

## Eviction of the Barbell Club: An Update

### Notice of Eviction

The Barbell Club was notified in a letter dated April 29, 2005 and received May 2nd from Bob Thompson, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance and the Treasurer of the GT Athletic Association, that the Georgia Tech Barbell Club was to vacate its facility in O'Keefe Gym by July 1, 2005 in order that its space be made available for a locker room for the women's volleyball team.

This administrative decision requiring the Barbell Club to vacate its present facility of 26 years in order to accommodate the needs of a dozen volleyball varsity players and hurt more than seventy-five times that number of students who are members of the Barbell Club is clearly unfair, unjust, and a serious disregard of student rights and their welfare, especially when there are obvious alternatives (to be discussed later) which reasonably and satisfactorily will accommodate both groups.

The Administration insisted from the beginning of discussions last September that a study made by an independent consulting firm showed that, to comply with Title IX requirements, the volleyball team must have a dressing/shower room at the site where they practice and compete, which is in O'Keefe Gym. Their present dressing/shower room is located next door in the Coliseum. Thus the Barbell Club has to vacate its entire basement space in O'Keefe Gym basement, all 4,337 square feet, to make room for the volleyball team.

Last fall, when it was first learned by the Barbell Club that there were plans to evict and hence destroy the Barbell Club, the response and support of the Georgia Tech community - students, faculty, and alumni - were overwhelming in favor that a solution be found so that the Barbell Club would continue to exist (even if in less space in its basement facility in O'Keefe Gym), and that a solution be found that would accommodate both the locker room needs of the volleyball team and the existence of the Barbell Club.

Since no definite date was given last fall specifying when an eviction may take place, the Barbell Club was uncertain if the decision was under consideration or was final. It hoped that a solution would be found, and couldn't believe it possible that a decision would be made that is so

detrimental to more than nine hundred students to accommodate a dozen varsity athletes.

While the volleyball team, of course, has the sole right to decide where it will play and dress, when it affects the existence of the Barbell Club one wonders why the volleyball team chooses to continue to play in O'Keefe Gym, a small former high school gym with limited seating which is usually inadequate to accommodate the large number of spectators, and it is impossible to increase its seating capacity. Why not play its games in the Coliseum where there is already a dressing room for both the home and visiting team, and excellent seating for more than 10,000? Since the volleyball season begins in August and that of basketball does not begin until November, there would be little conflict in sharing the same facility. If better locker room facilities are desired, then they could be constructed either in or onto the Coliseum. A study recently made by the Athletic Association has estimated that the cost to construct new locker room facilities in the basement of O'Keefe Gym will be \$482,609. It would save the Athletic Association nearly one-half million dollars if the volleyball team chose to play again in the Coliseum as it did in 1994. But again this is for the volleyball team to decide.

#### History of the Georgia Tech Barbell Club

The GT Barbell Club was chartered and formed as a student organization in the mid-1950's. It has been a campus tradition for half a century serving nearly ten thousand students in the last decade alone. Even though there is a membership fee of \$50 a year, it is by far the largest student club at Georgia Tech.

During its existence the Barbell Club has been an outstanding example of a student-lead activity. There has never been a significant disciplinary problem or injury worthy of note.

For the last 26 years it has occupied space in the basement of O'Keefe Gym, an area of more than 4,300 square feet, which includes eight rooms of varying size, a shower and dressing room, two rest rooms, and an office. Its equipment is the state of the art and all commercial grade. Excluding the cost of the purchase of new equipment, more than \$75,000 has been spent by the Club in the last eighteen months on renovation and improvements of its facilities.

The Barbell Club has received no funds from the school during the last 23 years. Its total source of operating income has been from the payment of membership dues and from interest on its investments. The total income for the last ten years has averaged slightly over \$50,000 a year and all transactions are by check, records maintained, and audited quarterly by the Officers of the Club.

The rosters of BC members for the last ten year are available. They show that during the last eight years the yearly membership has averaged 1,029 members with approximately 85% students and the remainder GT faculty, staff, and alumni members. (Only alumni who were BC members when a student are permitted to join). The last two years the membership has averaged 852 members since the weight facilities at the Student Athletic Complex (SAC) were closed due to construction during the last two summer semesters. As a service the Barbell Club graciously opened its facility at O'Keefe during that time to all GT students to workout without paying the usual membership fee. Hence no new memberships were received during the last two summer semesters accounting for the decrease in membership.

