

Embracing child-like belief

Children have a try-everything approach to life, and that's the quality behind making progress as a player or coach

John Morrison



THROUGHOUT sport, many young stars are being bludgeoned into the senior ranks and are being encouraged to do so by positive, enlightened and caring managers.

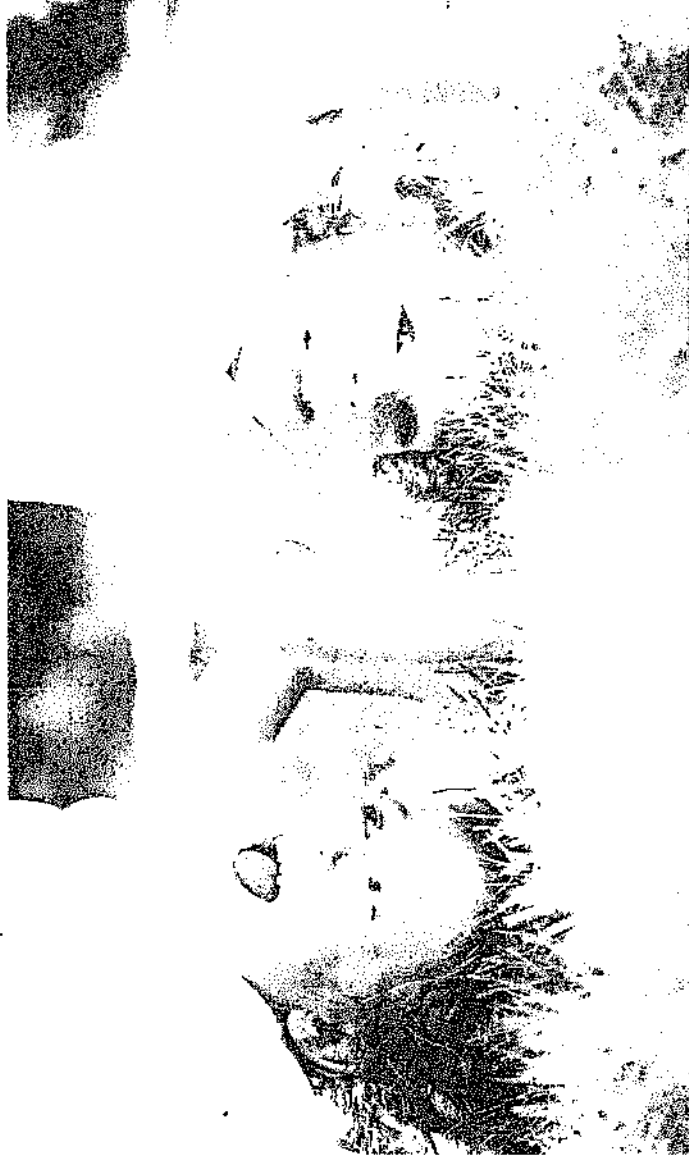
Conan Grugan, PJ Lavery (Tyronne), Ethan Rafferty (Armagh), Jack McCarron (Monaghan) and Aaron Kerrigan (Derry) are some of those bright young stars being allowed to shine.

Players are people and we are all born without prejudice or any sense of externally imposed limits on our potential. We are born genetically conditioned to succeed in the face of natural adversity, to survive.

Players, like children, are born with such imagination, such inner confidence, that in their minds they are the heroes of a thousand adventures. When that imagination and confidence are encouraged, anything seems possible; but when they are neglected, the child is damaged for life.

Remember the pictures from the Romanian orphanages where children were left uncared for, without stimulation, without love.

If a child's imagination is not developed, if the confidence the child



USE YOUR HEAD... There's a lot to learn from the way children go about skill acquisition

should naturally acquire is not fed, they will have no memory of personal achievement and thus no positive personal belief or self-esteem.

Happily, most children and players did experience that sense of achievement as children, and those memories remain with us, buried deep and as we grow older, we seem either to forget or to disregard those qualities which once gave us an absolute conviction in our ability to succeed.

As a player, put yourself in touch with the child you were; feel again the sense of wonderment and the belief that anything is possible. Think, 'I'm Possible', not, 'Impossible'.

When a child sets a goal, they may have no prior knowledge or experience of success, the child just believes they can do it - whatever it is. The resources the child draws on are imagination and determination. They also draw on other powerful qualities they are born with. For ex-

ample showing gratitude and appreciation, being flexible, being cheerful, full of vitality, full of passion and excitement, being curious and questioning, willing to give and co-operate.

Older players have stiff got that imagination and though sometimes they may have to dig deep to find the determination, players have still got that too.

Just as a child's confidence grows through praise and positive expert

coaches, so does a player's. So make it an ongoing process - as player, coach or manager - feel good about yourself and about your personal achievements, however small.

If you do something well, something that pleases you, as a player, give yourself a quiet, 'Well done', or even a loud one. The coach or manager should practice giving high fives when a player does something well. Remember, the person who has confidence in himself gains the confidence of others.

As coach, manager or player, note that those negative beliefs holding you back were formed by our past experiences; the result of learned experiences. You can unlearn them. Don't think, however that you can change them at the drop of a hat or that you can randomly construct an other set of behaviours without solid foundation. Habits aren't like that.

It is crucial to your lasting success and happiness that your belief in your abilities should be consistent with you and your team's core values and the personal and team ethics you measure you self and your team.

Work against them and you work against your self and your team. The confidence needed to achieve the future you want depends on the faith you have in yourself and your team.

If you create a positive self belief, with faith, you are maximising your potential to create success. Remember the child.