

Accentuate all the positives

Correction is one way to improve, but the best way to promote success in life is to give praise when praise is due



John Morrison

I ALWAYS appreciate tennis players when they celebrate every crucial point won and in tennis doubles the partners always celebrate the effort they put into every rally, whether won or lost, with a handshake or high five - London players, this year, celebrated every Con-nacht championship game they've won or been involved in.

Some people ask: "Why celebrate anything? What good does it do? Does it affect economical growth, etc? What's the point?" A simple answer is, "It's plain, feel good fun."

It satisfies two key factors in personal motivation - the need to be appreciated and the desire to be involved.

As children we should receive a great deal of praise in our development.

It makes us feel good about ourselves and self-esteem is crucial to coping with sport/life. As adults we still respond to praise and still seek it from others. The self image of a child at the age of ten is a greater predictor of their future success in sport/life than their IQ.

Self image is based on feedback from one's world at large. Whenever we succeed in achieving something of

value or significance, however small, their praise, appreciation or celebration will help reinforce our sense of success and our positive self-image into our subconscious.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more.

I wonder how many journalists, pundits and social media contributors who pilloried Paul Grimley after the defeat by Cavan also took time to praise and celebrate with him when Armagh turned things around in the next game, against Wicklow. What a positive response if they did.

Most of us need only a bit of encouragement to help us make our goals, it's strange that we need an excuse to celebrate and/or that it has to follow a certain form.

We might not send cards except for Christmas, birthdays, weddings, etc. I often send little thank you notes to players thanking them for their effort and reminding them of their strengths.

Yet, achievement, however small, can be celebrated by the simple praise phrase, 'Well done'. And it doesn't need fireworks/champagne and we always get a smile in return and an increase in effort.

When we celebrate our children, young players, even our dogs when they've achieved something or done right we see them grow in confidence and quickly develop the skills we're encouraging.

With our adult players, their response to such praise is the same and yet it seems sadly as adults, one day unconditional praise and positive reinforcement just stops. In many ways

we have become a negative 'put-down' society. Not natural and not encouraging. Never leave players to simply get on with it. Those in charge must lead and positively lead.

When we celebrate any form of achievement, we create in ourselves a strong emotional identification with success - a memory that's stored away for future use. Recalling it makes us identify with a feeling of well being and confidence. Celebrate your success and you will create moments. Moments, not medals, are what your life is all about and as golden memories help us cope with sport/life.

Winning isn't everything. Wanting to win and preparing for it is everything. Celebrate something every day, make it a habit. How often these days in sport/life do we take pleasure in simple things? Our success is not a measure of what we earn or what we have. It is measured by what we become.

To reinforce and grow a strong self-image of yourself as succeeding, celebrate every goal that you achieve along the way. No matter how small, no matter if you just say to yourself, "Wow, job done" and feel genuinely good about it.

Are there any better words of encouragement in the world than 'Well done'?

In the absence of a cheerleader become your own cheerleader.

'Well done' to Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Fermanagh and Donegal who've come back stronger after earlier season defeats or disappointments.



PPRAISEWORTHY... Graham Ganty applauds the Australians following Ireland's loss in the International Rules series in 2003
Picture: Ray McManus/SPORTSFILE