristics that you have to have." Number one, you have to have a will to win. The will to succeed.

As I analyzed great champions, I'm convinced that this is the something that makes the difference between mediocre people and great performers in a world of sport, business or defense. It depends upon whether or not you have this something deep down inside, this will to succeed. It's a will to win and a will to succeed not just a wish to do this.

He says, I know a lot of people who have what I call a wish to succeed. They'd like to go to the top. They daydream about the position they'd like to hold in life, and you find them three or four years later still talking about what they could do if they would only pay the price.

Well, it isn't this kind of thinking that takes you to the top. Wishful thinking or daydreaming is a kind of escapism that will destroy many a person's greatest aspirations.

I think it's equally important you have to have a will that can turn that dream into a reality through actions. And that's very important.

So it didn't take me very long to realize right away what was shaping my philosophy. And then I started thinking about what my goals were in my career at that particular time when I was trying to compete for state championships in the State of Iowa or for the

US championships when I attended Iowa State University, or for the World Championships after the Iowa State University collegiate seasons, or for the Olympic championships.

I thought about, yeah, yeah, I had these goals about wanting to do this or wanting to do that, but is that what really made the difference in my career?

I said no, the goal that I had was a daily goal that made the difference every day once or twice a day or even more. It was a fanatical goal. It was a goal that was very hard to reach. In fact, I never reached that goal.

If this was the wrestling room, and I'm in this wrestling room training today -- and again, this is a little fanatical -- I wanted to push myself so hard that I would collapse. I wanted to push myself to the point of physical and mental exhaustion.

And I always had an agreement with my coaches that said, "Coach, this is my goal. And when you see me pass out over there, just pick me up and carry me to the showers. Revive me. Get me ready for the next practice. But I need to push that hard.

Well, on a daily basis for 10 years I tried to do that. Several times I'd get very close to the point of exhaustion I thought. In fact, I'd even sometimes crawl towards the door, and it just wouldn't happen. I'd always pop up and walk out the door. Usually the last person there.

However, when I got out of the door, that's when I really realized what took place, that I didn't reach my goal for that particular day. So what it did is it got me to go back in the door,

go back in there and try to attempt to do that for another 10 or 15 minutes on a daily basis once or twice a day for 10 years. If you add that up, it means an unbelievable amount of extra discipline and extraordinary training that it gave me over the next.

But all this type of information that I'm giving you, this philosophy, leads to what I call performance. And performance is what everything is based on. Obviously, in this room there's a lot more than just what we're starting from the ground level and building up. That's called building performance.

In fact, in this room there's the second level is what I call repeat performance which means once you get to a certain level of excellence, you try to do it again once you feel comfortable about it.

The one thing I was able to do very well in coaching is I was able to get these people, you people if you're my team, to come back the next year and do it again and again and again.

So you need to work on that mentality that I talked about. It's important to you. Once they got there, they still feel like they need to get there again. It's rewarding. You have to work on that.

A repeat performance means you get the people better for the award winners today to come through again next year. To come through again next year, that's important.

And then to make sure it happens you get somebody else out there to join them. It's kind of like you get the mainstay to come through, which are the award winners here, and let's make somebody

else out there famous for next year.

There's another term called "record performance," and this record performance basically means, guess what, everybody comes through. That's difficult, and that can happen but you have to have a pretty good system. In fact, it's got to be a great system for that to happen. And you never know exactly when it happens. You just kind of get lucky, and I don't believe in luck. But with a great system, things will fall in place.

But with every great performance you have setbacks. Not very many, not very many setbacks. My career -- I went seven years in a row without a loss as an athlete, then I had a loss. It's a setback. It made me rise to greater heights quickly.

As a coach I went 10 years in a row without a loss, but then I had a loss. And that made me go on to greater heights, reform some different goals, eliminate the mistakes that was made.

