

FOREVER GREEN

Big Green alumni head coaches extend their legacies that began with their days donning the Dartmouth uniform.





Football Head Coach Buddy Teevens '79 celebrates a 38-7 victory over Harvard during the 1988 season.

Barry Harwick was doing just fine, thank you.

Harwick had been head coach of track and cross country at Bentley College since 1980, guiding the team to six conference cross country championships in 12 years while producing New England champions and All-Americans, and earning various coach-of-the-year honors. His wife, Marcia Kelly, had a good job at Tufts University and the couple was enjoying life in the shadow of Boston with their one-year-old son.

Everything changed when the call came from Hanover. Vin Lananna had moved on to Stanford, Harwick had interviewed for the open Big Green cross country and track job, and would the 1977 Dartmouth graduate be interested?

“If a coach is smart, they negotiate the hardest when they are going to a new job,” Harwick said in his Alumni Gym office. “I didn’t do any of that.

“I was so eager to come back here that I was out the door three days later and living in the Hotel Coolidge.”

Not to demean a local institution, but suffice it to say Harwick’s accommodations offered a clue as to just how excited he was about running back to the school where he once held the record in the mile.

Buddy Teevens, who led the Dartmouth football team to this year’s Ivy League championship, could relate. He graduated from the College in 1979 and has returned to the Big Green as head coach not once, but twice.

Bob Gaudet spent nine years as the head coach of men’s ice hockey at Brown before he packed up his young family and took over in the same position at his alma mater in 1997, an extremely rare in-league move for a head coach.

Dartmouth alpine ski coach Peter Dodge’s move wasn’t as unique. But when the opportunity arose, he didn’t hesitate at the chance to return to the only school he dreamed about attending while developing into a world class skier in St. Johnsbury, Vt., just over an hour north of the Skiway.

In addition to the four head coaches who attended Dartmouth there are nine Big Green assistant coaches who have spent time in the stacks in Baker Library, who love the traditions of Winter Carnival, who know the way to Dick’s House, who can tell you how to get to the Bema and yes, who probably know frat row the way only a Dartmouth student would. In the parlance of sports, they have walked the walk.

That has proven invaluable, according to Dodge, a former U.S. Ski Team member and professional champion.

“Although I had enjoyed success at a lot of levels when I started at Dartmouth, I was kind of a rookie coach,” he explained. “But I was of Dartmouth. I had done this myself. I knew what it’s like. Things have changed a lot, but a lot of things have stayed the same.”

It all starts, of course, with recruiting student-athletes to Dartmouth, which, for as important as the athletic side is, requires a true understanding of the academic piece.

“For somebody from the outside it must sometimes seem insurmountable,” said Gaudet. “I look at some of the people who coached in the Ivy League who don’t have the background and I’m sure the recruiting side is mind-boggling.

“In our sport you are going up against schools with scholarships that can recruit players we can’t. It’s not like we can offer just anybody. They have to have the right academic profile and be the right type of kid.”

Having lived it helps the former Big Green athletes coaching at Dartmouth better vet the pool of potential recruits, and in the process, share helpful insights with those high school students (and their parents) who seem to be the right fit.

“Because you went here you understand the academic situation people face,”



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—Barry Harwick '77

Teevens said. “You also understand the environment that they are stepping into. You can share with a guy from Houston or Dallas or San Diego or Seattle or Chicago what it’s like coming from a metropolitan area to a more rural environment. You can talk to them about how there’s a degree of anonymity in larger institutions, but there is a communal sense at Dartmouth that they may not have experienced before.”

Coaches who enjoyed athletic success in a Big Green uniform and beyond can look recruits in the eye and tell them it’s possible to find that kind of success coming out of Dartmouth. They did it themselves. Gaudet can tell them you can play pro hockey, because he did it. Dodge can tell them they can go to Dartmouth and ski on the world circuit. Teevens can tell a potential recruit that if you want to play for the Big Green and some day coach at the highest level of college football, you can do it.

Once the recruits have begun their college careers the coach who has walked – or run or skied or skated – in their shoes has an insider’s knowledge of the academic pressures at Dartmouth, according to Harwick.

“If somebody tells me about a course’s degree of difficulty, I can certainly empathize with that,” he said. “On the other hand, I can hold students very accountable by saying, ‘Look, I know you are taking three classes. You are actually only in the classroom 10 hours a week. If you are not getting the work done it’s probably a time management issue. It’s not because there are not enough hours in the day to be able to do it.’”

“I think it gives me a very realistic approach when I’m talking to students about the different demands they face.”

While the coaches have built-in advantages working in familiar surroundings, there can be added pressure as well. Not that the pressure wouldn’t be there wherever they worked, but there’s a feeling of indebtedness to an institution they love.

