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Developing Decision Makers in Sport

National Coaching Forum

Dublin City University, 2008

The process of developing decision makers in Irish Rugby & how this may relate to other team sports



Stephen Aboud

IRFU

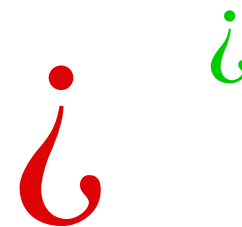
National Coach Development Manager

September 2008



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By outlining our approach to develop decision makers in Rugby, I hope that you may find something of interest & relevance to your own coaching situation.



TERMINOLOGY

Lets keep it simple!

- Strategic
 - Defined by having time to think and decide on action
- Tactical
 - 'In the moment', defined by seeing-assessing-deciding-acting almost 'simultaneously' – under pressure
- Technical
 - The action, mechanics





How does your sport facilitate the
Strategic ↔ Tactical ↔ Technical
framework?



CATEGORIES OF GROUP SKILLS

REDUCED ACTION

- **Smaller groups** – focusing on players immediately around the ball – ‘cell d’action’
- Key words: **Tactical-technical**
- Associated with **Drills**
- **Specific**
- Approach: **Part – Part - Whole**

COLLECTIVE ACTION

- **Larger group** activities requiring co-operative action
- Key words: **Games-Principles-strategic-tactical**
- Associated with **Game Sense**
- **General**
- Approach: **Whole – Part - Whole**





How does your sport facilitate the
Reduced ↔ *Collective* framework?



Cultural Differences in Rugby

- Anglo-Saxon (English-speaking)
 - England
 - Ireland
 - Scotland
 - Wales
 - Australia
 - South Africa

New Zealand

- FIRA
 - France
 - Italy
 - Argentina
 - Central / Eastern Europe
 - Africa – Central & North

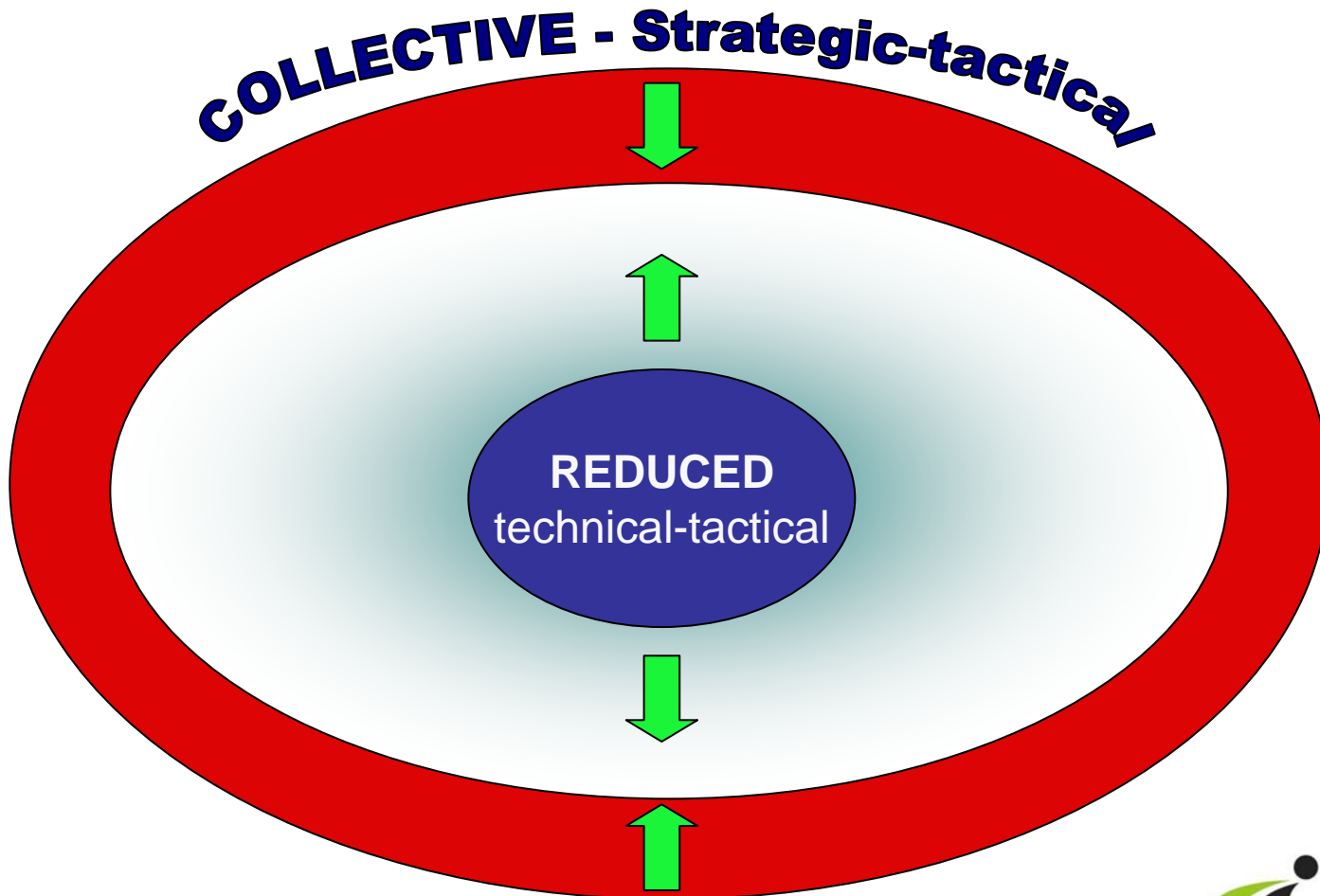
“The British did not only invent Rugby. They, with the passing of years, played an essential role in its evolution. Even against their own will. Such is the case with regard to the International Federation of Rugby Amateur, born **January 2, 1934** in Paris, fruit of a Franco-British divorce”

