**2024 Commencement Address by Roger Federer**

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| Roger Federer is a former tennis player. He is one of the most decorated and respected players of game. In this commencement address, he shares insights gained from his career. |

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| 10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100  110  120  130  140  150  160  170 | People would say my play was effortless. Most of the time, they meant it as a compliment, but it used to frustrate me when they would say, ‘He barely broke a sweat’ or ‘Is he even trying?’ The truth is, I had to work very hard to make it look easy. I spent years whining, swearing and throwing my racket before I learned to keep my cool.  The wakeup call came early in my career, when an opponent at the Italian Open publicly questioned my mental discipline. He said, ‘Roger will be the favourite for the first two hours, and then I’ll be the favourite after that.’ I was puzzled at first. But eventually, I realised what he was trying to say. Everybody can play well the first two hours. You’re fit, you’re fast, you’re clear and, after two hours, your legs get wobbly, your mind starts wandering and your discipline starts to fade. It made me understand that I have so much work ahead of me, and I’m ready to go on this journey now. I get it. My parents, my coaches, my fitness coach, everyone had really been calling me out – and now even my rivals were doing it. Players! Thank you! I’m eternally grateful for what you did. So I started training harder. A lot harder. But then I realised: winning effortlessly is the ultimate achievement.  I got that reputation because my warm-ups at the tournaments were so casual that people didn’t think I had been training hard, but I had been working hard before the tournament, when nobody was watching. Maybe you’ve seen a version of this at Dartmouth. How many times did you feel like your classmates were racking up ‘A’ after ‘A’ without even trying while you were pulling all-nighters, loading up on caffeine, crying softly in a corner of Sanborn Library? Hopefully, like me, you learned that ‘effortless’ is a myth. I didn’t get where I got on pure talent alone. I got there by trying to outwork my opponents. I believed in myself**. But belief in yourself has to be earned**.  There was a moment in 2003 when my self-belief really kicked in. It was at the ATP Finals, where only the best eight players qualify. I beat some top players I really **admired** by aiming right at their strengths. Before, I would run away from their strengths. If a guy had a **strong** forehand, I would try to hit to his backhand. But now, I would try to go after his forehand. I tried to beat the baseliners from the baseline. I tried to **beat** the attackers by attacking. I tried to beat the net rushers from the net. I took a **chance** by doing that. So why did I do it? To **amplify** my game and **expand** my options. You need a whole arsenal of strengths, so if one of them breaks down, you’ve got something left. When your game is clicking like that, winning is easy – relatively.  Then there are days when you just feel broken. Your back hurts, your knee hurts. Maybe you’re a little sick or scared, but you still find a way to win. And those are the victories we can be most proud of because they prove that you can win not just when you are at your best, but especially when you aren’t. Yes, talent matters. I’m not going to stand here and tell you it doesn’t, but talent has a broad definition. Most of the time, it’s not about having a gift. It’s about having grit. In tennis, a great forehand with sick racquet head speed can be called a talent. But in tennis, like in life, discipline is also a talent. And so is patience. Trusting yourself is a talent. Embracing the process, loving the process, is a talent. Managing your life, managing yourself: these can be talents, too. Some people are born with them. Everybody has to work at them. From this day forward, some people are going to assume that because you graduated from Dartmouth, it all comes easy for you. And you know what? Let them believe that, as long as you don’t.  Okay, second lesson: it’s only a point. Let me explain. You can work harder than you thought possible and still lose. I have. Tennis is brutal. There’s no getting around the fact that every tournament ends the same way: one player gets a trophy, every other player gets back on a plane, stares out of the window, and thinks ‘how the hell did I miss that shot?’  Imagine if, today, only one of you got a degree. Congratulations, this year’s graduate! Let’s give her a hand. The rest of you – the other one thousand of you – better luck next time! So, you know, I tried not to lose. But I did lose... sometimes big. For me, one of the biggest was the finals at Wimbledon in 2008. Me vs. Nadal. Some call it the greatest match of all time. Okay, all respect to Rafa, but I think it would have been way, way better if I had won...  