

**BILL BESWICK  
SOCCER  
MASTERCLASS  
SERIES  
FOR COACHES AND PLAYERS**

**VOLUME 1 : THE MODERN COACH**

**Workbook 1 : Profile of the Modern  
Soccer Coach**

# WORKBOOK 1 : PROFILE OF THE MODERN SOCCER COACH

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# PROFILE OF THE MODERN SOCCER COACH

## INTRODUCTION

*"There are athletes who can make it alone – those of unique talent – but for those whose profile shows both strengths and weaknesses there will be need of help, a guide to show them how to realise their potential. The coach-athlete relationship remains the basis of excellent performance."*

The quote above explains why I have chosen the psychology of coaching as the topic for the first Volume of the Masterclass Series, and the profile of the modern soccer coach as the subject of this workbook.

I have spent much of my life trying to understand what makes teams win and I am fully convinced that the quality of the coach is a highly significant factor. I've had the good fortune to work alongside some very good soccer coaches – and draw heavily from that experience – but it is also important to be a great student of coaches from other sports and the recommended reading list is a valuable part of the series.

The modern soccer coach is challenged by the changing nature of both the modern player and the modern game. Each requires that the coach adjusts his or her philosophy and coaching style to stay ahead of such change and meet the demands of their own particular situation.

Whilst re-emphasising traditional coaching virtues – courage, commitment, character and so on – the conclusion of this workbook is that the modern coach is going to be challenged intellectually and emotionally in new and very demanding ways – and coping with this may be the difference between success and failure.

Enjoy and good coaching!



## THE COACH'S JOURNEY – COACHING IS CHANGING

The only thing constant about modern soccer is change! Increasing knowledge, experience, scientific and technological advancement all exert their influence on the game and our attempts to play it excellently.

Society itself, and importantly the family structure, has changed dramatically and the modern player brings a new profile of strengths and weaknesses to challenge the coach.

Figure 1 shows the pattern of change as we move from traditional coaching – which of course was right for its time – to modern coaching.

<b>FIGURE 1 : THE MOVE FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN COACHING</b>	
<p><b>Traditional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on winning.....</li> <li>• Task centred .....</li> <li>• Results dominated .....</li> <li>• Instinctive .....</li> <li>• Player dependent .....</li> <li>• Isolated .....</li> <li>• 'Me' .....</li> <li>• Authoritarian .....</li> <li>• Yells .....</li> <li>• Speaks .....</li> <li>• Trainer .....</li> <li>• Field only .....</li> <li>• Ex-player .....</li> <li>• Hard worker .....</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modern</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on winning</li> <li>• Player-centred</li> <li>• Excellence dominated</li> <li>• Careful planning</li> <li>• Coach influenced</li> <li>• Mentored</li> <li>• 'We'</li> <li>• Democratic</li> <li>• Sells</li> <li>• Listens and then speaks</li> <li>• Teacher/Technologist</li> <li>• Field and classroom</li> <li>• Qualified coach</li> <li>• Smart worker</li> </ul>

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Although coaching must adapt, the virtues of the great traditional coaches – Vince Lombardi, Sir Alf Ramsey, John Wooden and so on – such as presence and charisma, the positive use of power and authority, a driving vision, courage under fire and the ability operate under public scrutiny will still underpin great coaching.

What will change is the player-coach relationship and a new emphasis on coaches sharing the process with the players – 'shared ownership' – and becoming as much player-centred as task-centred.

All coaches are in the end measured by results but the modern coach will not be dominated by them. They understand that the drive for excellence in performance – an everyday focus on teaching and preparing – is the best way to ensure consistent results and build great player relationships.

The traditional coach also often worked alone and dictated the programme from above, but now it is much more common to see the coach as the leader of a multi-skilled support team seeking consensus on the best preparation for the players.

One of the most significant challenges the modern coach faces is in the use of sports science and technology in the teaching and preparation of players. The most dramatic change in the English Premier League is the advance of match analysis, feedback and player accountability as coaches learn to maximise on the technological benefits of systems such as Prozone.

*I had the good fortune to observe two great basketball coaches in USA colleges. One had one eye on the scoreboard right from the tip-off and never stopped putting pressure on his players to win. The other ignored the scoreboard, calmly coached the process, and then worked the scoreboard in the last 5 minutes. One burned himself and his players out and the other was much-respected and very successful.*

So we see the modern coach as working smart as well as hard, more thoughtful, more democratic, a leader rather than a dictator, a 'seller' of ideas rather than a 'yeller' of opinions.

Their philosophy will be based on player relationships focused on respect, shared ambition, good communication and with a shared motivation to pursue the journey to excellence.

You will understand then, that when I am asked if modern coaches need to be ex-players my answer is that it always helps but is no longer essential. The complex nature and variety of features listed in Figure 1 may well see the emergence of a new breed of coaches from a variety of backgrounds – but all with the personality and ability to meet the four great demands of modern coaching.

- A sophisticated understanding of the game and a willingness to always continue to be a student of the game.
- The presence, personality, and communication skills to 'sell the dream'.
- The intellectual ability to cope with ever-increasing performance analysis and information and to use it to make better decisions – especially being able to cope with the advances in sports science and technology.
- The emotional intelligence to stay stable, well-balanced and maintain healthy relationships with players, staff and fans in the roller-coaster world of competitive soccer.

Finally check where you feel you are right now on Figure 2 – a self-evaluation exercise. The aim is simply to identify strengths and weaknesses. – "strongly agree/agree" represents a strength, "strongly disagree/disagree" represents a weakness, and "maybe" represents indecision – a poor quality in a coach.

For further analysis note that questions 1-5 reflect the personality of the coach, 6-10 coaching skills and 11-15 the relationship skills.

You could also ask fellow coaches and players to complete this for you as a further check.

