

Elite Performance Curiosities Explained

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Dylan Hartley lifts the Cook Cup



How fascinating to see the England Rugby team achieve unprecedented victories, with pretty much the same team who failed to make the quarterfinals in the World Cup 2015, not even a year ago? How amazing was it to see Leicester City promoted to the Premier League 2013/2014 and win the title just two seasons later? How is it that Chelsea FC can be Premier League champions 2014/2015 and fall to tenth just one year later? What's with the England football team, two years on from the World Cup 2014, and again dispatched early from Euro 2016?

What's Really Going on Here – Surely it cannot all be Down to the Coach or the Manager?

It goes without saying that a coaches/managers experience, character, knowledge, and preferences play a huge part – but where does the actual performance come from and through – the players?

For decades, sportspeople have worked tirelessly using tools, strategies, coping mechanisms, sheer grit and determination to control, manage and manipulate their thinking, both on and off the field, in order to achieve consistent high performance under pressure, but does this really work?

Many times, it was said that Stuart Lancaster's England Rugby team lacked 'belief' and 'discipline', the same could be said of Roy Hodgson's England soccer squad at Euro 2016, but what are these mysterious qualities we demand of our players?

An entire sporting culture places these two intangible performance characteristics high on the list of expectations, so surely we must try to understand their true nature, especially if they turn out to be a total misnomer and more of a hindrance and distraction than required attributes.

For 20 years, involved in performance sport, I could see that people struggle with the content of their head chatter, me too! It seems that your only option is to learn to cope the best you can with what's on your mind in any given moment. I lived with a perception/worldview that you need to overcome your

mental life in order to perform at your best – but this simply isn't true?

What if there is something you could understand, that would allow you to not be influenced by any noise in your head and move into the zone: your optimal functioning state, and psychological freedom, more readily?

The England rugby squad spoke recently with such certainty that goes way deeper than conceptually believing they can win. Similarly, Leicester City last season appeared to cruise past highly experienced teams with a stunning sense of ease and fun to shock the footballing world and win the English Premier League. Yet, no such mysterious magic was prevalent in the entire Chelsea camp last season nor was it available to Roy Hodgson and his team of extremely talented footballers at the Euros, in fact quite the opposite.

So What's this all About?

Well, it's an entirely new dimension that most of the sporting world is missing out on:

- Ever felt that inner knowing, a strong sense of confidence and resilience that is undeniable?
- Ever considered the incredible intelligence of the design of you, the human being?

I invite you to go beyond the conceptual and rational mind, to the space of the intuitive mind, a deeper wisdom that is practical, and scientific, if you're open to seeing it?

Let's consider these two statements/distinctions:

- Belief and discipline, are about the form of overcoming, unproductive and uncomfortable feelings/experiences ie, worry, disappointment, fear, judgement etc.
- Understanding or a deep realisation, looks right underneath these forms, to their root cause – how you get to experience them in the first place and then knowing this, accessing the infinite potential for life itself.

So often I hear sportspeople refer to the notion that, stress and pressure are an inevitable part of being involved in elite and professional sport, it is said to come with the territory – does it? It is even so much part of our sporting culture that it is assumed that stress and pressure particles are lurking all around the elite training and competition environments and it's only a matter of time before you get them just like you catch a cold.

This is simply not made of truth; it is an innocent misunderstanding of how the human mind really works and when you get caught up in it, you have to rely on how much belief and discipline you have in the bank to overcome the content of your personal mind.

“When you're the underdog you go out there as if you have nothing to lose, Iceland will be doing that” – Gary Cahill, England soccer team.

It's no surprise that teams who are not expected to get very far in a competition, come out fearless, uninhibited, and raring to give it their all, we have seen this so many times.

The game itself is the same – so why are teams almost paralysed, robbed of their speed, rhythm and creativity, just because expectations (outside factors) are different, why does this appear to cause such difficulty for teams, when we know performances come from within?

How is it that teams who are expected to produce results, seem somehow immune to this so-called pressure, and can produce outstanding and phenomenal performances in the moment?

It's About How the Human Mind Operates, (formless), Not Brain, (form) to Help you Navigate

Performance in Life.

- It appears that there is a mechanism in place for conditions and situations (outside factors) to make you feel the way you do – but there is no such mechanism, it doesn't exist.
- It seems that there is a causal relationship between circumstances and your feeling state, or state of mind, but there isn't, correlation is not causation.
- It looks like feelings are an inevitable consequence, given the circumstance; this is not true; everyone has a different experience of a win and a loss.

This illusory psychological paradigm of what is often referred to in this work as, 'outside in', brings complexity and struggle. It inadvertently clutters the mind, is exhausting, and as we can see, full of risk.

I invite you to take a look at how human experience really works, 'inside out':

- You are designed to feel your thinking in the moment, 100 per cent, no exceptions!
- Human beings think; you are not your thoughts.
- It is not a requirement of being human to be influenced by your thinking, you get thousands of thoughts all day, everyday.
- You project your experience out into the world; you don't catch it from others or anything.

It is an incredible part of the human design that you are gifted the power of Thought and Consciousness to create your entire felt experience. When you insightfully and profoundly see this, your mind quietens. It wouldn't make sense to entertain complex thinking that has you ruminating and distracted from the present moment.

England Rugby and Leicester City are reaping the benefits of a quieter mind and heightened levels of clarity. Players who truly connect as one, with the energy behind life, get in touch with a deeper part of them, the space of pure wisdom, untouched by anyone or anything – it brings simplicity, and instinctive and inspired performances:

What Coach, Manager or Athlete Wouldn't Want Any or All of These?

Can you dare to imagine:

- Coaches, managers and athletes engaging in feedback, unfiltered and unemotional, deeply connected and knowing that it wouldn't occur to either of you to take anything personally.
- Never blaming anyone or anything for the way you feel, on or off the pitch/court – being a victim of circumstance simply wouldn't make sense.
- Sportspeople unburdened by the expectations of performance targets, completely free to create high performance in the moment.
- Time never wasted in states of worry, frustration or disillusionment leading up to and following selection decisions.
- Athletes experiencing optimal functioning most of the time rather than fleetingly feel the zone state.
- It takes no time at all to 'get over' poor performances – it wouldn't occur to you to be self-absorbed, frenetically keeping yourself busy to avoid a low feeling state.

- An upgrade for performance analysis – athletes confident and hungry for information and data to advance skill capability – you absolutely know it says nothing about you as a person.
- National coaches/managers unaffected psychologically and physically by the so-called, ‘pressure environment’ able to maximise and accelerate recovery, especially enjoying high quality sleep.
- A leader-full team; players who truly understand that poor behaviours come from a low state of mind – members are not re-active, instead have empathy which allows potential conflicts to dissolve immediately.
- A sharp reduction in sportspeople suffering with stress related symptoms, needing to retire early, never realising their full potential.

What did you think of this blog? I would love to know your thoughts. Please let me know by adding a comment below.

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