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2010 Commencement Speech
“Who’s **That** Broad?”

I am truly honored to be here today. I remember sitting right where you are, May 1997 donning my cap and gown and thinking to myself .. wow, how quickly time had passed ... It had seemed like just yesterday I was running to the mailbox every day hoping a big thick envelope would come from the University of Michigan saying I was accepted.

I know now, as I’m sure you do that the opportunity this university has provided us, the education, the experience, the connections, the friendships, the life lessons we all received here, have truly been a blessing. What you don’t know, though is how it will help you along the road that lies ahead.. The one you are about to set foot on when you leave here...

For me, I knew what I wanted to do. I just didn’t know how to get there. See forever I had dreamed of being a sideline reporter... As a child, I not only was an athlete but an avid fan. Ironically what got me into sports was my parents’ rocky marriage. They would fight and I would hide myself in my room. The TV tuned in to either a baseball game or a sports show. My favorite was the “NBA Inside Stuff”. I’m dating myself now, but I remember watching host Willow Bay and saying to myself, “That’s what I want to do”. I was 8 at the time. When it was time to finally pursue that dream, I chose Michigan. I figured what better place is there right? In Ann Arbor not only would I get a top notch education, but I would be surrounded by one of the best sports scenes in the country. Like all of you, I majored in communications. I went on to earn my degree and my first job out of school was as a researcher for CBS Sports. I had several other jobs in between but my first on-air assignment was for a local cable station in NY. I covered opening day for the New York Mets. I was sent there to do off-camera interviews with players and the manager. That’s where I got the title for my never to be written autobiography... “Who’s That Broad”!

That day I entered Shea Stadium with my camera man and noticed I was the only woman reporter there. Not intimidated in the least bit, I joined a group interviewing Bobby Valentine. I asked him a question about the pitching or lack thereof and instead of answering he fired back a question at me, testing my knowledge. I stood my ground answered his question confidently and he backed down and gave me just the perfect sound bite. Later that day I returned to the studio to edit my piece and while reviewing the tape my editor and I noticed Valentine, as I was walking away, the camera still rolling, looking in my direction saying “Who’s **that** Broad?”

Who’s that Broad?”... This is what I would say to him now... She’s a girl living out her dream, she’s a Michigan graduate, she’s a journalist, she’s ambitious, she’s determined, she’s independent. She knows her stuff. She’s a wife, she’s a mother, she’s a mentor, she’s a friend. I only wish I could tell him the story of how this broad got to be standing here today.

Who's that Broad: Chapter 1- Know where your passion lies-

My passion was sports. As I mentioned earlier, it was a dream of mine since I was a little girl to be a sportscaster. Now, believe me, I was realistic. Getting to be on-air was not going to be easy, so I made sure to keep my options open. I always said if I didn't make it in broadcasting, I would find another job working in the sports industry. Because then I knew I would still be doing something I love. Something I was passionate about. Something that would motivate me to go to work everyday. I encourage all of you to find the things you enjoy most and incorporate them into what you want to do in the future.

Chapter 2: Keep your contacts- We are all fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to earn a degree from one of the most well respected universities in the country. When you leave here you not only will be taking with you a diploma, but you will become an alumnus of the university, a member of an association that spreads across the world and is there to help you. During my junior year at Michigan, I went in search of an internship. I was well aware that without any hands on experience my chances of being a reporter would be slim. So I headed to the communications department and on the wall was a flyer for an internship at HBO Sports. The application and resume were due within a day. So, with the help of an advisor there, I completed it, sent it in and was granted an interview in NY. There were hundreds of applicants and only 4 were going to be selected so they had plenty of choices. The interview process was intense. I was quizzed on my knowledge of sports, the background of the company and the history of the business. But in the end, what set me apart, was the fact that I went to the University of Michigan. One of the producers interviewing me was an alum and we hit it off and I ultimately got the job. Contacts have played a big role throughout every step of my career. During that summer I met a producer who did some work for CBS. So before heading back to Michigan I asked him if I could help him or the network out when they came to campus to broadcast football and basketball games. More on the job experience and more connections. From that one contact, I met several more people at CBS and it helped me land my first job out of college as a researcher. Contacts. I can't say enough about how important is to keep them and use them.

Chapter 3: Pay your dues- Wow- a researcher for CBS sports... right? Well, it's not as glamorous as it sounds. I worked 18 hour days, spent weekends sleeping under my desk, photocopied, got coffee, answered phones and spent endless hours sifting through newspapers from sports sections across the country. Oh and by the way, I got paid \$60 dollars a day. But, while I knew this ultimately wouldn't land me on the air, I figured it was a good way to learn about the business and again make the contacts I may need in the future. And who knows, maybe I would have liked being behind the scenes instead of in front of the camera and this would have been the perfect step for that. It's not always fun, but work hard and do the type of job that you can be proud of. I stayed there for about a year and was getting comfortable. The next step for a researcher is a broadcast associate and my fellow researchers and I were all trying to move up the ladder. That's when I first encountered one of life's biggest challenges...

Chapter 4: People will doubt you- Looking to get promoted, I had a meeting with the executive producer of CBS Sports. When I told him my passion for the business and my goals and aspirations for the future, he said to me "I'm sure you love sports and I'm sure you know sports, but not like the guys do"! Did he really just say that? That was my cue to leave and it was the

best thing that ever happened to me because I realized, especially as a woman in the business, that people will judge you before they know you and that was something I was going to have to overcome constantly throughout my career. From then on, I knew I was going to have to prove myself in order to gain the respect I deserved. Male or female, at one point in your life you will experience this. Someone will doubt you and you will have to prove them wrong... Make sure you know your stuff. Which leads me to...

