

September 17, 2004

The Georgia Tech Barbell Club

At the request of the Georgia Tech Athletic Association and with the compliance of the GT Administration at a called meeting on September 16th the GT Barbell Club Officers and Advisor were notified that the Barbell Club is to be evicted from its entire (eight) workout rooms and its dressing and shower facility in the basement of O'Keefe Gym where the Barbell Club has been located for the last 25 years so that the Women's Volleyball team may have a dressing/shower room in O'Keefe, although they now have an excellent dressing/shower facility in the Coliseum. The effect of such action will be to destroy the Barbell Club which has existed at Tech for nearly 50 years. The Barbell Club averages approximately 900 student members a year plus an additional 100 or more faculty, staff, and alumni members. Thus the action by the AA and the Administration will be to seriously hurt 900 students in order to accommodate the needs of a dozen varsity student-athletes when there are other solutions that will satisfy the needs of the Women's Volleyball team and that would leave the Barbell Club intact. This eviction is unfair, unjust, and unnecessary. At this meeting called by the GT Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance the AA and the Administration refused to consider any alternatives other than eviction. The topic of liability concerns was discussed by the Administration officials as one reason for the eviction and thus the destruction of the Barbell Club, this in spite of the fact that there has not been one known major injury in the Barbell Club in its 25 year existence. The liability argument carried to its logical conclusion could be used as a reason for eliminating, say, the Lacrosse Club, the Wrestling Club, in fact all sports clubs at Georgia Tech. In summary, the Barbell Club regretfully has no alternative than to conduct a massive information campaign to inform the greater Georgia Tech community of the injustice and widespread harm to students of this eviction instigated by the Athletic Association.

The Athletic Association argued that the Women's Volleyball program must have the Barbell Club space in the basement of O'Keefe Gym in order to comply with the NCAA and Title IX requirements that there be equal facilities for women athletes. As already stated, the volleyball team has excellent dressing and shower facilities (and also for the visiting team) in the Coliseum so such an argument is a ruse in order to acquire additional space in O'Keefe Gym at the expense of the Barbell Club. And then, of course, if the volleyball team really wants dressing and shower facilities in O'Keefe Gym there is ample land and space where they could be built by modifying or adding to the present structure of O'Keefe Gym and it would not affect the Barbell Club. But why can't the volleyball team continue to dress and shower in the Coliseum where it has done so for years? Or, if it insists on having a dressing/shower facility in the O'Keefe Gym then why must it take the entire Barbell Club site with its eight (8) rooms instead of taking only two (2) large rooms which would suffice? One argument by the AA was that compliance requires that the volleyball team have dressing/shower facilities where it plays? Where is there such a regulation? The Georgia Tech softball team does not dress and shower where it plays.

The following will expand on the above:

The Georgia Tech Barbell Club was founded in the mid-1950's so it is nearly fifty years old. The Club was initially given one small room in the basement of the Tech YMCA on North Avenue (now the Alumni House). It was then moved to the basement of Matheson Dormitory and later to the basement of the Commons Building on the West Campus. In September 1979 George Slayton was selected by the Dean of Students, Jim Dull, to be the Advisor of the Club. He was notified less than a month later that the Housing Office had acquired the space and that the Barbell Club with its then 15 members would be required to relocate to a single room in the basement of O'Keefe Gym where it has been for the last 25 years.