<http://www.fira-aer-rugby.com/>

- Polynesian
 - Fiji, Tonga, Samoa



“The 3rd Way” – Didier Retière





1. What type of game do we want?

“Do you want your game to give pleasure?”

Franco Ascione – F.I.R.

2. What type of players do we need to develop?





What are the characteristics of good decision makers?



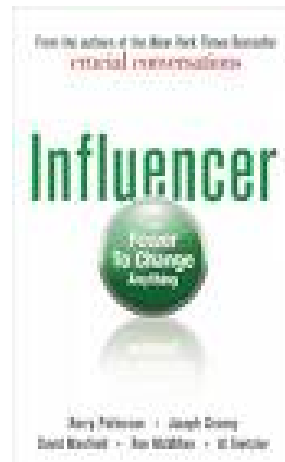
“Decision-makers are born and not made”



Comments / Opinions?



‘In order to change behaviour we must first change the way people think’



Influencer: The Power to Change Anything

Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler



“We must start with ‘the head’”

Pierre Villepreux

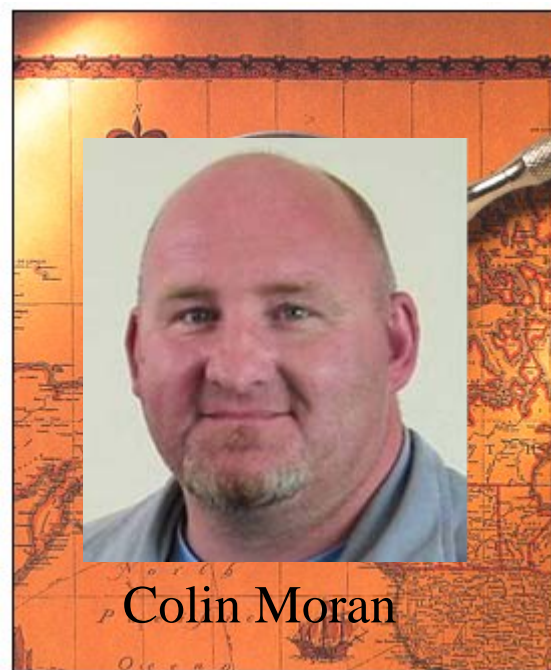


**“Say ‘no’
to
Rugby robots”**



Developing Players who can ...

*‘Navigate
not
Replicate’*



Empowerment

“... **Coaches are responsible** for enabling athletes to learn.”

