

98th Annual Old Boys Dinner – Pretoria Boys High School, Speech by Geordie Collaros

Good evening Judge Edwin Cameron, Chairmen of the Old Boys Association, SGB Members, Mr Reeler and distinguished Old Boys. What an honour and privilege it is to be standing here as the first speaker as we celebrate 116 years of what was, is, and always will be Pretoria Boys High School – The place we all learned to live.

My name is Geordie Collaros and I have the privilege of being the head prefect of this great school for the year 2017.

I'd like to tell you a story about a rugby team who hadn't had their greatest season to date. The starting XV lined up and ran onto their home field accompanied by the chanting of the schools war cries. It was freezing and the boys were playing a team they had not beaten in their schools history. Despite the so far, unsuccessful season and the glaringly obvious fact that they were playing a team they had never beaten, the stands were filled with over 500 of the schools boys seated closely in order to stay warm. Just when the conditions couldn't get any worse, it started to pour with rain... 30 minutes in, the underdog side were 3-0 up and all 500 odd boys were still on the stands despite the freezing cold and pouring rain... It was looking good until the lightning siren sounded and play was stopped immediately.

45 minutes the players waited in the change rooms, anxious for play to continue and not to be cancelled. The clearance siren sounded and it was time for the second half. As the team walked in single file toward the field, something amazing was taking place. All 500 boys had stayed throughout the lightning and pouring rain. Drenched with the continuous downfall, they faced the oncoming team and proceeded with their war cries...

The second half continued and the team were 6-3 up with the final play taking place on our 5 meter line. The attacking team set up their key player to run at the centre channel where I and the inside centre prepared... He ran at the inside centre and was tackled, stopped dead in his tracks, which forced a knock on... The tackler was concussed from the impact BUT Pretoria Boys High School had beaten Westville for the first time in history.

It was at this point where I and the 14 players beside me realised it wasn't about the rugby and it never was. It was about Boys High! It was about 500 boys supporting their school through lightning and freezing cold and even when given the option to go home they stayed. It's what we call Boys High Magic. The badge we wear on our blazers and ties shows no preference to accolade and achievement but rather hinds 100 plus years of boys who have not only passed through these hallowed halls but also became men whilst doing so. It's not a badge, it's a portal through time representing those who have past, are passing and will pass through this great school!

Almost 5 years ago, I stood in ore as I laid eyes upon the main school building for the very first time. Greeted by two giant pine trees that stand strong and tall like guards of a priceless treasure, I knew this was the home of giants. It was the knowledge of past sporting success, academic excellence or cultural achievement which left my heart skipping beats... No, it was something much greater, something I could not explain at the time however, it's what grabbed me and it's the reason I stand here today.

On my very first day of Form 1, I was lucky enough to be confronted face to face with a prefect who I believed to be the definition of fear. We were quite convinced that he was a convicted murderer of form ones and there I was next on his list... However what he said proved to be some of the most profound conversation I had ever been a part of. He asked me how many bricks there were on the main school building and as you can imagine I had no idea! What he said next laid the foundation to my five years at this school. He said: There are enough teachers in the school to do well with our work, there enough blades of grass on brooks to beat Affies, but most importantly there are enough bricks in the main school building to be the greatest school in the world!

I've spent around three quarters of the last five years within the four fences which surround this gem of a place. 28800 hours to be exact. I've spent more time here than my own house in Johannesburg for the last half decade. For the better part of these five years, Boys High has become my home away from home. In conclusion I've written a poem and it goes as follows:

In My Time Here, by Geordie Collaros

I've shed tears of joy and happiness to,

I've won some fixtures but lost a few.

I've broken bones and on Brooks I've bled,

This represents our flags colour RED.

I've made no friends which goes and shows... how

I've only made brothers, the family I chose.

I've learned that when I fall I must get up and fight,

This represents our flags colour WHITE.

I've had successes and failures as well,

My time here at Boys High approaches a final bell.

Virtute et Labore I have seen,

This represents our flags colour GREEN.

The home of giants, The school on the hill,

It's just a school so what's the big deal?

116 years a school, a home,

Never will you ever have to walk alone.

*Welcome to the RED, the White and the GREEN,
The Boys High Giants, The Boys High Machine.
How many bricks in the main building I was told,
Enough to be the greatest school in the world!*