Today the Barbell Club has at O'Keefe 8 workout rooms, a dressing and shower room, 2 rest rooms, and an office. For the last 10 years the membership has averaged over 900 student members and over 100 faculty, staff, and alumni (former student members). Thus the Barbell Club is by far the largest student club at Georgia Tech. Membership dues to join the Barbell Club are only \$50 per year (12 months) for students and \$125 per year for faculty, staff, and alumni. Each member receives his/her own key which permits the member access to workout 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (including all holidays and school breaks). The Barbell Club receives no financial aid from the school. It does receive in membership dues in excess of \$50,000 a year and has done so for more than 10 years. The vast majority of the income is used for the purchase of new equipment and to continually improve the Club facility. All income and expenditures must be approved by the Student Officers and the financial records are audited quarterly by them. Because of the size of the operation, both facility-wise and financially, and to provide continuity of records and procedures, the Club has needed and depended heavily on the Club Advisor. For 23 years this was George Slayton. Two years ago he was informed that Georgia Tech required all student club Advisors to be an employee of the school. Since he had retired in 1995 after 27 years of employment with the Georgia Tech Athletic Association, he could no longer be the Advisor but was informed that, just as some student clubs at Tech hire coaches, he could remain in an active role with the Barbell Club as a Manager. His responsibilities now have been in the area of membership and finances. The Barbell Club then selected Micah Wise, an employee of the Athletic Association, as the new Club Advisor. Micah was a longtime member of the Barbell Club and his job at the Athletic Association was in facilities and he had responsibilities for the maintenance and improvements of the Coliseum and the O'Keefe Gym. Last fall Micah terminated his employment with the Athletic Association to spend full time with his own fast growing business. Not being able to be the Club's Advisor, because of Micah's expertise in facilities and his knowledge of health equipment, the Club selected him as a second Manager of the Barbell Club, responsible for all facility aspects of the Club, ranging from hiring and supervising a cleaning service to the total renovation of the Club's facility. As a result, since last January 1st the Barbell Club has spent in excess of \$55,000 on renovation of the Club and this summer spent an additional \$15,000 for the purchase and installation of an air-conditioning system for the upper area of the Club (located next to the interstate). The cash value of all the workout equipment (strength and aerobic) of the Club is hard to determine but is easily in excess of \$150,000 and is unsurpassed in quality

and variety by any weight/aerobic training facility on campus. If one has not visited the Barbell Club in the last year he/she is urged to do so.

Recently the Barbell Club selected Dr. Thomas Morley of the Department of Mathematics and a long time member of the Barbell Club to be its Advisor.

Ten years ago Lawton Hydrick, at that time in charge of all facilities of the Athletic Association, indicated the desire of the AA to take the upper half of the Barbell Club basement facility at O'Keefe Gym to be used as a dressing room, shower, and training room for the Women's Volleyball team. It was pointed out to him by the Officers and the Advisor of the Barbell Club that this would mean the loss of five of the eight workout rooms and additionally its dressing and shower facilities. Thus the Barbell Club would be essentially destroyed. It was also pointed out that there were alternatives for the Women's Volleyball team that would solve their facility needs and that would not impact the Barbell Club. The AA complied when it learned that the members of the Club were incensed at the thought of the possibility of the closing of the Barbell Club which would seriously hurt nearly 1,000 students, faculty, staff, and alumni to satisfy the need of a dozen varsity student-athletes when there were reasonable and good alternatives which would not adversely affect the Barbell Club. The students members were planning to "march to the President's Office", and to take their case to the Student Body, the Technique, the Student Government, the fraternities and sororities, and to Georgia Tech alumni. It was in their minds simply an issue of fairness and being sympathetic to wholesome student desires and needs, especially when alternatives were possible. Lawton Hydrick admitted privately at the time that the AA could not stand such bad publicity and hence the AA dropped its plans to evict or to acquire more than half the space of the Barbell Club.

Most of the members of the Barbell Club are very serious and even passionate about their weight and aerobic training so it is clear that the students members will react as indicated above should the school decide unfairly to ignore the desire of hundreds of students and destroy the barbell Club in order to satisfy the need of the Women's Volleyball team, especially when there are today other good solutions which would not affect adversely the Barbell Club and would benefit the Women's Volleyball program.

The Barbell Club has performed meaningful community service through the years. For more than a dozen years the Barbell Club has donated \$100 a month to the Paul Anderson Youth Home in Vidalia, GA. The Home takes in about 20 troubled teenage boys at a time who would otherwise be in a teenage correctional institution and leads them toward a productive life. (Paul Anderson, now deceased, was a great weight lifter and Olympic gold medal winner.) To date the Club has contributed approximately \$15,000 to the Home. For more than a decade the Barbell Club has provided free memberships to all Georgia Tech policemen to assist them to be physically fit. The last two summers because of construction work the weight/aerobic facility at SAC was unavailable to those with SAC privileges. The Barbell Club during this time opened its facility at O'Keefe Gym to anyone from SAC to use the Barbell Club facility without having to pay Club membership

dues. The Barbell Club will be happy to be of service in the same fashion any time that CRC is closed for a holiday or break.

