

Graduation 2013 Honorary Graduate - Oration

Oration for Honorary Graduate Sir Keith Mills
Orator: Dr. Ourania Dimitraki

Chancellor, the Senate has resolved that the degree of Doctor of the University be conferred upon Sir Keith Mills.

Sir Keith Mills is one of Britain's most successful entrepreneurs and he is best known for founding loyalty card schemes, such as Air Miles and Nectar. He is the man who knighted for his work in bringing the Olympic Games to London and primed it as one of the best prepared Games in history.

But just who is Sir Keith Mills?

Sir Keith Mills was born and educated in the UK. His background is in marketing. He has spent his entire working life in the advertising and marketing business. In the late 1980s, he had a 'eureka' moment that was to change his life forever – he came up with the idea for Air Miles; he took the idea to British Airways and eventually sold them a 49% share. He took a break in 1999 to do the Clipper Round the World Race, sailing under the young and then quite inexperienced skipper Alex Thomson, who had never even crossed the Atlantic.

Yet Thomson and his crew dominated the race, and these two forged a lasting friendship. Sir Keith Mills has very much been a mentor to Thomson and he bought the (late) Open 60 Hugo Boss and put Thomson on the road to major sponsorship.

Sir Keith Mills has had a highly successful career as an entrepreneur and pioneer of the loyalty industry. He founded Air Miles International in 1988 and is formerly Chairman of Loyalty Management Group Ltd (LMG), the company which owns and manages the Nectar programme - however his sporting interests led him to set up sported. He is a non-Executive Director of Tottenham Hotspur FC and owns two yacht racing teams. In 1999 Sir Keith Mills was part of the crew that won the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race.

In September 2003 Sir Keith was appointed International President and CEO of London 2012, the company that successfully won the bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In 2005 Sir Keith received a number of awards including: Master Entrepreneur of the Year, Chief Executive of the Year and the Sports Industry Businessman of the Year.

When Lord Seb Coe and Sir Keith Mills took their team to Singapore to bid for the 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games in 2005, they made a number of promises. The most ambitious of those promises was that if successful, they would use the Games to inspire disadvantaged young people around the world to use sport as a means of improving their lives. Following the successful Olympic bid, he was knighted in 2006 in recognition of his services to sport.

In January 2007 Sir Keith announced his intention to lead a new British America's Cup team called TEAMORIGIN.

As prolonged, Sir Keith Mills was, central to the success of bringing the Olympic Games to London. He was CEO and International President of London 2012 and is now Deputy Chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games. Sir Keith Mills was the man at the forefront of bringing the Olympics back to London is all too aware the whole world will be watching. He believed that the Games would provide a welcome boost to the nation's morale in the wake of the economic crisis. Sir Keith characteristically said. *"It really will be exceptional. At a time when the country needs a shot in the arm, not only are we pumping billions into the economy but in 2012 we will provide the emotional help needed to bring the country out of the recession... You really must be part of it. It will be very special and a great fillip for the country just when we need it."*

Sir Keith Mills, relishes a battle, whether it involves competing for advertising accounts, as it did in the 1980s, or, as more recently did, managing London's bid to host the Olympic Games. Having established the London 2012 organisation which planned and organised the Games (LOCOG-London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games), Sir Keith remains as Deputy Chairman alongside Lord Sebastian Coe to oversee operations.

In the 2013 New Year Honours he was awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire for delivering a successful Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Sir Keith Mills is an inspiration to us all: he did not only inspired a generation to play sports and young people around the world to choose sport but also motivates us all to keep fighting off even under stiff competition

Chancellor, I present to you Sir Keith Mills.