

# Practising the four virtues

Good coaches and managers often have characteristics in common. Do these apply to you, and if not, why not?



John Morrison

**T**HERE are new coaches breaking into sport year on year to challenge the previous raft of master coaches. As Pellegrini, Mourinho and Rodgers have done in soccer, so too Jim Gavin, Malachy O'Rourke and Jim McGuinness are being recognised as the new breed of master coaches in Gaelic football. The acquisition of skill is based on three parts:

## Ignition, deep practice and master coaching

Master coaches succeed because they first tap into ignition. By their coaching they are creating and sustaining motivation in their players, they are teaching love of the sport, by their enthusiasm and demeanour. The effect on the player, in this ignition phase, is that the player as a learner gets involved, captivated, hooked with the result the learner player needs and wants more information and expertise.

The master coaches methods make the initial learning for the player very pleasant and rewarding. They tend to give a lot of positive reinforcement and are rarely critical of the player, yet they do set stan-



THE EYES HAVE... Jim Gavin has the gaze

commanding gazes. Their gaze is about information, about figuring the player out, like my granny when I was very young as she gazed at me saying, "John, what you at?"

Master coaches treat players differently because they are different. They tend to be able in collective situations to still give individual treatment that is best for each player. They also know all about players in

Picture: Pat Murphy / SPORTSFILE

their wider life - what makes them tick. As they give players information they watch and listen for clues as to what players know or don't know and use these clues as a way to move players forward.

## Virtue three - The GPS Reflex

Master coaches give their players a lot of information. Shock them and then shock them more. Deliver infor-

mation like a machine gun - short, vivid, high definition burst. Never begin sentences with, 'Please, would you,' or, 'Do you think,' or, 'What about.' Instead use short imperatives. 'Now do x,' or, 'You will.' Sound clinical and urgent like a compelling GPS. 'Turn left, turn right, go straight, arrival complete.'

This be concise, locating mistakes and their solutions in the same vivid stroke. When they get to a new level, push the buttons. Push the buttons to the next level to see what they can do. Your mind is a hands-on learner.

## Virtue four - Have theatrical or acting honesty

Be a total coach on in all you do, act it beautifully, positively and with enthusiasm. Raise the voice, lower your voice, ask questions, figure out how they react, be mean and tough or easy going. Use what works on the players.

Drama and character, like an actor, are vital to coaching in their use to reach the student with the truth about their performances.

Point out the exact moment of their mistake - when things didn't work and build solutions from there. If it's a choice between telling them to do it or them figuring it out, master coaches take the second option every time. They want to make the player an independent thinker, a problem solver. Players don't need to be seen every day. Don't drip feed them all the time. Let them figure things out for themselves.

Use the four virtues to help you.