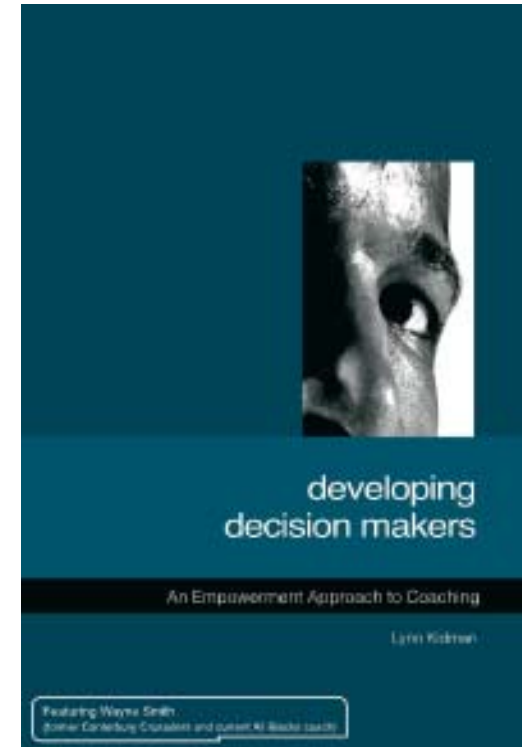
“... athletes develop understanding when **they are involved** in solving problems for themselves, ...(Butler, 1997).”

...“If experts merely present knowledge (sometimes quite forcefully) to those who are ‘non expert’ and make decisions for them, the **athletes become disempowered**” ...

Lynn Kidman
Developing Decision Makers, 2001

“.. An empowerment approach to coaching emphasises an **athlete-centred approach** ...”

“The athlete-centred approach promotes a sense of belonging, as well as giving athletes a role in decision making and a **shared approach** to learning...”



Lynn Kidman
Developing Decision Makers, 2001





What are the characteristics of coaches who develop good decision makers?



Questioning

- Using where, why & how ...
- What
 - are your thoughts on...
 - did you see, hear, think, feel, do ...

- Avoiding
 - Rhetorical questions
 - Answering own questions
 - Using ‘..yes, but ...’

- Actively listen!



Questioning

Observe behaviour



Compare to desired behaviour



Identify error



Decide on best learning response



Choose best question



Facilitate, prompt, probe, ..