Chapter 5: Never stop learning- I left CBS intending on trying to get that first job on air. But with still no resume tape in hand that wasn't going to be easy. Then a friend of mine told me of a broadcast agency looking for help. It was a decent salary, I would finally have my weekends free, and it was a chance for me to see another side of the business. There I basically assisted in helping get **other** people on-air jobs. I talked with news directors of stations across the country and learned what they were looking for when hiring talent. I watched thousands of tapes of aspiring anchors and reporters and learned from their mistakes, from how to dress on camera to how I would have to work on my New Yaaawwwk accent and I learned how to put a resume tape together for when that time finally came. Most importantly though, I received an education on the broadcast business and an insight into what it was going to take for **me** to succeed as a reporter. My wakeup call was the day I assisted a sports reporter my age in moving from Binghamton, the 157th ranked market in the country to Philadelphia a top 5 market. I was inspired and left the agency in search of my first resume reel.

My next stop was a local cable station in Long Island, NY. It was while working here that I got the title of this book. I was hired by legendary sportscaster Bob Wolff, who by the way just turned 90 and is still on the air. I learned a ton there. I produced the 7 and 10 o'clock sportscasts, wrote his scripts, edited tapes and researched story ideas. I made friends with the cameramen and the other reporters and often tagged along on their shoots. When they were done with their reports, I would do a mock stand-up, they would record it for me and thus I began compiling my resume reel. In addition, on my days off, I took a reporting class at a local community college and my tape was getting better. I was learning. I was learning how to edit, how to write copy, how to shoot, how to be... a reporter. It had been 3 years since I had graduated, but I never stopped learning and that I believe is the foundation for success.

Chapter 6: Be Persistent- I made that tape. Granted it was basically fake, I mean none of it aired, but no one needed to know that. I sent it out to hundreds of stations across the country. Lots of rejections, mostly no responses, but I didn't give up. Six months later, I finally got the call. All it takes is just one person to believe in you. For me, it was the owner of a mom and pop shop in Trenton, New Jersey. He hired me to be their sports reporter. It's rare that things just fall in your lap, be persistent and don't give up.

Chapter 7: Versatility- In Trenton, I was primarily their sports anchor but they also needed me to cover news. Was that my interest? Definitely not, but I needed to show them I was willing to do anything. I became more valuable to them, more educated and more experienced. My sports assignments were usually covering games or doing a feature on a player or a team. But sometimes news came calling. Like when Former President George W. Bush was in town or anthrax was found in a local post office. Sports or news, it didn't matter to me. I was finally a reporter! I stayed there about a year and a half and then I got my big break. Sometimes being in

the right place at the right time helps. At that time everyone was looking for a female sports reporter and a girl I had known from camp was an agent. They got me a weekday gig at Madison Square Garden Network in New York and a weekend job at ESPN covering college football. I was in the right place at the right time. Luck **is** part of life.

Chapter 8: It's ok to ask for help- At ESPN, I was hired as one of their many sideline reporters for about 8 games. I had never been live before. Everything I did in Trenton was taped. I was petrified and it showed. I improved each week but with very little help from them and after the season they told me they didn't have room for me next year. I wish I had asked for help. This way, I would have known what I was doing wrong, I would have had the chance to improve each week and maybe then they would have given me another opportunity. Ask for help, listen and show that you are willing to learn.

Chapter 9: Nobody's Perfect- Fortunately when ESPN let me go, CBS was looking for a second reporter. In addition to my agent, the contacts I still had from working there as a researcher got me in the door and I was hired. It had come full circle. That was 2003. I did everything for the network, from rodeos and auto-racing, to track and field, gymnastics, football, basketball and tennis. Ahh, tennis. I grew up playing the sport and when I got the chance to work the US Open I was beside myself. My second year covering the grand slam event, I was interviewing Lleyton Hewitt after he has just gutted out a five set win. It was being broadcast live in the stadium as well as on national TV. I asked him a question that didn't sit too well with him or the fans and next thing I knew I was getting booed off center court. Yes booed. They wanted a fluffy feel good question and I got on him for not performing better. As my boss said afterwards..."Tracy you're not Barbara Walters". Probably the low point of my career. I dwelled over it for weeks but there was nothing I could do. It was over, I learned from it and moved on. And hey, not everyone can say they got booed off center court at the US Open! You too will stumble, but get up, dust yourself off and keep on climbing...

Chapter 10: Never be satisfied, but be grateful- I have been with CBS now for 8 years and I couldn't be happier. People always ask me what my next step is. I don't know. My goal when I was young was to be a sideline reporter. And here I am. So I think I'll just continue to enjoy what I am doing now and see where the road leads me. But know that this is not my only job. I am also a wife to an amazing husband, also a Michigan graduate, and a mother to two boys under the age of 4. Hopefully both future Wolverines. How to balance work and a family is another book in itself, and one worth reading, but you have time for that.

So **my** story comes to an end where my journey began. Now it's time to focus on **your** story...

- **Find your passion.**
- **Keep the contacts you make along the way.**
- **Pay your dues.**
- **Overcome those who doubt you. Prove them wrong!**
- **Never stop learning.**
- **Be persistent.**
- **Be versatile.**
- **Continue to ask for help and always try to improve.**

- **Keep reminding yourself nobody's perfect.**
- **Never be satisfied, but be grateful!**

These life lessons, while simple, are easy to forget. Remember them though because they will be the basis of **your** success story.

When you leave here today, I want you to think about what **your** autobiography would be titled and go write those first few pages.... Because Chapter 1 has already begun.

Thank you and **GO BLUE!**