

DR DAVID ALRED MBE

Pro-Chancellor,

Dr Dave Alred is a highly distinguished sports coach who specialises in mental preparation for high performance under pressure. He is exceptionally versatile and has taken athletes from many different sports to elite international standards, something once thought impossible. He can also look back on a personally successful playing career in professional sport, initially Rugby Union at Bristol and Bath, but he has also played Rugby League, and American football with Minnesota Vikings.

When asked to name the greatest highlights of his career, Dave turns quickly to rugby and the British Lions Tour of 1997 when everyone expected the squad to 'get hammered' (in his own words) - but they won against all the odds. Another outstanding achievement was the World Cup in 2003, when Jonny Wilkinson's goal-kicking record owed much to Dave, who was by then known as the world's leading kicking coach. But he has also focussed increasingly on the players' mental preparation; as he explains, 'if there's anything I can do to get a player to go where he's never been before, in terms of the level of his performance, that's my job'.

This distinctive approach has brought Dave many successes in a wide range of very different sports. He has worked with top soccer players such as David James, Richard Wright, Ashley Young and Joe Cole, and also with the squads at Sunderland, Bolton Wanderers, Middlesbrough and Newcastle United. He is Performance Coach to the UK Lawn Tennis Association; he helped British Judo to prepare for the Beijing Olympics; and his work with Luke Donald saw the golfer become number one on both sides of the Atlantic. But typically he takes just as much pleasure from an entirely different achievement, when he taught a 73-year-old Irishwoman to play golf and then watched her become captain of a golf club in New Zealand. This, he says, demonstrates what he constantly emphasises, that 'there's nothing you can't do'. So much of his work focuses on this, and what he calls 'the Eureka moments' when a client recognises that they can do things better, not by some far-reaching change of approach but by doing a specific and often simple action. His intensive research at Loughborough University on mental and intellectual aspects of sports coaching earned him a PhD in performing under pressure.

Dave has been widely recognised and honoured for his many achievements. The *Daily Telegraph* has described as one of the world's all-time top five sports coaches. He was awarded the prestigious Mussabini Medal in 2003 for outstanding coaching success on the world stage, and was recently

inaugurated into the UK Coaching Hall of Fame for his contribution to the success of the England Rugby World Cup winning squad. He was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2004 for his services to rugby. His expertise is sought internationally, but he also generously supports BU's Sports Academic Group, mentoring staff on professional practice and research, giving lectures to students, and working closely with SportBU and its sports scholars. As a leading motivational speaker, he is also preparing to collaborate with BU in applying his principles of performing under pressure to the world of business.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Dr Dave Alred, and I ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.