FIGURE 2 : WHERE ARE YOU NOW? - A COACH'S SELF-EVALUATION						
	Decide where you stand on the following questions and ✓ the box that best fits	Strongly Agree	Agree	Maybe	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Everyone knows how passionate and committed I am to coaching soccer					
2.	My personality and behaviour always reflect a positive model to my players					
3.	I have clear goals and am tough enough to drive the programme forward					
4.	I am a good communicator and always get my message across					
5.	Players enjoy playing for me					
6.	I have a clear understanding of how to develop players and teams					
7.	My strength is being able to plan, organise and coach practice well					
8.	I have a good track record of identifying and recruiting talent					
9.	I am tactically sound and can teach a variety of formations					
10.	I coach game day well and always give my team the best chance to win					
11.	I pride myself on developing positive and productive relationships with players					
12.	Players who have played for me will say I got the best out of them					
13.	As far as possible I always try to share 'ownership' with the players					
14.	I communicate constantly with the players but especially I listen					
15.	The power of my player relationships is shown by their motivation to play					

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## THE MODERN COACH – A JOB DESCRIPTION

Very often coaching jobs do not come with a job description. This often implies a lack of clarity in what a coach does – and can lead to later problems.

I recommend that such a job description for a soccer coach should concentrate on 3 key aspects:

1. Personality – does this coach possess the necessary characteristics – eg. passion, commitment, charisma, resilience, and so on?
2. Production – can this coach plan, organise, teach, and build a winning soccer team?
3. Relationships – does this coach have the interpersonal and motivational skills to get the best out of players and staff?

Using this as a basis I know what questions to ask when interviewing for a modern coach. Discuss with your colleagues how you would answer the following questions:

Interview questions – post of soccer coach:

Why do you want to be a coach?

What are your personal strengths and weaknesses as a coach?

How would you impact on and improve players?

Describe the players you will be working with

How is potential turned into performance?

What benefits can you see from sports science and technology?

How do you build a cohesive team?

Why are you at your best on game day?

How would you handle success – or failure?

How will our players describe you?

Tell me about your life outside soccer.

What should emerge from the better candidates are the 10 key qualities of a modern coach:

1. A suitable character
2. Intellectually and emotionally sound
3. Experienced and qualified
4. A sound and winning coaching philosophy
5. A good communicator
6. The ability to plan, prepare and organise
7. The ability to create a network of support
8. The ability to develop positive relationships
9. A builder of teams
10. Potential for leadership.

Figure 3 shows the results of research defining the characteristics of successful coaches.

<b>FIGURE 3 : THE SEVEN SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL COACHES (RESEARCH RESULTS)</b>	
1.	Character
2.	Consistency
3.	Communicator
4.	Caring
5.	Confidence builder
6.	Committed
7.	Competent
<i>Dale &amp; Janssen</i>	

Figure 4 offers you the chance to assess yourself or your colleagues – also use peer group evaluation to give appropriate feedback.

<b>FIGURE 4 : THE 12 KEY DEMANDS ON A MODERN SOCCER COACH</b>				
<b>"The Modern Soccer Coach will be ....."</b>		<b>This is my strength</b>	<b>I can cope with this</b>	<b>I need to work on this</b>
1.	A strong, competitive, and resilient character			
2.	Intellectually and emotionally sound			
3.	Appropriately qualified and experienced			
4.	Consistently guided by a clear coaching philosophy			
5.	Able to plan, prepare, and manage training, matches and a season			
6.	An excellent teacher of the game			
7.	Able to gather, analyse and evaluate information			
8.	A team leader for a network of multi-skilled support staff			
9.	Successful at developing honest and inspiring player relationships			
10.	An innovative thinker able to create winning game plans			
11.	Expert at building cohesive teams and squads			
12.	Gifted in communication, motivation and leadership			

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## PERSONALITY AND COACHING STYLE

I have now reached the age where I can look back on my coaching career meaningfully and honestly. More and more I realise that I was limited only by my own personality. At times I was unable to coach myself and yet still trying to coach a team of complex characters.

My value as a mentor to younger coaches is that I now understand this. Coaching begins with self-awareness; an honest appraisal of strengths and weaknesses. Once I have defined that profile with a coach we look at strategies to maximise strengths and contain weaknesses and build this into an effective coaching style.

Every coach must develop a coaching style that is effective in interpreting their vision into meaningful action whilst staying true to their personality.

Such a modern coaching style must:

- meet the needs of a fast-changing sophisticated game
- meet the needs of the modern player
- move beyond simply 'hardware' coaching – physical, technical, tactical – and embrace 'software' coaching – mental, emotional, lifestyle
- emphasise the positive over the negative at all times
- be based on high levels of communication
- be appropriate for the coaching situation – coaching U-10's requires a different style from coaching U-18's, coaching girls may require subtle changes of style, and so on.

The potential for coaching problems – especially of a mental, emotional, or lifestyle nature – has increased dramatically as the nature of our players has changed. Figure 5 illustrates the likely characteristics of modern young players.

<b>FIGURE 5 : CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYER 2000+</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent – less submissive</li><li>• Preoccupied with self – 'me not we'</li><li>• 'Pick and mix' loyalty</li><li>• Finds criticism difficult</li><li>• More liable to conflict</li><li>• More lifestyle problems</li><li>• Motivation less strong, more variable</li><li>• More liable to mental, physical burnout</li><li>• Needs emotional support</li></ul>

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Clearly a coaching style based on command and control may not work as it has in the past. The modern coach whilst retaining authority must be less overtly 'tough' and build a 'warmer' relationship style that can get the best out of players. The player must now be firmly in the centre of the coach's focus and regular and sensitive communication becomes a priority.

Thus the coach and players share 'ownership' of the journey to excellence and such inclusion ensures player motivation and co-operation – the player being empowered to have greater control of their personal soccer destiny.

Figure 6 allows the coach to measure themselves – or even better have fellow coaches or players measure them – on the tough/weak, warm/cold dimensions of coaching. Whilst simplistic, this measurement has value in helping coaches reflect on their style.