Losing at Wimbledon was a big deal because winning Wimbledon is everything. I mean, I’ve gotten to play in some amazing venues around the world, but when you have the chance to walk onto Centre Court at Wimbledon – the cathedral of tennis – and when you finish as the champion – you feel the magnitude of the moment. There’s nothing like it. In 2008, I was going for a record sixth consecutive title. I was playing for history. I’m not going to walk you through the match, point by point. If I did, we would be here for hours. Almost five hours, to be exact. There were rain delays, the sun went down. Rafa won two sets, I won the next two sets in tiebreaks, and we found ourselves at seven all in the fifth. I understand why people focus on the end: the final minutes so dark I could barely see the chalk on the grass. But looking back, I feel like I lost at the very first point of the match.  I looked across the net and I saw a guy who, just a few weeks earlier, crushed me in straight sets at the French Open, and I thought ‘this guy is maybe hungrier than I am and he’s finally got my number.’ It took me until the third set before I remembered... ‘hey, buddy, you’re the five-time defending champion! And you’re on grass, by the way. You know how to do this...’ But that came too late and Rafa won. And it was well-deserved. Some defeats hurt more than others. I knew I would never get another shot at six in a row. I lost Wimbledon. I lost my number-one ranking. And suddenly, people said, ‘He had a great run. Is this the changing of the guard?’ But I knew what I had to do. Keep working and keep competing.  In tennis, perfection is impossible. In the 1,526 singles matches I played in my career, I won almost 80% of those matches. Now, I have a question for all of you: what percentage of the points do you think I won in those matches? Only 54%. In other words, even top-ranked tennis players win barely more than half of the points they play. When you lose every second point, on average, you learn not to dwell on every shot. You teach yourself to think: okay, I double-faulted. It’s only a point. Okay, I came to the net and I got passed again. It’s only a point. Even a great shot, an overhead backhand smash that ends up on ESPN’s Top Ten Plays: that, too, is just a point.  Here’s why I am telling you this. When you’re playing a point, it is the most important thing in the world. But when it’s behind you, it’s behind you. This mindset is really crucial because it frees you to fully commit to the next point, and the next one after that, with intensity, clarity and focus. The truth is, whatever game you play in life, sometimes you’re going to lose. A point, a match, a season, a job. **It’s a roller coaster**, with many ups and downs. And it’s natural, when you’re down, to doubt yourself. To feel sorry for yourself. And by the way, your opponents have self-doubt, too. Don’t ever forget that. But negative energy is wasted energy.  You want to become a master at overcoming hard moments. That to me is the sign of a champion. The best in the world are not the best because they win every point. It’s because they know they’ll lose again and again and have learned how to deal with it. You accept it. Cry it out if you need to, then force a smile. You move on. Be relentless. Adapt and grow. Work harder. Work smarter. Remember: work smarter.  Lesson three... Are you guys still with me? For a guy who left school at 16, this is a lot of lessons! Okay, here is the third one: **Life is bigger than the court**. A tennis court is a small space. 2,106 square feet, to be exact. That’s for singles matches. Not much bigger than a dorm room. Okay, make that three or four dorm rooms in Mass Row. I worked a lot, learned a lot and ran a lot of miles in that small space, but the world is a whole lot bigger than that. Even when I was just starting out, I knew that tennis could show me the world, but tennis could never be the world. I knew that if I was lucky, maybe I could play competitively until my late 30s. Maybe even 41!  But even when I was in the top five, it was important to me to have a life. A rewarding life, full of travel, culture, friendships, and especially family. I never abandoned my roots and I never forgot where I came from, but I also never lost my appetite to see this very big world. I left home at 14 to go to school in the French part of Switzerland for two years and I was horribly homesick at first, but I learned to love a life on the move. Maybe these are the reasons I never burned out.  I was excited to travel the world, but not just as a tourist... I realised pretty early that I wanted to serve other people in other countries. Motivated by my South African mother, I started a foundation to empower children through education. Early childhood education is something we take for granted in a place like Switzerland. But in sub-Saharan Africa, 75% of children don’t have access to preschool. Think about that: 75%.  Like all children, they need a good start if they are going to fulfil their potential. And so far, we’ve helped nearly 3 million children to get a quality education and helped to train more than 55,000 teachers. It’s been an honour and it’s been humbling. An honour to help tackle this challenge and humbling to see how complex it is. Humbling to try to read stories to children in one of the languages of Lesotho. Humbling also to arrive in rural Zambia and have to explain what tennis actually is. I vividly remember drawing a tennis court on the chalkboard for the kids to see because I asked them what tennis was, and one kid said, ‘It’s the one with the table, right? With the paddles?’  I have to tell you, it’s a wonderful feeling to visit these incredibly rural places and find classrooms full of children who are learning and reading and playing, like children everywhere should be allowed to do. It’s also inspiring to see what they grow up to be: some have become nurses, teachers, computer programmers.  