The Availability of the new GT Community Recreation Center (CRC).

The Administration has maintained that, after the Barbell Club is evicted, its members could workout at the CRC and continue as an student club. This proposal, although it may appear reasonable to those who do not understand the Barbell Club, weight training, and its activities, is totally unacceptable to its members since it fails to recognize that this would destroy the Barbell Club. There is no space in the CRC for the Barbell Club to have its own workout area. Thus there would be no purpose or practical reason for the Barbell Club to exist if it did not have its own facility. Why would anyone join? How would its members be any different from those of all the other students using the CRC?

The members of the Barbell Club oppose working out at the CRC for the following reasons:

1. The weight and aerobics area at the CRC is tremendously crowded at peak times making a workout extremely difficult;
2. Located on the west campus the CRC is not convenient to the thousands of students who live on the east campus and thus it requires a 15-minute walk or bus trip each way;

3. The Barbell Club has a much larger variety of workout equipment that is not available at the CRC;
4. The CRC is closed six hours a day and nine hours a day on Fridays and Saturdays and is closed on certain school breaks and holidays, while the Barbell Club, being a key club, is available to a member 24 hours a day 365 days a year.
5. The members of the Barbell Club are the most serious students on campus interested in weight training, some training for competition. (BC student member Brian Jacob competed as a member of the U.S. Olympic weight lifting team in 1992 in Barcelona and in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.) Serious weight lifting requires the dropping of very heavy weights to the floor. This is not permitted at the CRC. Many of those working out with weights at the CRC are 'novices' and unknowingly interfere with serious lifters.
6. Very important, the Barbell Club is a student club, which provides socializing and a valuable learning experience. As a Club the members decide what new equipment to purchase, set rules, police the behavior of the members, select what music to play and which television channel to watch, what dress code to formulate, etc. This would not be possible at the CRC.
7. The existence of recreational facilities on the east campus is nearly none. The Barbell Club is about the only one available to those students who live on the east campus, especially in bad weather. Several years ago discussions were initiated by the Barbell Club Advisor with the Director of SAC, William Stanphill, about the possibility of SAC taking over the Barbell Club and having it as an east campus extension of SAC; however, the proposal was never pursued by SAC.

In summary, it is not considered possible for the CRC, as fine a facility as it is, to provide what the Barbell Club does for its members, just as a resident hall cannot provide the same living experience as does a fraternity or sorority. The CRC is different; it is an outstanding community center but not a student club. Off campus the environment and atmosphere of an LA Fitness Center is vastly different than that found in a Gold's Gym. There is this same difference on campus between the CRC and the Barbell Club. The former is an outstanding facility for the GT community while the latter is for the serious weight lifter. Most members of the Barbell Club use the facilities of the CRC except for the weight training and aerobics areas.

Mike Edwards, Director of the CRC, has graciously offered his assistance, and this is appreciated, but for the above reasons the Barbell Club has felt from the beginning that discussions would be meaningless if the Barbell Club did not exist with its own facility. There are no reasons to dialogue about the future activities of the Barbell Club if it is to be a corpse. However, the Barbell Club would appreciate ongoing advice from the CRC on weight training, conditioning, and safety considerations. The Barbell Club will be happy to make its facility available as it did when SAC was closed the last two summer semesters for construction, and to all those who use the CRC whenever the CRC is closed for school breaks or holidays.

#### Eviction Deadline and the Disposal of BC Equipment

The memorandum stated: "Effective July 1, 2005 the space currently occupied by the Barbell Club will be permanently reassigned as recommended in the Volleyball Locker Room Project Committee report. The Barbell Club is to vacate the O'Keefe space prior to July 1, 2005."