Re-set task/challenge

To facilitate the
LEARNING of players

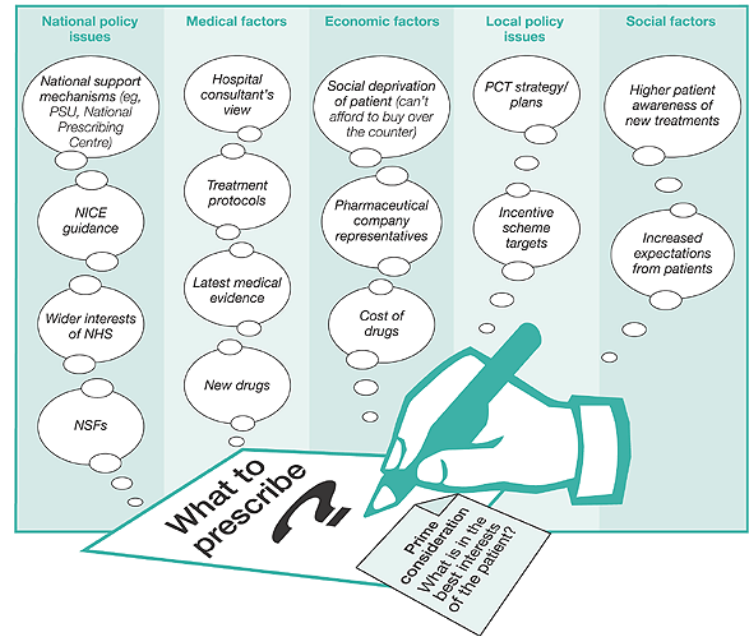


You must not just have
the correct advice but
the correct questions



Intervention

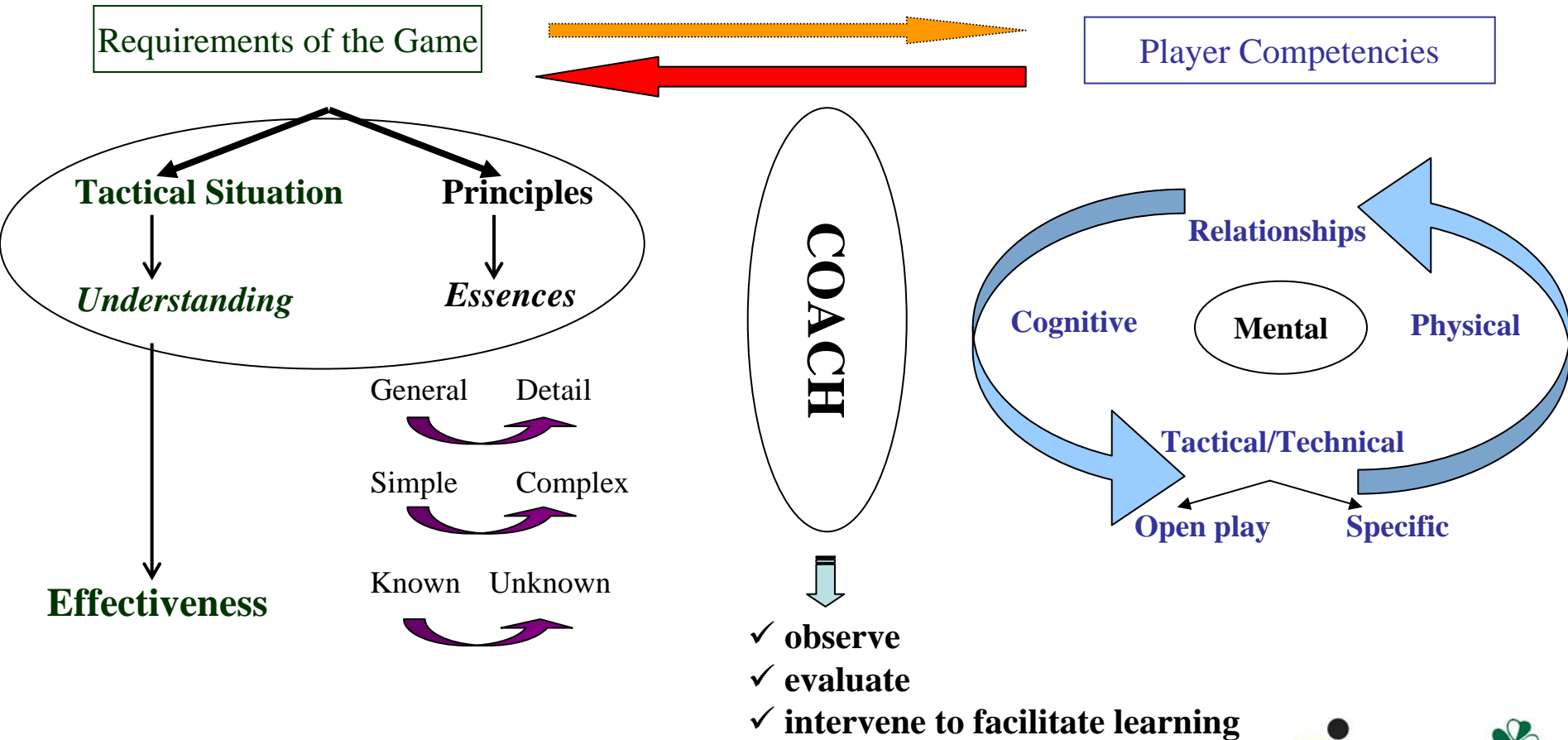
- *Observe what they need now*
- *Give a common project*
- *Share the theory, but after the action & by questioning*
- *Treat the positive*
- **Fabrice Brochard – FFR**



“Training & working as a physiotherapist has helped me listen before making judgement”

Morgan Buckley - ASMT

The Method

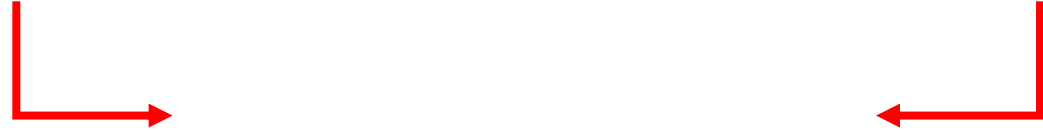


Franco Ascione - FIR



The Common Approach

Player Behaviour Expected Behaviour



OBSERVATION



DIFFERENCE

Nature & extent of difference



Identify the cause



Intervene to correct



No Feedback

Too General

Interrogative - 'why did ..'