But my biggest setback probably in my career had nothing to do with athletics. It happened to do with family when I was sophomore in high school. When I was sophomore in high school, I'd just won my first state championship in wrestling and my parents and myself went away for the weekend for a fishing trip. My sister, four years older, was going to join us the next day. She ran my dad's real estate office. And she didn't show up.

The bottom line there, she was raped and murdered right in our own house. The family fell apart because of it. The family was falling apart. It was crumbling right before my own eyes. But something had to be done.

For some reason at that particular time, I just told my parents, because I saw them crumbling, that I wanted to move -- they didn't want to move back into that house. I told them not only did I want to move back into that house, I told them I wanted to move into the bedroom where my sister had lived and had been actually murdered in. It was a giant step forward for our family, and it actually worked very well.

See, setbacks can either make you crumble or they can take you over, or you can beat them. There's no way that you can let them beat you because you've got to go on in life, otherwise you go on in the wrong direction.

There's something there also to be learned. Because I had been warned about this in a nonchalant manner walking to school one day that took her life, but I did nothing at that particular time because it was just boy talk. It was simple. I didn't think on it, but I didn't react. But it affected me to the point where I now have prevention as one of my biggest goals in my own family or in any type of life that I live.

And so because of that, I always take those warning signs and analyze them a little better to try to make certain things not happen, real simple things. My family -- I've got four daughters. Always remind them of things that are basic, like when they get behind the wheel, to buckle up. Even though they know it and they hear and they don't even want to hear it, it's important. That prevention makes a big difference.

But all this philosophy revolves around what I call a



standard of excellence. And you know, wrestling represents that standard of excellence. I know a lot of people have it. Russell. A lot of people don't even -- probably haven't even seen a wrestling match. But for those that have, and for those that have been involved, it's extraordinarily hard. But there's so many disciplines that you have to master, it makes you walk away a better person. Everything else in life is a little bit easier once you had to do this.

It represents a standard of excellence to the point that it's like -- in 1980 my mom was diagnosed with throat cancer, but they couldn't figure out where the origin was. And so they gave her like six months to live. It's like I took her to a higher level of expertise. And within five minutes, this guy could find the source. And he said, "I can save your mom." He gave her 15 more years of quality life just by a standard of excellence, because somebody was a little bit more ready and more scientific than the next.

You know, we've got so many things in America and across the world that we need to do yet. We need to find these cures for cancer, for HIV. And we've got so many things that we have to do right here in the war with terrorism.

America needs great people that is willing to look for that standard of excellence, and this room's full of it. And this room is full of people that can actually make a difference. I'm actually living proof by standing here right now and being here on my own two feet about that standard of excellence.

Not too many years ago, they actually probably called me

the bionic man when I was wrestling because I could whip everybody.

But because of that and the amount of training that I went through, science has afforded me the opportunity to be as healthy as ever. I had 18 surgeries, two artificial hips. I don't know how long my knees are going to be last, but knees will probably be replaced and whatever else because that's the standard of excellence out there.

And it's important because -- you know, you think about things what makes a difference. Remember I said family to family? Well, when my mother was diagnosed with cancer in 1980, she had two grandchildren -- two daughters -- that were very young. Then she had two more from my wife. So she was able to be around four granddaughters. And you've got to remember this was the same woman that her only daughter raped and murdered. That's important. That's a standard of excellence.

But anyway, as strong as I stand up here and talk about standards of excellence, talk about fanaticism and so on and so forth, there's other things that are also real crucial too.

I'm going to end with this because this is what it's all about. I have a daughter named Molly that also competes in sports.

She's a sophomore at the University of Iowa. She swims there. But she also ran track and field in high school.

As a junior she came up to her dad and said -- and I was getting ready to coach the Olympic team in 2000 for the World Trials -- and she said "Dad, can I not go to the Olympic Trials with you because I want to stay and compete in this qualifying event because I want to run in these big relays called the Drake relays." She

says I can run the 800 there and qualify. I've never ran this time but I have one more opportunity and would you give me that opportunity? And I said of course. But I said you better talk to your mom first about it a little bit because we're all going to the Olympic Trials. And of course, the mom said that she could do it.

