

Know your audience

Dr Ray Martin 9/11/2020

I have often found that entertaining fools and their accompanying orientations towards the mental side of the game, to be a waste of time and a great demotivator. We all like to see success in our coaching endeavours and this often lies in the selection of those we coach. I am a firm proponent of compatibility between coach and player and at the heart of this relationship is the attitude of the player. Attitude was after all the first chapter of the recent book I put out. Although what follows may appear tongue in the cheek, it is in my opinion that your enjoyment and longevity as a coach will be enhanced by avoiding what I refer to as the “mental bandits”.

Firstly, you may encounter ol’ ***Tournament Tom***. He will periodically want to pick your brain in order to find some added benefit to his upcoming tournament. Practising his mental skills over time is a no – no; I want some instant benefit he claims.

Secondly, we find ***Harry Hotspur***. He typically has just lost a match to a player he should easily beat. Quick quick- coach, I’m out of confidence; fix me he implores.

These two bandits are followed by ***Knowing Noel*** who in spite of coming to you, knows everything there is to know and ends up telling you what he wants to hear. “I just have no luck” is often his convenient excuse.

My most frustrating bandit is ***Godfrey Goalie***. While he listens to your advice on setting process goals, he will stubbornly return to outcome goals as these, according to him are the be all and end all of mental skills. Hit the road Godfrey, and don’t you come back no more no more no more no more. He finds solace in his mate ***Alistair Achiever*** as they down another stubby.

Finally, we meet ol’ ***Mental Mike*** who appears to be the great advocate of mental skills but rather presents friendly fire! He places everything at the door of mental skills to ensure success. To hell with practice, technique, diet, life - style and so on. The mental component is the only component he tells all who care to listen.

I’m looking forward to feedback from the squad regarding this important aspect. I do not believe in the beginning or continuance of a coaching relationship if there is not attitude to foster the relationship and thus ensure progression.

I would not like this to sound as though I advocate a “hire and fire” approach. Not in the least but often patients respond better to a different approach from a different doctor when dealing with health matters. Why should we be any different?

Keep safe.

Ray