

THE MIND...

Confidence before success

Confidence is the foundation stone of performance. If a player or team lack confidence, they can not expect to succeed



John Morrison

AFTER shock opening defeats Armagh, Tyrone and Derry will need a boost in confidence for the rest of their championship season and their future.

The Irish rugby team, after a disastrous Six Nations, Manchester City and Arsenal, after a trophy less season, will also need a boost of confidence for next year.

Self confidence is having a positive attitude and healthy belief in yourself and your ability, be it sport, work or life in general.

In sport this belief that you can successfully perform a given behaviour or task is known as self-efficacy. For example a player may have a high degree of confidence in kicking, but a low degree in high catching.

A player's expectation of doing something will be critical in whether they achieve it or not. A player confident in volleying a ball will not hesitate to volley home when a cross, at the right height and speed to take it first touch, comes across. A less confident player may attempt to first control the ball, losing valuable seconds and perhaps the chance to shoot and score. What are the benefits of confidence?

Confidence:

- Gives you positive feelings, allowing you to remain calm and relaxed under pressure. You will feel less anxiety at the same stress level as would a less confident player.
- Encourages you to stretch yourself, to reach higher. Allows you to set goals and face challenges where the outcome is risky. With less confidence you set easy to achieve goals and are content to play against lesser teams or less able players.
- Encourages effort and persistence and heads will not go down unlike less confident players.

Confident players play to win, want the ball, are not afraid to take risks, take control of the game. Less confident players play not to lose, avoiding mistakes and often avoid being on the ball.

How can a coach, coach confidence? Here are a few ways.

(i) Catch them doing good and tell them. Wait for success to come along, encourage and eventually when a player masters a good pass, a timely tackle, a session where they've worked hard, praise the player.

(ii) Feedback should be positive. The younger the player or more inexperienced at a higher level will make more mistakes. Be patient, wait for the good stuff. It's often what is not said as a coach that is more important than what is said.

(iii) Make your feedback expressive. Use superlatives rather than 'good' or 'well done'. Words like terrific, excellent, wonderful accompanied by a high five.

(iv) Use the feedback phrase. "That's unlike you not to..." For example, "That's unlike you not to track back." "That's unlike you not to win those catches or tackles." "That's unlike you to give up when we're losing."

(v) Change exercises after players have achieved some specific success and give them different exercises to achieve more success.

(vi) Reduce the 'But' and increase the 'And'. For example, if a player has been overly excited say 'great solo and next time if you look up you may see the pass,' instead of 'great solo, but, next time if...'

Using 'but' cancels out that went before it whereas 'and' maintains the positive nature of the first part of the feedback.

(vii) Make sure they understand and that you train everything fully. Tell it, show it, explain it, show it, walk it, run it slow, run it faster, run it unopposed, run it opposed - every session. If players doubt their preparation, they will doubt their ability to deliver.

(ix) Ask players before games, "How do you want to be in the game today?" Encourage answers like "I want to be lively, positive and calmly aggressive." The more a player acts confidently, as if they are a winner, the more likely they are to feel confident.

Does success breed success ring true? More accurately the phrase could be, success breeds confidence and confidence breeds success.



SMALL STEPS... One way to build confidence is to find positive aspects of a player's game, praise them for it and encourage them to build on it. Picture: Brian Lawless / SPORTSFILE

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