

Graduation 2013

Honorary Graduate – Response

Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Laura Trott

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, fellow graduates, thank you very much for honouring me to share your day.

I am very honoured to receive this degree, but this is the second time in recent weeks I find myself feeling a bit of a fraud in accepting an award for just what I do. And to be honest when compared to the job done by our military, emergency services and nurses among others it is pretty simple and not that unpleasant or dangerous...well until I ride the elimination race!

I feel very lucky not only to be doing something that I love but also to be given the opportunity to try, as the Olympics tagline said, to inspire a Generation.

Whether I inspire anyone is for others to judge in the future, but in the meantime we all have a part to play. We all have a duty to seize the opportunities that we are given!

My parents gave myself and my sister the opportunity to be involved in sport, partly because of my health but I partly because Dad didn't want to buy us a Play Station. You have had an opportunity to pursue an academic path and so your degree is your gold medal.

We must now take these prizes and follow our dreams, for me it is Rio in 2016. For you? Well you know what you are dreaming. But we must all encourage those around us and those that come after us to do the same.

Along the way we will all be given further opportunities, maybe lucky breaks. Use these to your best advantage! My lucky break, I guess, was my mother wanting to lose weight so we discovered cycling. For you it may be a chance encounter with a musician, journalist or artist. It may be something simple, because someone sees something in you that you don't see in yourself. Again this happened to me! I thought I was a sprinter. A female Chris Hoy! I was wrong and the coaching staff saw this.

Of course none of this may happen today, or even next week. It may be in 10 years' time. But seize these opportunities that life give you and challenge yourself to be the best you can and follow your dreams.

Not everyone will achieve their "dream", but in the distant future you want to look back and feel content that you could have done no better. And for that you can then be proud of yourself.

We come from what my Dad calls the X-factor generation. We are obsessed with wanting others to be proud of us!

Forget it!

Others will judge us as they see fit regardless of what we do. Our parents will, generally, always be proud of us. So concentrate on making yourself proud! If you are proud of yourself you will be content, happy and will enjoy the person you are.

We all make mistakes. I mean kissing your boyfriend in public whilst sitting behind David Beckham wasn't the smartest thing I could have done! But you learn, and it makes us the people we are.

Be proud of who you are and be proud of what you have achieved and be honoured to be here today.

Seize the opportunities you have been given and go out into the world and be the best you can.

Or in Essex speak let's go and kick some butt!

Thank you!