There are immediately two serious problems if the Barbell Club is to vacate its 26 year facility, certainly in so short a time, namely by July 1st:

1. The BC equipment consist of heavy and expensive exercise machines (61 by count), benches (25 by count), tons and tons of weights, bars, racks, aerobic equipment, hundreds of rubber floor mats (they cost \$24 each) that cover nearly the entire space, lockers, a desk, cleaning equipment, air-conditioning units purchased by the Club, fans, television sets, radio sound equipment, etc. This equipment, purchased over the last several years, when new exceeded more than \$200,000 in cost and now is still worth tens of thousands of dollars. It would be a tremendously difficult job to find a way of quickly disposing of the above. If it is to be sold, a buyer must be found, and then to remove it would require the dismantling and its transportation out of the facility, an enormous job. To expect that this must be done by July 1st is unreasonable. The question is asked: Since the plans for the construction of a locker room facility for the volleyball team was essentially completed by the first of this year and known by the Administration, why wasn't the Barbell Club notified earlier by the Administration and was given only 60 days notice before the ordered eviction? Why did it wait until May 2nd when most students were leaving for the summer?
2. All the Barbell Club members when they joined pre-paid for a membership through the end of the summer semester. To be fair to them the Barbell Club

would be obligated to refund the unused portion of the dues from July 1 to August 5th. This would be a difficult task.

#### Concerns Expressed by the Administration

Although in its 26 year history in O'Keefe Gym there has never been a known injury in the Barbell Club, the Administration has expressed its concerns about injuries and liability. The Barbell Club takes the concerns seriously and has addressed them. Besides spending over \$75,000 for renovations, the Barbell Club in the last eighteen months has:

1. Purchased a \$1,000,000 liability policy with \$5,000 medical coverage should a member or non-member be injured in the Barbell Club.
2. Contracted with General Recreation Corporation to have a technician come to the Barbell Club monthly, more often if needed, and inspect and make repairs.
3. Hired a professional cleaning service to clean and disinfect the Club five times a week.
4. Spent \$4,100 this spring to have panic bars and emergency exit lights installed on the doors of the Barbell Club.

The Administration has stated that the Barbell Club should have and pay someone to be in the Club at all times to instruct and respond in case of an injury or an emergency. Since the Barbell Club is available to the members 24 hours a day, this is not practical, nor is it really considered necessary. The same argument could be made for a fraternity or sorority where serious injuries have taken place; the Barbell Club has had none. Steps are being taken to insure that there will never be only one person alone in the Club so the BC is considering closing the Club from 1:00 AM to 5:00 AM to reduce this possibility. There is an emergency phone in the Barbell Club and plans are to instruct its members in how to properly respond to an emergency.