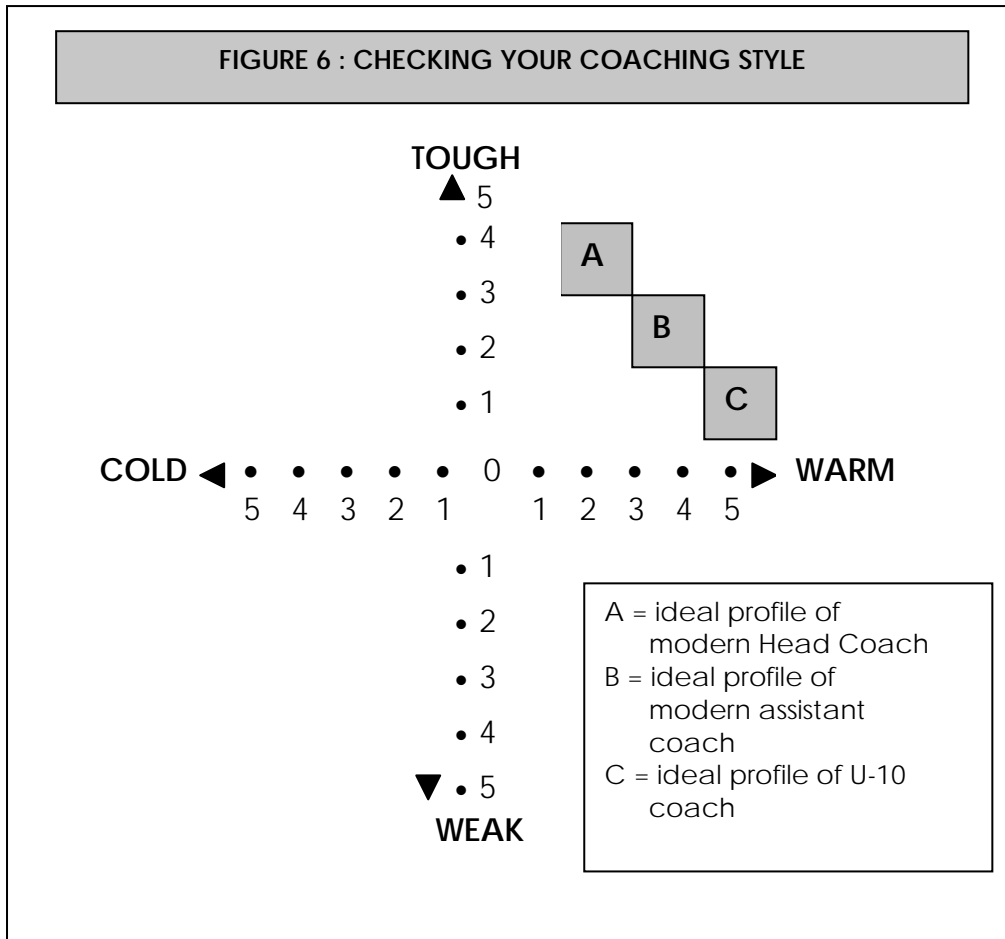


Figure 7 compares traditional and modern coaching styles and acts as a useful checklist for coaches. The key point - and one I will come back to again and again in the Masterclass Series – is the rising importance of not just the intellectual capacity of the coach (IQ) but the emotional intelligence (EQ). This will become a key determinant of whether a coaching style is capable of dealing with and getting the best from the more complex and difficult players now emerging.

**FIGURE 7 : COMPARING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN COACHING STYLES**

Traditional	Modern
• Charismatic .....	• Understated
• Action-orientated .....	• Reflective
• Idealistic .....	• Pragmatic
• Top down .....	• Bottom up
• Motivation via fear .....	• Motivation via reason
• Task focused .....	• Task and people focused
• I.Q. ....	• I.Q. and E.Q.
• Individual/isolated .....	• Team/mentored
• Tough and cold .....	• Tough and warm
• Coach hard .....	• Coach hard and smart
• Person of few words .....	• Constant communicator
• Tendency to be negative .....	• Tendency to be positive
• Instinct .....	• Planning and preparation
• My way or "highway" .....	• More than one way

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*Sir Clive Woodward, the successful England Rugby Head Coach, prioritised communication as part of his coaching style – so much so that he provided all his players with laptops and a day's training to ensure that communication was never a problem regardless of where coaches and players were at any given times.*

## STRATEGIES – THE FOUNDATIONS OF WINNING

In the early days of coaching many coaches flew 'by the seat of their pants' and made the script up as they went along. Modern soccer is too complex to allow that and increasingly, strategy and planning are becoming the foundations of success. Coaches who are intellectually capable of becoming – and staying – students of the game will see strategy and planning as an interesting challenge and not a chore and their teams will benefit.

**COACHING PHILOSOPHY** : every coach needs a sound and clear coaching philosophy – their particular everyday approach to creating excellent soccer teams. This blueprint of vision and action allows them to plan an appropriate programme of work every day, week and season.

Their philosophy must be:

- coherent – capable of being clearly communicated and clearly understood
- 'do-able' – capable of being acted upon by the team in their particular situation.

Your personal philosophy starts the day you become responsible for a team and of course never ends as you build experience and knowledge.

*'When teams stay the course and hold fast to their philosophy through good times and bad, they work from a firm foundation. They gain an identify. They stand for something'*

*Bill Parcells*

The foundations of any coaching philosophy are:

1. Experience – clearly the richer the coach's experience the more solid and sophisticated the philosophy is likely to be. Many coaches will draw upon their experience as ex-players – coached by other players! – but this is no longer enough. It is vital the coach does not get trapped within their own experiences repeating the philosophies of their former coach, but seeks and is influenced by a wide range of experiences.
2. Knowledge – a coaching philosophy must match the game's progress so keeping up-to-date with new ideas, tactics, preparation methods is vital. Much of this knowledge is soccer related but there is an increasing need for the modern coach to be able to deal with wider demands – business, media, psychology, technology, exercise science, lifestyle and so on. Such demands are why we may increasingly see coaches supported by expert staff who can interpret the information.