I want to wind up everything. I want to make sure everything's good, and I want to listen through this cell phone by somebody in the stands while you're competing, and we can give a blow by blow of your race to your dad and so on.

So you know it's -- we worked it out. But I asked her before we left, how come you know you can knock two seconds off your time? How do you feel that? She goes, "Dad, the state champion's in the race, and I'm going to stay up with her. I'm going to stay right on her trail leg" or wherever. Her time is much faster than mine.

Well, you know, that's great. I'd never take that away from somebody. Never take those aspirations especially when they're going to do it through action.

So anyway, we're at the Olympic trials and my wife says, hey, the race is about ready to begin. And she comes over and she gets the cell phone out. And she says okay, they're off. The race is going. Wow, she's staying right up with the state champion. And she's one lap down, she's got one lap to go. She's got to be way ahead of her time because she's usually with the pack of girls. She's way ahead of them. She's up with the state champion. She's right on their heels.

There's about 100 yards to go, and my wife said I did a good job with the crowd because I told them we weren't going to be there and, wow, they're all behind her. They're yelling "Go Molly go. Go Molly go." I'm telling you, as a father -- I mean I've coached a lot of athletes and I got emotional, but when it's your own flesh and blood, wow, it's hard. I usually always cry the whole time she competed.

So anyway, my wife tells me, she goes "Wow, she might win this race. She's obviously going to qualify, she's four to five seconds ahead of time." Then all of a sudden my wife starts shaking the cell phone. I said oh no, battery must be dead. My wife thought that. And I had said these things are overrated, but we know they're not.

Then all of a sudden they came back on. The person on the other end choked up and couldn't talk. I saw my wife kind of turn white a little bit though. And here were the words that came out of her mouth, she says, "Molly fell." Wow, it just crushed me. One meter from the finish line she fell. She got disqualified actually.

She tried to get up and she crawled over the line and got disqualified. She didn't qualify.

I looked into it. She didn't fall. She ran to exhaustion. She collapsed. She ran every ounce of energy in her body out of her body to the point of exhaustion. It bothered me. I didn't know how to handle it because her dad, he won his every wrestling match except one or two in his whole life. And all of his athletes that he trained, they won 93-94 percent of their matches.

I didn't know how to handle it.

So I went back to the sports Bible because I look for answers there. It didn't take me long to find the answer. And this is what it's all about. It says page 25, it says, "And another point," this may sound strange to you, it says, "do your level best no matter what." This may sound like a contradiction in terms after I what I just said. But would I surprise you if I told you that some of the greatest champions I've known are fellows and girls who never won a gold medal. They were people who, even though they didn't win, they looked up and performed to the highest within themselves. They did their best and outshadowed many of those who have one gold medals. That was my answer.

In wrestling you get your hand raised and the other person walks off and doesn't. I tell you, when you lay it on the line, those people get their hand raised. Molly got her hand raised no doubt.

And actually, my greatest contribution -- I have four daughters -- is to put four contributing daughters out into society.

Why? Because if you look at what's going on in the world, if you look at freedom, if you look Iraq, if you look at Afghanistan, if you look at all these places, how many chances have all these people had to be raised in good family support. Had they been in that family support, they'd have a different mentality.

And just think, if my four daughters go out there and then they have kids, and then those kids have kids, and if they keep

using the same philosophy, wow, have I been a contributor. That's fantastic. That's really my biggest contribution. And the world needs this.

So anyway, it was an honor for me to be able to come and speak. I got a chance to meet with Donald Rumsfeld last week for about an hour or so, and I really enjoyed it. And you know, when he stood up at a banquet just recently and said, "I love wrestling," he won me over. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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