Playing without fear

Three years ago I was taken to task by suggesting Mickey Moran and I were coaching Mayo to play Brazil.

When asked to expand on our aim, I said Brazil's attitude was if their opponents score 10 - then they intended to score 11.

How refreshing for me last week when Paul Grimley announced that he and Kieran McGeeney were now promoting an 'attacking' game in their Kildare squad.

In fact, in pre-quarter final match interviews Paul insisted the Kildare would be sticking to the attacking philosophy which brought them face-to-face with Tyrone.

He stressed, "The most important things is that we play our game".

"That's the only way we're going to beat Tyrone. If you analyse opponents too much and try to counteract their strengths, one door shuts and another opens," Paul pointed out.

He added, "Sometimes when you do that, you sacrifice too many of your own players by applying them to a negative tactic. If your whole thing is about stopping them, Tyrone (and other teams) will attack you and destroy because their movement is so superior," he confirmed.

Tyrone put the fear of God into teams because they don't really care what the other team has.

As do the All Blacks, Man Utd, Brazil, Kilkenny, Crossmaglen etc etc.

Attacking is the best form of defence because it comes from a lack of fear.

If your beliefs are recurring thoughts of certainty - eg, "we will or we can win" - your players will take calculated risks and have no fear. They will be empowered by their beliefs rather than limited by them.

I've been advocating this in my past two articles.

Paul Grimley also said last week, "What's the point in reaching this stage (the quarter-final) and then being afraid of who you're going to play".

Excellent 'man-to-man' defenders capable of doing so, coupled with all the team being able to tackle properly when they haven't got the ball, is the best foundation and system for an attacking style of football.

'Siege' defensive systems can always be broken down.

Tyrone and Kildare endorsed the value and effectiveness of all out attacking, based on the counter ability to 'man to man' defend, in their magnificent game last Sunday.

Gaelic football at its best and, for me, there were two winners on the day in a game where every player played without fear.

In contrast, we saw how Cork's attacking game ripped apart Donegal's ultra defensive system.

Playing with two forwards doesn't win matches. But adult players playing with fear nowadays may be down to how our children are growing up today.

New research has found that youngsters today are missing out on the rough and tumble of outdoor games enjoyed by their parents.

A recent report on childhood activities in Northern Ireland had indicated that youngsters are in danger of losing out on developing important childhood skills that have a positive impact on their well being and on their development.

The ability to explore new challenges, learn to manage risk and to cope with change, are all learned from the games that previous generations grew up on outdoors.

Our 'over protective' ready-made entertainment indoors today, only breeds fear in our children.

They hear 'don't' more than they hear 'do'.

Hopscotch, climbing trees, skipping (rhymes), 'tig', etc, provide learning experiences based on imagination. These all help youngsters develop key skills, such as team play, counting and creativity that are crucial to their future development.

This 'BIG MOTHERED BRITAIN AND IRELAND' mentality is, in fact, restricting (limiting beliefs?) opportunities for our children to learn and play freely and without fear.

We literally are not giving our youngsters the best opportunities for their future.

We should not be afraid to let our children play without fear so that they can become adult players who play to win without fear.

Children do play to learn so let them.

If you do, as adults in their sport, they will play without fear

Posted: Thu 8 Oct 2009 **Author:** John Morrison