*When Steve McClaren and I moved from Manchester United to Middlesbrough we took our philosophy with us. We lost the first 4 games! Under great pressure Steve took my advice to 'stick to the plan' and 3 years later the same fans who booed him cheered as we won the Club's first ever trophy in 128 years of existence. Stay in the game!*

3. Player-centred – all successful modern coaching philosophies put the player at the centre of the process and aim to deliver the maximum performance from the player potential available.

Increasingly philosophies reflect a holistic approach to developing 'complete' players and are based around:

Physical – building maximum physical capacity

Technical – developing a high level of skill

Tactical – teaching tactical intelligence

Mental – creating positive and strong attitudes

Emotional – developing control under pressure

Lifestyle – ensuring this supports the above.

4. Context related – any philosophy must reflect the particular needs of the situation the coach finds himself in. If you are coaching U-10 then develop a U-10 philosophy and don't try a senior team approach.

Similarly a philosophy will reflect gender, cultural issues, competitive level, ambitions of owner/fans/parents, and so on.

Figure 8 helps you start to get your particular philosophy in order by asking you to complete your answers to some key questions.

Do this exercise with the coaching staff – first of all individually and then collectively.

<b>FIGURE 8 : BUILDING MY COACHING PHILOSOPHY</b>	
<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Key Statements Of Philosophy</b>
<b>Vision</b>	My vision for my team is.....
<b>Targets</b>	Our targets for the next period will be .....
<b>Attitudes</b>	We will establish a positive mentality throughout the club by .....
<b>Relationships</b>	The coach-player relationships I want to develop are .....
<b>Planning</b>	Our programme will be well planned because .....
<b>Recruitment</b>	My plan for getting and keeping the best players is .....
<b>Setbacks</b>	The way we will deal with the setbacks will be .....
<b>Practice</b>	The way I will establish effective practice will be ....
<b>Teaching</b>	Players will constantly develop because our teaching will be .....
<b>Matches</b>	Our plan for coaching games will be ....
<b>Results</b>	We will always deal with success or failure by ....

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**PLANNING THE PROGRAMME:** arising from your coaching philosophy should be a blueprint of your action plan. This will build structure to your ideas and give you an appropriate development plan for the day, the week and the season.

Raising the importance of planning – especially longer term – has been a key part of my role coaching the coaches wherever I have been. By instinct coaches want to live in the ‘now’ – dealing with today’s issues – rather than learning from the past or preparing for the future.

At Middlesbrough we deal with 3 key plans –

1. The plan for the day – decided in a staff meeting from 9.00-9.30 am and then communicated to the players via the dressing room whiteboard. Clearly this can only be planned each day as the situation with games, injuries, etc is very variable.
2. The 12 week plan – whilst planning the day we are all conscious of the upcoming 12 weeks listed on a whiteboard clearly in view. The knowledge of what is to come will influence our day to day decisions – for example whether to train hard, minimally, or rest the players.
3. The full season plan – again laid out on a large whiteboard. This helps us reflect where we have been and how far we have to go, plus highlighting key phases of the season. This is the board that the Head Coach and I use for all sorts of forecasting – our potential points total, the pattern of work and rest, recruiting opportunities, and so on.

Figure 9 shows that there are 4 key planning areas that feature in every planning meeting – short or long term. At Middlesbrough we are fortunate to have experts supporting the Head Coach with planning suggestions for each of the areas of physical, technical, tactical, and mental/emotional work.

Figure 9 also represents a useful framework for coaches who need a structure to help them plan their programme of activity.

Make sure you keep a record of this and use it for end of season evaluation and learning – what worked, what didn’t, etc.

*Sir Alex Ferguson, Manager of Manchester United, knows how to plan and manage a season. In the November of his first year as Coach to United, Steve McClaren was so disappointed with the players attitude to training day that he went to Alex and suggested a ‘reprimand’. Alex declined saying that as the really big games were in March/April he would prefer to save his ‘reprimands’ for then.*

FIGURE 9 : PLANNING THE PROGRAMME INCORPORATING PHYSICAL, TECHNICAL, TACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS				
Phase of Season	Physical Programme	Technical Programme	Tactical Programme	Psychological Programme
Pre-Season				
1 <sup>st</sup> quarter Of season				
2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter of season				
3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter of season				
Final quarter of season				
Close season work				

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NB. In each box there should be a stated objective and the key methods that you believe will help your players achieve it – remember objectives change as the season moves on and the number of games and win/loss records etc changes. You may need to review this plan 4 times a season.

**CREATING A COACHING ENVIRONMENT:** this is so important I devote a separate workbook in this volume to this topic, (Workbook 5), but it has to be mentioned here in context as a key part of the strategic planning of coaching.

I know coaches tend to be dismissive of anything other than serious practice and playing and that they see the impact of the general environment as superficial.

However, the modern player – raised so differently from their coaches – is influenced by all sorts of environmental issues either positively or negatively and this in turn influences the quality of training or playing.

We have tried to create at Middlesbrough a ‘no-excuse’ environment which meets the players’ needs – parking, kit, locker room, medical, catering, family support, and so on – that the player really has no excuses for not training properly.

Not only do we try to cater for players’ needs but also players’ feelings and so we create ‘resonance’ where the feelings of the players – individually or collectively – are identified early and if negative are quickly brought back to the positive.

Much of this is achieved by the personalities and professionalism of the staff surrounding the players. They must – win or lose – put the player first and be a constant source of support.

Workbook 5 in this volume expands greatly on this but I want coaches to understand the strategic importance of creating a positive coaching environment and the cost of failing to do so.

**BUILDING THE TEAM:** in building your coaching philosophy you will have worked ‘from the end backwards’ and asked yourself some key questions:

- What kind of soccer do I believe in?
- What will characterise my team’s play?
- What are my coaching strengths?
- What is the right approach for the coaching and competitive situation I am in right now?

The more you work on these questions – and good coaches spend a great deal of time reflecting and visualising – the more you will begin to get a picture of the squad, team and players you want. The key to coaching success lies then in your ability and determination to recruit and build a squad of players who can regularly produce the winning soccer you envision.