“It is an honor for me to be involved with the College now because I don’t know where I would be without it,” said Gaudet. “For me it is motivational. I get up in the morning, and even on tough days, this place inspires me.

“To have an opportunity to come here out of Saugus (Mass.) High School and get an Ivy League degree and have all these great things happen because of it has been wonderful. I met my wife here. I got an Ivy League degree. I was able to sign a pro contract, although I wasn’t good enough for in the right place to play in the NHL. I’ve had three kids go here. The people who come here and do this probably feel like they owe the school something for all the school has given them. That’s how I feel.”

Dodge, too, feels a responsibility to Dartmouth because of his time as a student. But that’s only part of his motivation.

“I have a lot of personal connection to Dartmouth, and because of that, I want to do well,” he said. “Dartmouth skiing has always been right up there and it’s a big responsibility maintaining that legacy. It is a responsibility and an honor to keep that going.”

Like Dodge, whose program won its third NCAA championship in 2007, Harwick heads up a program that has excelled on the national stage, particularly with a men’s cross country program that finished second to Arkansas in both the 1986 and 1987 NCAA championships. He knows better than most that that is a tough act to follow.

“Our alumni are very very supportive but some of them wonder why we don’t win Heps every year,” Harwick said. “The fact that there is an alum in the coaching position who obviously cares about the team in a very personal sense, above and beyond a professional sense, doesn’t necessarily make it any easier.



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–Bob Gaudet ‘81

“I have to be able to explain to people their view of the College hasn’t changed. If you are standing up at the Green looking at Baker Tower – one of my favorite things – it looks exactly the same as it did when I was a freshman almost 40 years ago. But when you look at our league you see how it has changed, and what has happened with the competitive landscape. It’s more challenging than it was.”

No one knows that better than Teevens, who won an Ivy League championship as a senior and two more as a coach the first time around. For as badly as he wanted to turn the Big Green program around, he struggled mightily upon his return to Hanover two decades after leaving for what was then the I-A ranks. Working at schools like Florida, Illinois and Stanford showed him how things are done in the big-time, and he’ll freely admit he rankled some people trying to bring valuable new ideas to Dartmouth.

“Nothing had changed in the 20 years since I had left,” he said. “The weight room that we had constructed on the third floor attic of Davis Varsity House was the same. The patterns in the carpet in the office were identical. We were still using the locker room we had constructed and everyone else had moved forward.

“There were people who said, ‘It only took you five years the first time and you won championships,’ but in the past it was a little bit easier. Some of the legendary coaches were kind of at the tail end of their careers and I was a little bit more aggressive with recruiting and so forth. The league leaders were well ahead of everybody when I came back, and not just on the field.”

After posting just seven wins in his first three years back, Teevens saw Dartmouth hit rock bottom with an 0-10 record in 2008. His status as a favorite son of the school, he said, had made it a little easier to get the resources he needed, but also bought him the time to use them.

“I work hard and I think I am a decent representative of the institution and a decent person, but I got the benefit of the doubt,” he admitted. “In most places, you go 0-10 after four or five years and you are fired.

“I reflect back to Tulane and it was, ‘We’re coming, we’re coming,’ but as close as we were we didn’t get it done and we were gone. That’s the business but it didn’t happen here, and it has made all the difference.”

With the benefit of the doubt, of course, come added responsibilities, not the least of which is raising money for your program. And with that comes another kind of pressure.

“Fundraising is not my best quality,” admitted Gaudet. “But you have to do what you have to do. Buddy and I are looked to as people who have relationships with a lot of guys. You wore the uniform, so you do have a relationship with all these people. There’s pressure there because you want to show the people that give you support, whether it be financially or emotionally, that you’re on top of things, and that you are doing the best that you possibly can for the College and for them.”

That’s a responsibility Harwick takes seriously when he puts on his alumni hat.

“I know people that have given significant amounts of money to our program and the trust that they have given me to make sure that that money is being spent wisely and for the best interest of the program is a responsibility,” he said. “I’ve never taken that support for granted and truly appreciate it, probably even more than someone who didn’t graduate from Dartmouth.”

To be sure, there are challenges coaching where you went to school, but they are far outweighed by the positives, according to Dodge.

“It is a big plus knowing what Dartmouth is all about, understanding the people and understanding the institution,” said Dodge. “There is no disadvantage.”

Maybe Teevens said it best.

“I have a lot of pride in our program and a lot of pride in the school. The pressure on me is representing something that is way bigger than I am.

“I think a lot about the alums, and the guys who wore the uniform. As an alum I want to do the best job I can both for my players, for the people who came before them and for Dartmouth.” **DP**



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–Buddy Teevens '79