### An Appeal to Higher Authority

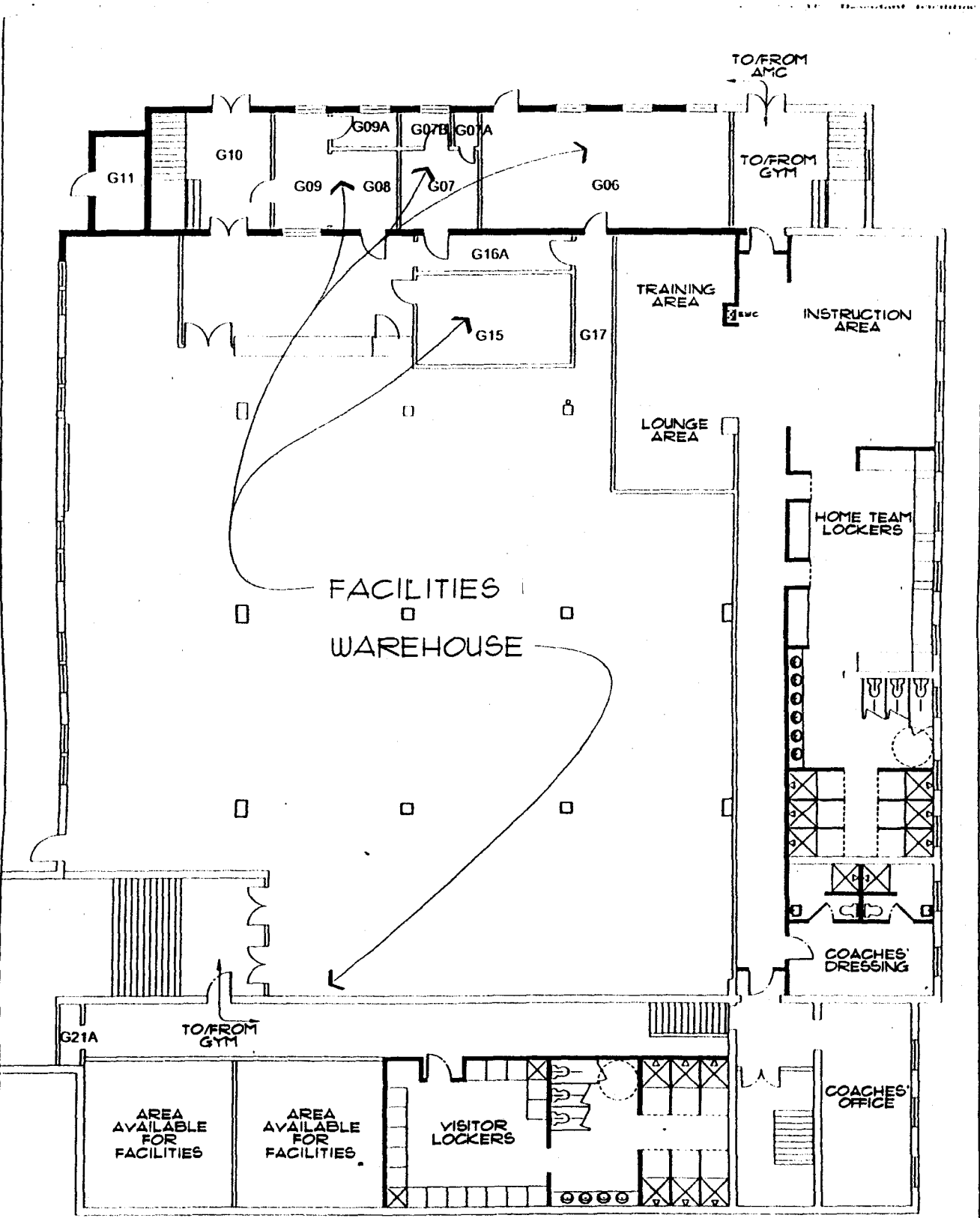
It is obvious to members of the Barbell Club that the Administration, instead of looking for ways to help the Barbell Club, it is going out of its way to try to create and find arguments to justify its eviction and destruction of the Barbell Club.

Since the eviction notice is so damaging to so many Georgia Tech students, and, since the above solution is so obvious and satisfactory in accommodating the needs of all concerned, the Barbell Club will appeal the eviction decision based on the believed student right to the existence of a 50-year chartered Georgia Tech student club and the perceived duty of the Administration to support student initiatives that are deemed proper and beneficial to students' welfare and experience. Its appeal will be first to the Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance. If unsuccessful the appeal will be to the GT Athletic Board, the Student Government, to the President, and finally to the Board of Regents. Since the eviction and resulting destruction of the Barbell Club is so obviously unfair, especially since there is a simple and fair solution, if deemed necessary this appeal will be communicated to the Tech community by publication in the Technique, the Atlanta newspapers, radio, TV, the internet, by letter, and personal contact.

The final bottom line is this: It is egregiously unfair to satisfy the needs of a dozen scholarship varsity athletes at the expense of more than seventy-five times that number of Georgia Tech students who are Barbell Club members, especially when the needs of both can be so easily and fairly satisfied. This is the heart of the issue. It is a question of fairness, student rights, and of

following a democratic process. A student club should have the right to appeal a decision made unilaterally by one or two administrators. Title IX has been cited at many universities across the nation to justify the destruction of men's varsity athletic programs. More than half of all collegiate varsity wrestling programs have been abolished. The eviction and destruction of the Georgia Tech Barbell Club may be the first time Title IX has been used to justify the abolition of a sports club. It should not happen!





# ATTACHMENT I

BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN - O'KEEFE GYM  
 SCALE: 3/8" = 1'-0"

NOT ISSUED FOR CONSTRUCTION

PROJECT NO. 033 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN LOCKER/DRESSING FACILITIES FOR VOLLEYBALL	SCALE: 3/8" = 1'-0" (FOR B.S.)	REVISIONS/ISSUE DESCRIPTION 1. 033 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN 2. 033 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN	DATE 11-11-83	DRAWN BY J. J. J.	CHECKED BY J. J. J.	APPROVED BY J. J. J.	GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY OFFICE OF FACILITIES DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION 900 FARMER ST., N.W., ATLANTA, GA 30332 TELEPHONE (404) 894-4000
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