Although this is the less attractive ‘off-the-field’ stuff of coaching, planning the building of the squad carefully will later bring rich rewards on the field. Coaches must consider several key issues.

- What size squad do I need – am I allowed – in order to meet the competitive challenge of the season?
- What are the general characteristics I am looking for:
  - age
  - ability
  - athleticism
  - coachability
  - characterand so on.

- If this is not a new team, then what player resources do I already have, who can I use and who must I move on?
- Knowing how I will play tactically I can define the requirements of each position and profile the players needed to complete the squad.

So recruitment – a never ending process – is a first key step in building the squad.

Once assembled the coach needs to communicate vision, goals and a sense of identity. Much more will be said about team-building later in The Masterclass Series but for now coaches should work on three key steps:

1. **Vision** – it is the job of the Coach to give players and staff (and parents where applicable) a very clear sense of purpose – a reason ‘why’ everybody is going to work very hard.
2. **Task Cohesion** – again the Coach must communicate very clearly how the team will play and how each member of the team is expected to do their job. The importance of the squad players in a long season should also be emphasised. Everybody must understand their purpose and contribution.
3. **Social Cohesion** – coaching is getting the best out of people and people generally give more when they feel good about themselves and the people around them. Coaches must not forget that the squad is a social unit and when positive is very powerful and when negative will not perform. Everyday and in everyway coaches must apply strategies that keep the squad in the positive.

*When coaching England at basketball I had a long night out with the Australian Coach, Jay Brehmer, after his team had defeated mine in a tournament in Bangkok. After a few drinks Jay suddenly gave me some advice which I have never forgotten:*

*‘Bill, do you want to be a good coach? – ‘Yes’ – ‘well get good players!’  
‘Bill, do you want to be a great coach? – ‘Yes’ – ‘well get great players!’*

## PRODUCTION – DRIVING THE PROGRAMME

The journey to soccer excellence must start with the coach and the potential of their impact on the players. Essential to this is the coach's ability to both plan and 'drive' a programme of continual improvement.

The process of preparing the players to play is fundamental to success and will reflect the coach's depth of understanding of the game and the ability to use support systems.

All this fails if the coach is not able to deal effectively with the management of game day – when all great coaches really earn their money.

Dealing with the outcome of games in a manner which supports and does not destroy the development of the team is another crucial skill.

Finally it is important that the coach always understands fully and takes into consideration the particular context of each game – and its implications on possible performance.

**PREPARING TO PLAY:** deciding the context and content of each practice session is based on your coaching philosophy and the overall programme planned. No practice session can be wasted and it is important to 'do the right thing every day' . Game day is simply a public exposure of the good habits you teach every day.

There are always a thousand things coaches can work on but good coaches prioritise and simplify – “working backwards from our next game what do I need to help my players with?” .

Of course many of these drills will be the same each practice but again the good coach knows how to repeat without boredom – coaches must build a wide range of drills to cover each skill. One of the best ways to do this is to observe “best practice” and take every chance to watch good coaches in action.

Good preparation is a balanced diet of physical, technical, tactical and mental activity. Coaches must understand both the “science” and the “art” involved. Coaches need understanding and help in the science of exercise, fitness, injury and rehabilitation. Similarly they must work on the ‘art’ of emotional intelligence, understanding where their players are psychologically and how to ensure a collective positive state of mind before practice begins.

Exercise 10 helps coaches plan a more balanced and thoughtful session:

*When coach at Manchester United Steve McClaren used to prepare 3 different practice sessions (science) – he would only decide on which one after visiting the dressing room and checking on the mood and energy of the players (art)*

FIGURE 10 : PLANNING PRACTICE TO ENSURE A PHYSICAL, TECHNICAL, TACTICAL AND MENTAL BALANCE					
Activity		Benefits			
		Physical	Technical	Tactical	Mental
1.	Pre-session meeting			✓	✓
2.	Warm-up	✓	✓		✓
3.	Quick feet	✓			
4.	4 v 2	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	.... and so on				

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Exercise 10 helps coaches maximise on practice opportunities and prepare key teaching points. One of my favourite sessions is when I work alongside a coach during a practice and they focus on the physical, technical and tactical teaching whilst I inject key psychological messages.

Of course most coaches work alone so it may help them help their players mentally if they focus on the messages of the ICE checklist for programming players' mindset.

I - Intensity  
Intelligence

C - Confidence  
Composure  
Control

E - Emotion  
Enthusiasm  
Enjoyment

Points To Consider.

- Be careful - poor administration and organisational errors do not offer excuses for poor practice.
- Do not overcoach – it's not about how much you know but about how much your players can take.
- Create a work ethic in your players via your enthusiasm and persistence.

'1,000 days to learn, 10,000 days to refine'.

- Balance work, rest, relaxation and recovery – players will only practise well when energised and never leave your "game legs" on the practice field.
- Keep a journal or record of your practice sessions – you could file all your session notes in one folder – and review at the end of the session.
- Always remember the end point of preparation is that the team is physically, technically, tactically and mentally ready to play.

Figure 11 details a working day in the life of a professional coach and the effort that goes into getting it right for the players.

<b>FIGURE 11 : A DAY IN THE LIFE OF COACH STEVE ROUND – MIDDLESBROUGH F.C.</b>	
8.00 am	Cycle to club training ground
8.15	Meet Medical staff – players available to train?
8.30	Meet Head Coach – organise practice - plan today's meetings
9.00	Inform all staff of practice responsibilities
9.25	See ground staff with today's instructions
9.30	List all today's events on players notice board
9.35	Check video technician for today's meetings
9.45	Check dressing room – 15 minutes chat to get the mood of the players
10.00	Final check with medical staff " " " Head Coach
10.15	Down to pitch – check layout, equipment etc
10.30	Meeting room – listen to Head Coach discuss the game plan for the next game
10.50	Down to field – practice as planned
12.10	Extra work with 1 player or small group
12.30	Back inside – check gym and player warm down Check medical staff – training injuries?
12.45	Unit meeting (attackers) with help of video technician – special teaching topic
1.00	Lunch
1.30	Staff meeting – use of Prozone game analysis
2.30	Meet sports psychologist - review players
3.00	Final meeting with Head Coach
3.30	Personal training in gym/or run
4.30	Cycle home to Sarah and young Jamie John
7.00	Watch reserve team game
9.00	Share a beer with the staff
10.30 pm	Home

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**GAME PLANNING:** the job of the coach is to give their players every chance to win soccer matches. Good preparation should also include the preparation of a game plan – the way we should play to win based on the information we know.