Descriptive - 'you tried to..'

Directed & prescriptive

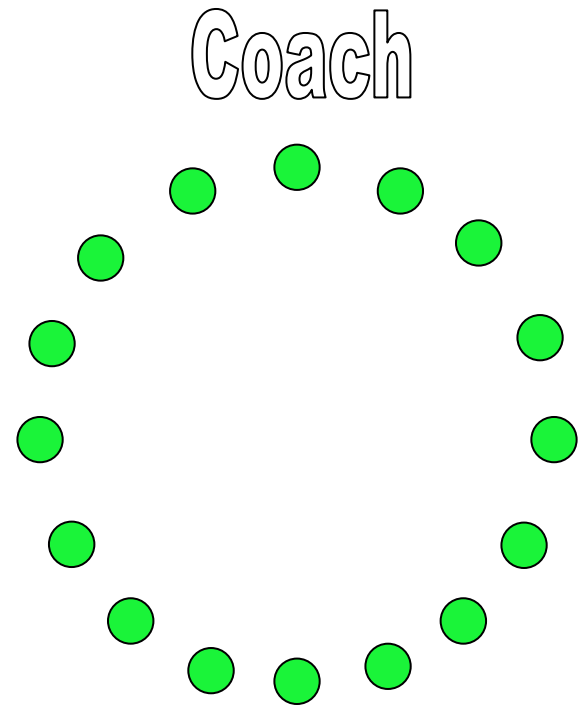
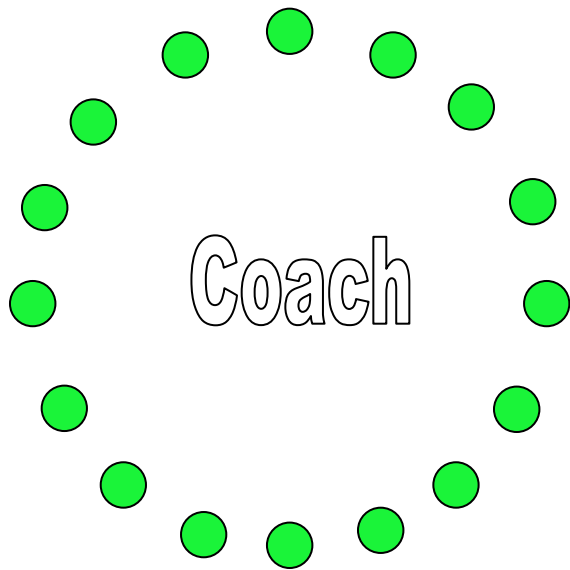


How do we view players?

