

ALL-IRELAND COMMENT

by JOHN MORRISON

Am I motivated?

IT'S great to see local lads Ronan Clarke, Andy Mallon, Gregory Loughran, Gareth Swift and Paul Duffy starring in the Armagh colours, both Senior and U-21.

Having known and watched each grow up and having coached each at some stage, their development from vocational school players to county stars is success itself.

I appreciate their confidence and motivation but in doing so I remind myself that confidence and motivation are two of the most over used and probably least understood terms in sport.

Motivation is often confused with being 'psyched up'.

Some believe motivation is about giving a tough pre-match or half-time speech to get players going.

This can be a good ploy, but the disadvantage of consistently using this approach will far outweigh any advantage.

Who mentions the same good speech if the team has lost?

Over-psyching can be as big a problem as being too relaxed but better they are relaxed before games than in a frenzy.

To achieve optimum motivation for players, you need to understand and appreciate them as individuals. Some need shouted out, some need a quiet word, and some others need to be left alone for a time before going out.

Motivation is influenced by two concepts: importance and confidence.

Players or teams apparently lacking in motivation could be asked: 'How much do you want to achieve?' (Importance) or 'How optimistic are you about being able to achieve your target?' (Confidence).

Coaches should learn to understand each player's personal motives for playing since these will affect attitudes, enjoyment and performance.

The coaching environment set by the coach should be positive, remember you can motivate players better with kind words than with a whip.

If self-confidence and self-motivation (elements

from within the player) are better than external factors such as coach or parental pressure or desire or the good of the club, coaches can best help players be self-motivating by their positive approach.

The coaches can make sessions interesting and challenging; provide players with clear feedback; allow players freedom to perform the task and learn from it; encourage players to help set some of the content for some sessions.

Motivating players is best done by having them adapt a PB, Personal Best, approach. Winning doesn't always mean being first. ('ego' orientated player or coach). Winning means you're doing better than you've ever done before, (task orientated player or coach).

A simple example of the impact of this would be two players A and B playing for their team in a game. Player A simply wants to win and will put the minimum effort in to do so. (At training they have been confident if feel they are best but anxious and nervous if don't.

They are more likely to show poor behaviour, blame others, moan, sometimes cheat and are unable to accept criticism (especially in front of others).

If they are better than the rest, they do not exert tremendous effort. If they feel they won't win, they simply give up.

Player B strives to achieve a personal best. Regardless of what happens in the game, they remain a winner by trying to improve their best. (In training these players persist longer, select more challenging tasks, enjoy themselves more and take criticism on board).

Player B is more likely to improve over time, exert greater effort and persist. They will enjoy competing more and take defeat less hurtful especially if 'PB' is improved.

Some other way of developing motivation are:

Show your players you care. You'll quickly find players do not care what 'coach' knows until they know you care. Keep in contact regularly, ring them especially if injured.

Emphasise personal improvement with players concentrating on their own performance. Emphasise enjoyment. Don't make it too serious.

Mistakes enhance learning, so offer constructive feedback without being critical or sarcastic.

Genuine praise and encouragement can be more effective in creating a positive environment than tangible rewards.

Use the TARGET model. (Task, Authority, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation, Time) to create an optimum training environment. Contact me if you want to know more about this.

You will generally find that the better prepared you are as a coach, the more players will enjoy the session. Simple really.

Armagh and Tyrone have been doing it for years and I suppose Kerry for a lot longer.

Be like Joe and Mickey, be confident and ask players their opinions. Be willing to listen to players and to put some of their ideas into practice.

All motivation needs a 'spark' to bring you to action. Ask any woman taking her photo of a hairstyle to get her hair done! What will set you off chasing your dream?