There are 3 key questions the coach needs to answer:

1. What impact will the context of the game have?
  - home or away, significance of the game, pitch conditions, weather, travel.
2. What do we know about the opposition?
  - recent record, likely confidence, injuries, how they will try to stop us scoring, how they will try to score, strengths v weaknesses.
3. What do we know about us?
  - recent W/L record, level of confidence, injuries/selection, what we have practised, best ways of scoring, best ways of keeping a clean sheet, likely key moments.

From this information base the coach must create a “mental model” of how the game might go and decide how best to instruct their team.

Key issues will be:

- selection/substitutes
- formation/shape
- tempo
- special assignments
- set pieces
- shaping a winning attitude.

When my Head Coach has the game plan ready I test him with several key questions:

- will we be hard to beat?
- will we win midfield?
- have we got width?
- how will we score?
- will the players be comfortable with this plan and believe in it?

Finally, no game plan is worthwhile unless it is well communicated – again it is not about what you know but all about what the players can take (especially if your only chance to communicate is in the emotional atmosphere of a pre-match dressing room).

*I am grateful to the Coach I met at Notre Dame who told me how hard he prepared for each game with his U14 team. Every game he told them in great detail about each player on the opposition – and got a passive response. Then one day one of his players dared to ask “why can't you talk about us?.....”*

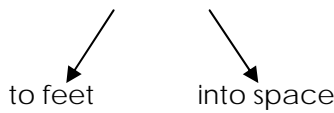
Of course it is helpful to have consistent selection and continuity of the game plan – then you are merely reinforcing good habits. However the higher the level you coach you will find the quality of the opposition forces more thought about specific game planning. Finally, our game plan meeting is always based on:

- Selection
- Shape
- Organisation/Discipline
- Attitude.

Figures 12 and 13 are examples of game plan messages to the players.

<b>FIGURE 12 : GAME PLAN - DEFENDING</b>	
1.	Recover to shape
2.	Be compact
3.	Send the ball wide
4.	Trap – stop the switch
5.	Press together
6.	Win the ball back

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<b>FIGURE 13 : GAME PLAN - ATTACKING</b>	
1.	First pass forwards  to feet      into space
2.	Keep Possession - move ball quickly - switch play - use the width - sustain play – 6 passes
3.	End Product - final third entries - crosses - penalty area entries - through ball - cross - shots - SCORE

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**COACHING THE GAME:** all preparation and game-planning leads to game day and the ultimate test for coaches is whether they can successfully coach important games.

All coaches at whatever level face two great challenges on game day:

1. can they cope intellectually in understanding and managing the 'chess board' of the modern game?
2. can they cope emotionally with the challenge to their self identity and self esteem of being potential winners or losers at any given moment?

These two issues are clearly interlinked and good coaches need both to be functioning positively in order to help their team win. How often have I seen a coach's inability to deal with themselves emotionally destroy their capacity for focused thinking.

In coaching the coaches I spend a great deal of time on game coaching behaviour and my key messages are:

**'Intellectual' Coaching'** – ie. smart, focused thinking

- Move into 'big picture' strategic thinking – don't get caught up in minor issues, irritations
- Trust your game plan and stick to the script
- Absorb game-day information – opposition, weather, pitch conditions
- Be willing to adapt but only if necessary
- Ensure key information is clearly understood
- Prepare yourself mentally – your job is focused observation to help you understand what is happening in the game
- Observe the patterns of the game rather than the incidents
- Be prepared for possible setbacks – create a 'mental model' of how you will respond eg. how will you cover an injury to any one of your players?
- If the game plan is working try to stay out of the way of your team – but if it's not, have the courage to make an impact on the game by making changes and don't wait until the game is lost.

**'Emotional Coaching'** – ie. self control and composure under pressure

- Always remember you are the 'model' which tells your players and fans how to feel – you are the source of the team's confidence
- Build a personal routine for game day that keeps you well-balanced – positive rituals, no surprises
- Learn to observe and influence the game rather than being an unfocused emotional spectator
- Respond to incidents, setbacks rather than emotionally reacting to them – the only response allowed is 'how can I best deal with this in order to help my team win'
- Hold your nerve
- Always stay in the game and coach until the final whistle
- Show your team how to take a defeat as well as a win.

*When I became assistant to the England Basketball Coach, Tom Wisman, our first trip was a 4 day, 2 game journey to Iceland. Tom and I shared a room and when I put my blazer and slacks in the wardrobe I was amazed to discover 4 suits hung up. I asked Tom and he let me know how important it was for the players to always see him looking smart and confident – look the look!*

Figure 14 offers coaches an example of a personal mental script that when followed could dramatically improve self discipline, composure and game coaching.