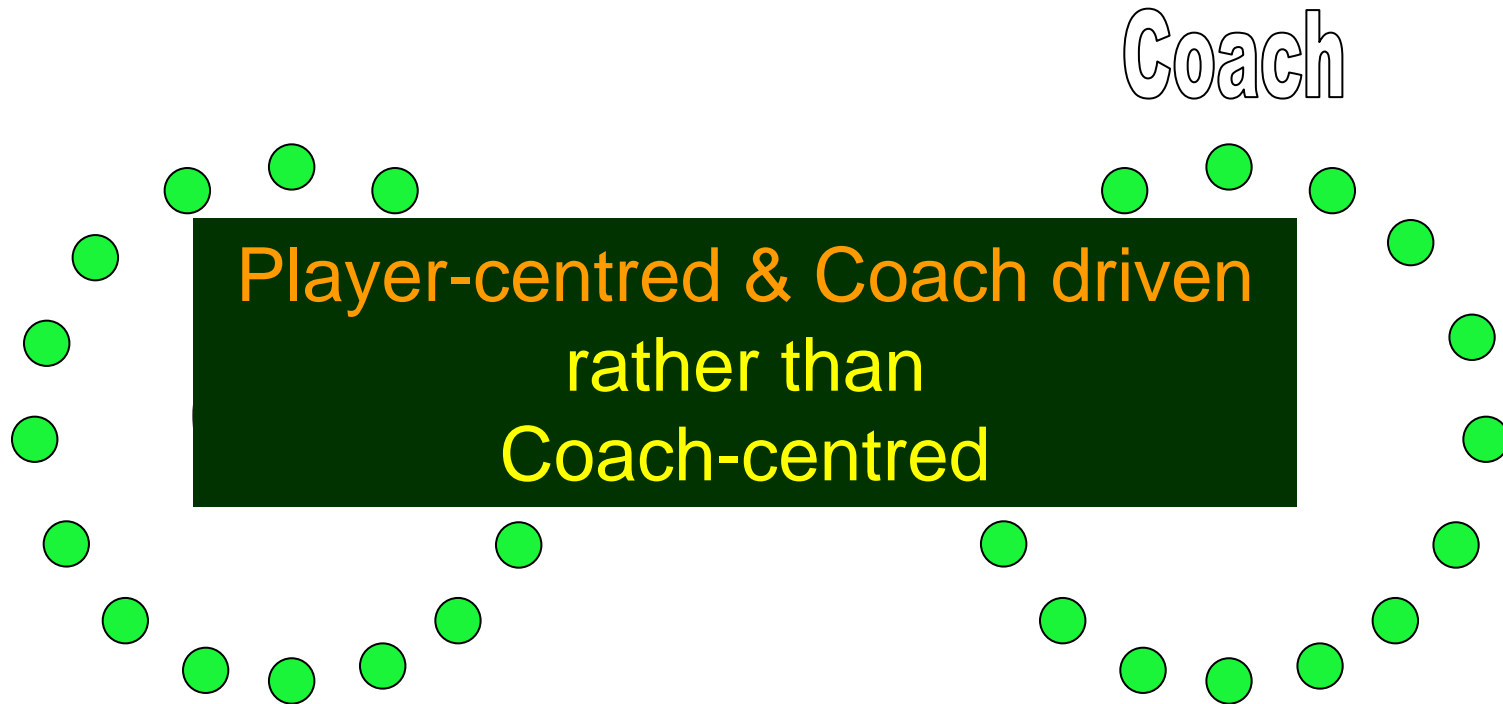


The Coaching position

How do you see yourself?



The Coaching position



Higher coach presence – lower learning?

Lower coach presence – higher learning?

Changing perspective



- I don't feel in control
- I feel exposed
- I'm not sure what's going to happen next
- I don't feel like I'm coaching
- I feel like I'm handing over control to the players

Changing perspective



- I don't think I can ever go back
- It's liberating
- I feel more relaxed with the feeling of not being 'in total control'
- It's actually more fun
- It's energising

Coaching Perspective

Is your coaching focused on content or process?



“Do we coach rugby or do we coach players?”

Roly Meates

(Coach - Leinster & Ireland)



Training Environment

- Utilise mistakes & errors as an opportunity to facilitate learning & improve performance
- Learning opportunities before the 'test'
- Coach Reflections:
 - *'How have I made a positive difference during the session?'*
 - *What have the players learnt?*
 - *What can the players do better now?*

“I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost more than 300 games.

Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot - and missed.

I've failed over and over and over again in my life...

And that is why I succeed”.