It was argued by the Administration at the called meeting that the students who workout at the Barbell Club could do so at the Campus Recreational Center (CRC). The members of the Barbell Club strongly oppose this proposal for the following reasons:

1. The CRC is not open twenty-four hours a day as is the Barbell Club. The CRC is open from 6 AM to 12 midnight Sunday through Thursday and closes at 9 PM on Fridays and Saturdays. There are a good number of student members of the Barbell Club who, after studying, workout after midnight. There are also a number of members who begin working out at 5 AM before going to class or work. Additionally, the CRC closes on many holidays (such as Labor Day 2004) and when school is not in session. Being a key club the Barbell Club never closes.
2. For the many students who reside on the East campus in resident halls, fraternities, and sororities nearby recreational facilities are almost non-existent, but the Barbell Club is only a couple of minutes walk away. For them the CRC is nearly a mile walk away or would require a 15 to 20 minute bus ride each way and it could be in cold and/or rainy weather. Some of the members of the Barbell Club work in the main O'Keefe building. They use the Barbell Club facility to workout over their lunch break. Time prohibits their doing so if they must travel across campus to the CRC.
3. While the CRC has beautiful weight and aerobic equipment, it does not have the variety of equipment that the Barbell Club has. Some of the members of the Barbell Club train for weight lifting competition. Brian Jacob, a Georgia Tech student and a member of the Barbell Club, was a member of the U.S. Olympic weight lifting team and participated in the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992 and in Atlanta in 1996. To train for weight lifting competition (or simply for personal development) there has to be an area where the lifters are permitted to lift an Olympic bar with weights, preferably in kilogram units, over their heads and then, if desired or needed, to drop the bar crashing to the floor. The Barbell Club has such an area while the CRC does not. Additionally, some of the student members of the Barbell Club are serious about body building, either for personal improvement or for competition. To do so it is customary, when desired, for men to workout without a shirt. This is permitted in the Barbell Club but is not in the CRC. Background music (usually loud) while working out is extremely important to students. At the Barbell Club a member can select the radio station which plays the music desired and it is heard throughout the Club. There is also the opportunity in the aerobics area of the Club to select the television program desired. These options are not possible at the CRC.
4. The weight and aerobic area at the CRC, as stated above, is outstanding. However at times it can be crowded and noisy. It has the atmosphere of a commercial spa, which is fine for those who so want. Many students who are serious about their weight training, though, prefer the atmosphere of a gym and not workout in an center where many of those doing so do not know how to lift and thus interrupt one's workout routine. The strong desire of serious lifters to workout in a gym environment is substantiated by the fact that, although almost all the student members of the Barbell Club are eligible to workout at the

CRC (and many use its other outstanding facilities), they choose to pay to join the Barbell Club. Last year the Barbell Club received over \$51,000 in membership dues, and during the first three weeks of the new membership year which began on August 9th over 400 Georgia Tech students, faculty, staff, and alumni have paid so far over \$27,000 for a 2004-2005 membership. This should show convincingly their vote for the desire that the Barbell Club continue to exist as a service organization to students at Georgia Tech.

5. Very important, the Barbell Club is a club where friendship are developed. This would be much more difficult in a large facility as the CRC.

6. If there is no Barbell Club there will be hundreds of students who now workout at the Barbell Club who will then have to workout at the CRC and this could cause at peak times congestion in the weight area.

At the meeting there was talk of moving the Barbell Club to the CRC. First, there is no space at the CRC for the Barbell Club and further, what reason would there be for the Barbell Club to exist if it had no facility of its own? The Barbell Club members would again strongly oppose this possibility for many of the reasons just given. The student members in particular like the present location on the East campus; they like the opportunity to workout any time of the day or night and its never being closed on holidays or breaks; they like the club and gym atmosphere; they like the equipment and the ability to select what new equipment to purchase; they like to be able to drop weights, play music they select as loud as they want and the men members permitted to remove their shirts. It is believed that this would be lost if the Barbell Club were a part of the CRC.

