

# Unforgettable



When you see something for the first time, you never forget it. As I write this, I can still picture the 2007 semi-final game of the NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championships between Cornell and Duke. Duke was leading 10–3 in the third quarter and all seemed lost for Cornell. But with unparalleled determination, Cornell staged a furious comeback and tied Duke with 17 seconds left in the game. Duke would eventually win by scoring a goal with three seconds left, showing their own fortitude, but it was the comeback and effort by Cornell that left me in awe.

I played lacrosse at Cornell in the early nineties and had also watched thousands of games in numerous sports, but I had never seen a team play with such spirit, passion, grit, resilience, and relentless determination as Cornell did in the second half of that game. Since I work with many professional and college sports teams as well as teams in the corporate, educational, and non-profit world, I had to find out what inspired this team to play the way they did. As a student and teacher of human motivation, I knew it had to be more than a desire to win. They were driven by something much bigger and I was very curious to discover what it was.

So, I went on a quest back to the place where I spent my college years, a place that shaped and molded me in so many ways. On the plane to upstate New York, I realized that I could connect the work I did now with many of the growth opportunities I experienced as a student-athlete. Playing a sport in college changed my life forever and taught me to work hard; overcome adversity, rejection, self-doubts, and fears; and keep striving toward my dreams. I left as a student, became a teacher, and landed at the Ithaca airport ready to be a student again. As I arrived on the campus I hadn't seen in over 10 years, I felt a familiar chill in the October air and I was prepared to learn new lessons on leadership and teamwork.