It’s been an exciting journey and I feel like we’re only at the beginning with so much more to learn. I can’t believe we’ve just celebrated twenty years of this work, especially because I started the foundation before I thought I was ready. I was 22 at the time, like many of you are today. I was not ready for anything other than tennis, but sometimes you’ve got to take a chance and then figure it out.  Philanthropy can mean a lot of things. It can mean starting a nonprofit or donating money. But it can also mean contributing your ideas, your time and your energy to a mission that is larger than yourself. All of you have so much to give and I hope you will find your own, unique ways to make a difference because life really is much bigger than the court. As a student at Dartmouth, you picked a major and went deep ,but you also went wide. Engineers learned art history, athletes even sang a-cappella and computer scientists learned to speak German. Dartmouth’s legendary football coach Buddy Teevens used to recruit players by telling their parents: ‘Your son will be a great football player when it’s football time, a great student when it’s academic time and a great person all the time.’ That is what a Dartmouth education is all about.  Tennis has given me so many memories, but my off-court experiences are the ones I carry forward just as much. The places I’ve gotten to travel, the platform that lets me give back and, most of all, the people I’ve met along the way. Tennis, like life, is a team sport. Yes, you stand alone on your side of the net, but your success depends on your team. Your coaches, your teammates, even your rivals. All these influences help to make you who you are.  It’s not an accident that my business partnership with Tony is called TEAM8. A play on words: ‘Teammate.’ All the work we do together reflects that team spirit, the strong bond we have with each other and our colleagues, with the athletes we represent, and with partners and sponsors. These personal relationships matter most. I learned this way of thinking from the best – my parents. They’ve always supported me, always encouraged me, and always understood what I most wanted and needed to be. A family is a team. I feel so very lucky that my incredible wife, Mirka, who makes every joy in my life even brighter and our four amazing children, Myla, Charlene, Leo and Lenny are here with me today. And more important, that we are here for each other every day.  Graduates, I know the same is true for you. Your parents, your families made the sacrifices to get you here. They have shared your triumphs and your struggles. They will always, always be in your corner. And not only them. As you head out into the world, don’t forget: you get to bring all of this with you. This culture, this energy, these people, this colour green. The friends who have pushed you and supported you to become the best version of yourselves, the friends who will never stop cheering for you, just like today. And you will keep making friends in the Dartmouth community. Possibly even today. So right now, turn to the people on your left and your right. Maybe this is the first time you have met. You might not share experiences or viewpoints, but now you share this memory. And a whole lot more.  When I left tennis, I became a former tennis player. But you are not a former anything. You are future record-breakers and world travellers, future volunteers and philanthropists, future winners and future leaders. I’m here to tell you, from the other side of graduation, that leaving a familiar world behind and finding new ones is incredibly, deeply, wonderfully exciting.  So there, Dartmouth, are your tennis lessons for the day: Effortless is a myth… It’s only a point… Life is bigger than the court. |

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| **Q1**  A  B  C  D  E  F  G  H  **Q2**  **Q3**  **Q4**  **Q5**  **Q6** | **Read** **lines 1 to 15**  Choose four statements below which are **true**  **[4 marks]**  Federer plays competitive tennis in a way that appears to be effortless  An opponent at the Italian Open complimented Federer’s mental discipline  Federer believes that playing tennis well for over two hours is challenging  Individual tennis games do not last longer than two hours  Federer understands that it is important to continue working hard  Many people who were close to Federer criticised him in his early career  Federer does not appreciate it when he is criticised by others  Federer believes that the ultimate achievement in tennis is winning Wimbledon  **Read** **lines 15 to 23**  Explain what Federer means when he says, ‘But belief in yourself has to be earned’ (23)  **[2 marks]**  **Read lines 24 to 32**  Choose a synonym for each of the words below  **Admired** | **strong**  |  **beat**  | **chance**  | **amplify**  | **expand**  **[6 marks]**  **Read lines 51 to 76**  How does Federer remember the game against Nadal at Wimbledon in 2008?   * explain how his feelings changed as the game developed * explain how he felt after the game ended * support your response with references to the text   **[6 marks]**  **Read lines 85 to 92**  Why does Feder compare life to a ride on a roller coaster? (89)  **[4 marks]**  **Read lines 98 to 149**  Federer says, ‘Life is bigger than the court’ (99)   * explain what he means * explain how he supports his view by choosing two examples   **[4 marks]** |