If the Office of the Dean of Students, because of the large number of students who participate in the activities of the Barbell Club and the large finances involved, desires closer supervision and involvement, then the Barbell Club would be happy to cooperate fully in this regard with the Director of Student Organizations.

The facility needs of the Women's Volleyball team are certainly valid and should to be addressed. The program has gained national prominence in the last few years. They presently have good dressing and shower facilities in the nearby Coliseum (certainly better than they would have using the present dressing and showers facilities of the Barbell Club in O'Keefe Gym unless major renovations are made). Their matches are played in the O'Keefe Gym. They therefore would like dressing and shower facilities in the O'Keefe Gym. The problem is that there is no space unless the Barbell Club is evicted and its space taken by the Women's Volleyball team. (Actually a small portion of the basement space recently vacated by ORGT could be assigned to the volleyball team if some construction work was done, however the area is presently being renovated for occupancy by GT Facilities, and so this possibility is believed unlikely.) There is, though, sufficient land where a dressing room and shower facility could be built as an addition to the O'Keefe Gym building. The volleyball players like to play in the O'Keefe Gym since, because the site is small, the fans in the stands are close to the action and this encourages the home team. There are, though, serious problems with playing in the O'Keefe Gym. The most serious is that the Gym often does not provide sufficient seating for the large number of fans who wish to attend the matches and tournaments, thus some fans are turned away.

Additionally the bench seats are not very comfortable. There are other problems, specifically, the rest rooms are not adequate, the lobby area is much too small and restricted, and there is little space for a concession stand. The Fire Marshall would likely object to fans occasionally standing in the aisles of the stands and the fact that only two exits are made available for over a thousand fans in case of fire or an emergency.

At the called meeting the Barbell Club Officers, in a spirit of cooperation, offered (subject to the approval of the Club's membership) to give \$25,000 to the AA to assist the volleyball team in meeting its dressing/shower room needs. There was no indication by the AA that this would be accepted. Also, since the volleyball team now occupies the same facility, the Barbell Club offered the team free membership privileges.

Obviously the best solution to the above problem and one that does not affect the existence of the Barbell Club is to move the Women's Volleyball games back to the Coliseum where there would be ample seating and room to grow, and where there are already good dressing and showers facilities. The moving would satisfy any allegation by the NCAA and Title IX that the Women's Volleyball program did not have equal facilities with, say, the Men's and Women's Basketball programs. The volleyball season and the basketball season do not, for the most part, overlap. If there were conflicts in practice or match times the volleyball team could still practice and play in the O'Keefe Gym as presently.

In summary, for more than twenty-five years the GT Barbell Club has provided a worthy and appreciated need for thousands of Georgia Tech students. It is a beautiful example of a student-run initiative and activity and a learning experience for its Officers. Never in this time has there been any serious problems or injuries, and rarely even minor ones. As discussed above, the desire of the Athletic Association for exclusive use of the O'Keefe Gym by the Women's Volleyball program and the decision of the Administration to evict the Barbell Club from the facility it has occupied for 25 years (and thus to destroy it), would be a decision that, while it may questionably benefit a dozen student-athletes, would be at the expense of seriously affecting 900 plus student members of the Barbell Club. This would be totally unfair, ill advised, and insensitive to the desires and needs of many Georgia Tech students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Should the Athletic Association not reconsider the eviction and look at alternative solutions, the Barbell Club regretfully has no alternative but to vigorously oppose this injustice with a massive campus-wide information campaign so that the entire Georgia Tech community (the student body, faculty, alumni, including the President, the Technique, Student Government, Interfraternity Council, and Athletic Board), will know and understand what is being done to the Barbell Club and pray that, because the injustice and other alternatives are so obvious, overwhelming disapproval by the Tech community will cause the eviction notice to be rescinded and other viable solutions found. Thank you.

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