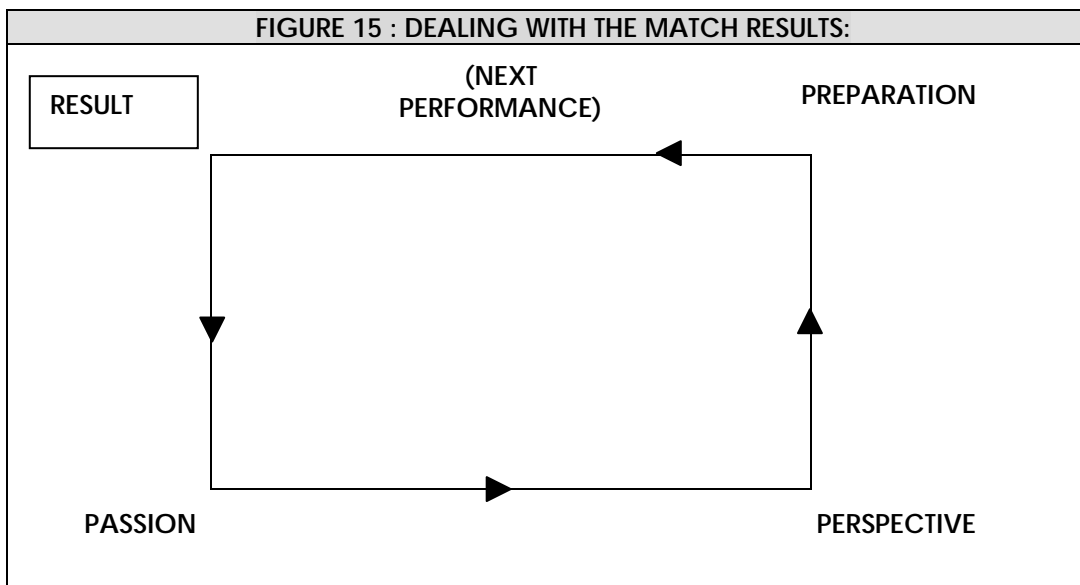
<b>FIGURE 14 : COACHING THE GAME – A MENTAL ‘MODEL’</b>		
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> HALF</b>	0'	Observation of key patterns of the game - focused thinking and strong emotional control
	20'	Test some key questions: - is the game plan working? - will changes help? - are the changes tactical or personnel? - what are the opposition likely to change?
	40'	
	45'	Prepare half time instructions
<b>HALF TIME</b>		- check in with your staff - allow the players to relax/check their mood - tell them what they have done well - tell them what needs changing (if any) - tell them how it will help them win - rebuild motivation and attitude
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> HALF</b>	45'	Observation of key patterns of the game - focused thinking
	60'	Test some key questions: - will we win if I don't make changes? - what options are left open to me? - can I help with a tactical change? - can I help with a personnel change? - will my substitutes impact the game?
	90'	Prepare to deal with the outcome

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**DEALING WITH THE OUTCOME:** some of the most important work a coach does comes after the game is over. The players – and the media – will look to the coach to tell them how to feel about the game plus the coaching staff need to learn as much as they can from the performance.

Figure 15 illustrates that the coach must be in control of a post game psychological pattern that will flow from the result:

1. the passion of a win or loss (the most dangerous phase!)
2. the perspective of understanding what happened and why
3. using this information as the basis for structuring preparation for the next game.



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The end of game speech where a coach ‘closes the game down’ is a great coaching skill. Key to keeping a team psychologically and emotionally stable is being able to help the players move on from a win or a loss in a healthy and positive state.

Coaches must become ‘realistic optimists’ and learn to interpret outcomes – success or failure – in a way that re-emphasises their belief in the team and allows everybody to move on. So coaches must build ways of closing down games – either post game or at the next practice session – that is truthful, holds the team accountable (we speak about the team in front of the team, but we speak of individuals only in front of that individual), allows for future learning and creates a collective state of mind.

A simple strategy is as follows:

**FIGURE 16 : GAME OUTCOME OPTIONS**

OUTCOME	CLOSE-DOWN SPEECH
Played well and won	- job well done – Enjoy!
Played badly and won	- we were lucky today but might not be next time
Played well and lost	- unlucky today but keep playing like that
Played badly and lost	- disappointing, a lot to work on but stick together

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Dealing with the game outcome sensitively is especially important in womens soccer. Research shows that when women are depressed – have just lost a game, played poorly etc – they will not move on as quickly as men. Women need to focus on, examine and express their emotional state – and may require ‘counselling’ help post-match.

It is also vital that coaches take great care in not attributing blame post match before reviewing the evidence. Most teams now film their games or use a match analysis system like Prozone and what seemed right immediately after the game can be proved wrong when the game is later reviewed!

Without the discipline and intellectual capacity to learn from performances a coach will never grow and develop – and of course is destined to repeat mistakes over and over again.

My experience is that soccer coaches have good knowledge but often they need help structuring a problem to guide their thinking to a solution. I help my coaches evaluate game performance by asking them to answer (with evidence):

- Did you select the right players?
- Were they in the right positions?
- Were they physically capable of doing what you asked them to?
- Was the team shape right?
- Did the players understand their specific jobs?
- Did you get the attitude right pre-game?
- Did half-time help us or hurt us?
- Did your substitutions impact on the game?
- What would you go back and change?

This model forces the coaches into a working format that is objective rather than subjective and leads to learning rather than recrimination. It also keeps everybody focused on the continual improvement of performance and reduces fixation on results.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Many of my presentations to coaches are based on the principle that performance follows attitude. So if coaches want to win they have to build attitude – the ‘software’ of mental and emotional strength – as well as the ‘hardware’ of physical capacity, technical skills and tactical intelligence.

Such ‘holistic’ coaching of hardware plus software is fundamental to the modern coach. Coaching has always been a mix of science and art but – notwithstanding the impact that sports science and technology are having – ultimately it is primarily an art because it is a human process and unless we engage human beings in the process it will fail.

Soccer coaches are thus forced into two positions of style – the leader who has responsibility for driving the programme and winning matches – and the leader who is responsible for engaging the motivation and commitment of young players.

The creation of a coaching style that can embrace both demands – in my book I describe it as Tough/Warm – separates the great from the good coaches. The coaching equation clearly becomes:

- Good Production + Good Relationships = Peak Performance
- Good Production + Poor Relationships = Direction but declining commitment
- Poor Production + Good Relationships = Good commitment but no direction

So how do I advise my coaches? Well I consider the first priority is getting the programme of preparation right so every player feels the team’s strong sense of purpose and the opportunity to personally develop into a better player.

This will involve the coach in:

- the wise use of power and authority
- the setting of standards and discipline based on what is best for the team
- driving the programme and seeking to always ‘raise the bar’
- ensuring players receive the best teaching
- creating effective systems for feedback and accountability
- knowing which players to keep and which to move on.
- dealing positively with coach-player conflict.

Most coach-player interactions concern performance issues and it is important that the coach handles these well.

Figure 17 (adapted from Jim Thompson ‘Positive Coaching’) outlines a useful procedure.



The coach must learn to be a good observer of player behaviour at practice and in games:

Law 1 : 'What gets noticed gets done. What doesn't stays the same!'

If the coach sees good play then such behaviour should be praised when appropriate and the player encouraged to continue

Law 2 : 'What gets rewarded gets repeated'

If the coach observes poor play then they must be proactive and sincere in their concern:

Law 3 : "If the player always does what they always did then the coach gets what they always got"

The coach should ask the player what they did wrong and the answer will reveal a technical/tactical or attitude problem.

The coach can then determine an action plan but key to the continued relationship with the player is that:

- the incident is dealt with as a behavioural rather than personal issue
- the coach closes down the interaction on as positive note.

Apart from such performance interactions the coach will encounter numerous opportunities to engage – formally or informally – with the players and must take advantage of these to build positive relationships.

Figure 18 illustrates 10 potentially key relationship building opportunities that must be handled correctly to convey:

- care and concern for the player as a person
- a desire to communicate to build understanding
- a willingness to listen
- a preparedness to share 'ownership' of the process
- a move toward adult-adult relationship
- a willingness to both laugh and cry together.

If coaches take advantage of relationship opportunities successfully they will build a more motivated and psychologically robust team. Then when the team is in a 'slump' and production levels are low, the strength of the relationships will surface and the team and coaches will stick together and are far more likely to see it through back to winning times.

*When Steve Round was coaching our young reserve team, he followed a policy learned from the great Dean Smith, former basketball coach of North Carolina. If the team lost, Coach Round would deal with all media, but if they won he would select 2 players for interview and use this as a teaching opportunity to help them get used to the media.*

<b>FIGURE 18 : 10 KEY RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
1.	Meetings – opportunities to sell the vision, underline the team philosophy and get everybody on the same page. Every month we share progress with the senior players and ensure the dressing room is getting the right message.
2.	Recruitment – a time to explore character as well as talent and begin to understand the players’ background and personality.
3.	Teambuilding Exercises – for example goal-setting can be best completed as a shared exercise with eventual consensus from coach and players. We start the season with a family barbecue and end the season with a team meal.
4.	Performance Reviews – can be energy-sappers if too critical, can be energy-fillers if thoughtful and inspiring.
5.	Courtesy – anytime, anyplace coaches and players pass by, they should communicate courteously – so coaches must know everybody’s name.
6.	Critical Incidents – during the playing career of a young person many difficult life moments can occur and the coach may be judged on how well players are supported at these times.
7.	Teaching moments – every player wants to improve and when coaches seize ‘teaching moments’ and give players extra time and attention their relationships are bound to improve.
8.	General communication – we believe in the phrase ‘increase communication, decrease anxiety’ and so we supply daily updates to the players on all relevant issues via a series of noticeboards.
9.	People-People – surround the players with staff and helpers who excel in relationship skills – especially the good-humoured and funny!
10.	Media – use any media opportunity to reinforce relationships.

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## SUMMARY

Soccer, and especially the character of the players, is changing and so the modern coach must also change. Whilst there will be increasing demands on the skills and knowledge of the coach in the area of PRODUCTION – preparation, recruitment, and games – it is in the area of RELATIONSHIPS that the coach will be more challenged.

Coaches will have to be students of the game and build a Coaching Philosophy that can act as their everyday blueprint for action. This will take into account new production demands – for example the increased use of sports science and technology, and the need for personal skills – for example communication, inspiration and emotional control, that will fully engage the modern player.

The process of coaching remains familiar – and coaches can learn much from studying the coaching ‘greats’, but I have injected the new and challenging demands faced by coaches of the modern game. Especially important is the understanding of the player as key to the concept of ‘shared ownership’. Also key is that dealing with match results - without emotional intelligence and control - can so often damage individual and team relationships and morale.

A modern coaching style will therefore have to be tough/warm to meet the demands of both production – coaches must win games – and relationships – we can only win by getting the best out of our players. Coaches must find a style that achieves this but is comfortable with their personality.

Figure 19 is a compilation of all the evidence showing why coaches fail.

FIGURE 19 : WHY COACHES FAIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of technical knowledge</li><li>• Lack of tactical knowledge</li><li>• Unable to communicate</li><li>• Unable to apply knowledge to ‘live’ situations</li><li>• Cannot cope with personal pressure</li><li>• Cannot convert to a ‘coaching’ identity</li><li>• Fails at player relationships</li><li>• Cannot coach “upwards”</li><li>• Unable to learn/change/adapt</li><li>• Fails to establish life-balance/social support</li></ul>

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This workbook hopes to guide you away from failure into a successful coaching career by emphasising:

- be a student of the game
- meet the intellectual demands of the new player and performance support systems
- improve and increase all forms of communication
- share the journey with the players
- understand and develop emotional intelligence
- enjoy coaching – it’s challenging but I have found nothing better!

Good luck and Good Coaching!

Bill

## RECOMMENDED READING

'The Winner Within'	Pat Riley	1993 ISBN: 0-425-14175-6
'Shark Amongst Dolphins'	Steve Hubbard	1997 ISBN: 0-345-41205-2
'The New Toughness Training For Sports'	James. E. Loehr	1994 ISBN: 0-525-93839-7
'Winning Every Day'	Lou Holtz	1999 ISBN: 0-88-730953-4
'Mind Gym'	Garry Mack	2001 ISBN: 0-8092-9674-8
'Positive Coaching'	Jim Thompson	1995 ISBN: 1-886346-00-3
'Sacred Hoops'	Phil Jackson	1995 ISBN: 0-7868-6206-8
'Think Like A Champion'	Mike Shanahan	1999 ISBN: 0-06-662039-2
'Everyone's A Coach'	Ken Blanchard and Don Shula	1993 ISBN: 0-310-20815-7
'Focused For Soccer'	Bill Beswick	2001 ISBN: 0-7360-3002-6