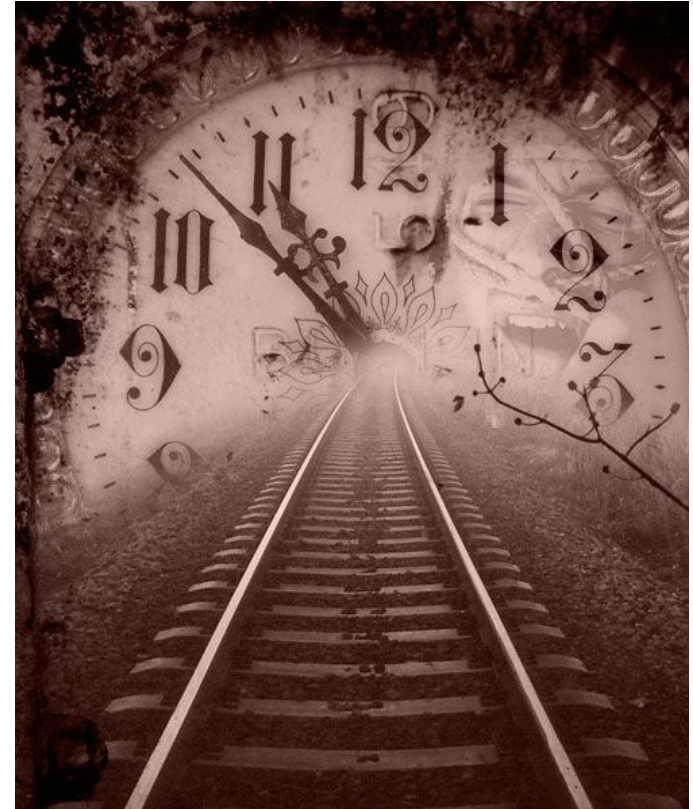
Michael Jordan



Development perspective

Some coaches perceive time spent on the development of players as conflicting with the 'business' of getting results

'No mistake drills'



Training Environment

Developing leadership:



Facilitating players taking responsibility for their own decisions & actions

It's more than strategy, it's about their personal development

Coach Considerations

- Coaches with confidence & ability to react to the needs of the situation
- A greater range of knowledge & patience
- Security and confidence to allow players determine their own path
- It's showing respect & trust WITH & IN the players
- It's a longer journey – “Accompagnée”

“Accompagnée”



*It's ultimately about applying
the principles of
good parenting!?*



Other Influences



Problem-Based Approach

Who?
(player)



What?
(task)

Where?
(context)



Problem-Based Approach

Who? – The Player

- the most important component
- innate abilities
- maturity
- previous experiences
- motivation
- emotions



Problem-Based Approach

What? – The Task

- emphasis on sensory-perceptual factors?
- decision-making process
- movement execution or action



Assessment

Decision

Action

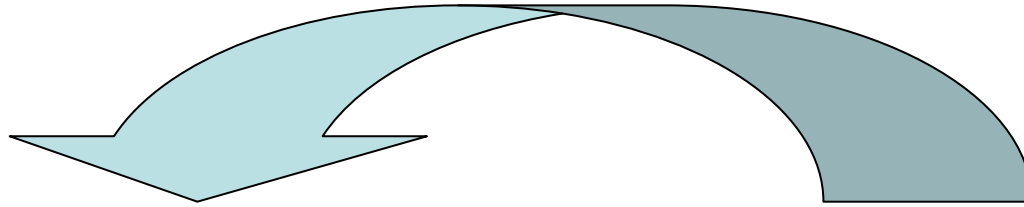
Problem-Based Approach

Where? - The Target Context

- Where is the task to be performed
- What environment?
- Will there be time pressure?
- Aim to perform tasks in similar environment



Progression

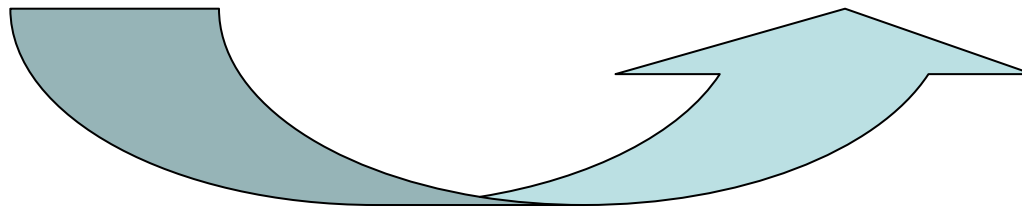


Develop Technique

- Repetition
- Space
- Time
- Numbers

Develop Skill

- Opposition
 - Intensity
 - Numbers





What are the obstacles to developing decision makers?



Imagery & Decision making

**‘L'entraînement mental en rugby :
Habilités mentales’**

Fabrice Brochard



Why it works

- mental imagery is intended to train our minds and create the neural patterns in our brain to teach our muscles to do exactly what we want them to do

Reasons for developing

- it prepares the body and mind for activity
- because it provides a means for focussing attention on factors relevant to the task in hand
- when a movement is rehearsed mentally nervous impulses associated with the movement are triggered by the images invoked.
- Thus, it is possible to render physical practice more effective and more efficient through mental rehearsal

Imagery & Practice





How applicable is this to your coaching?



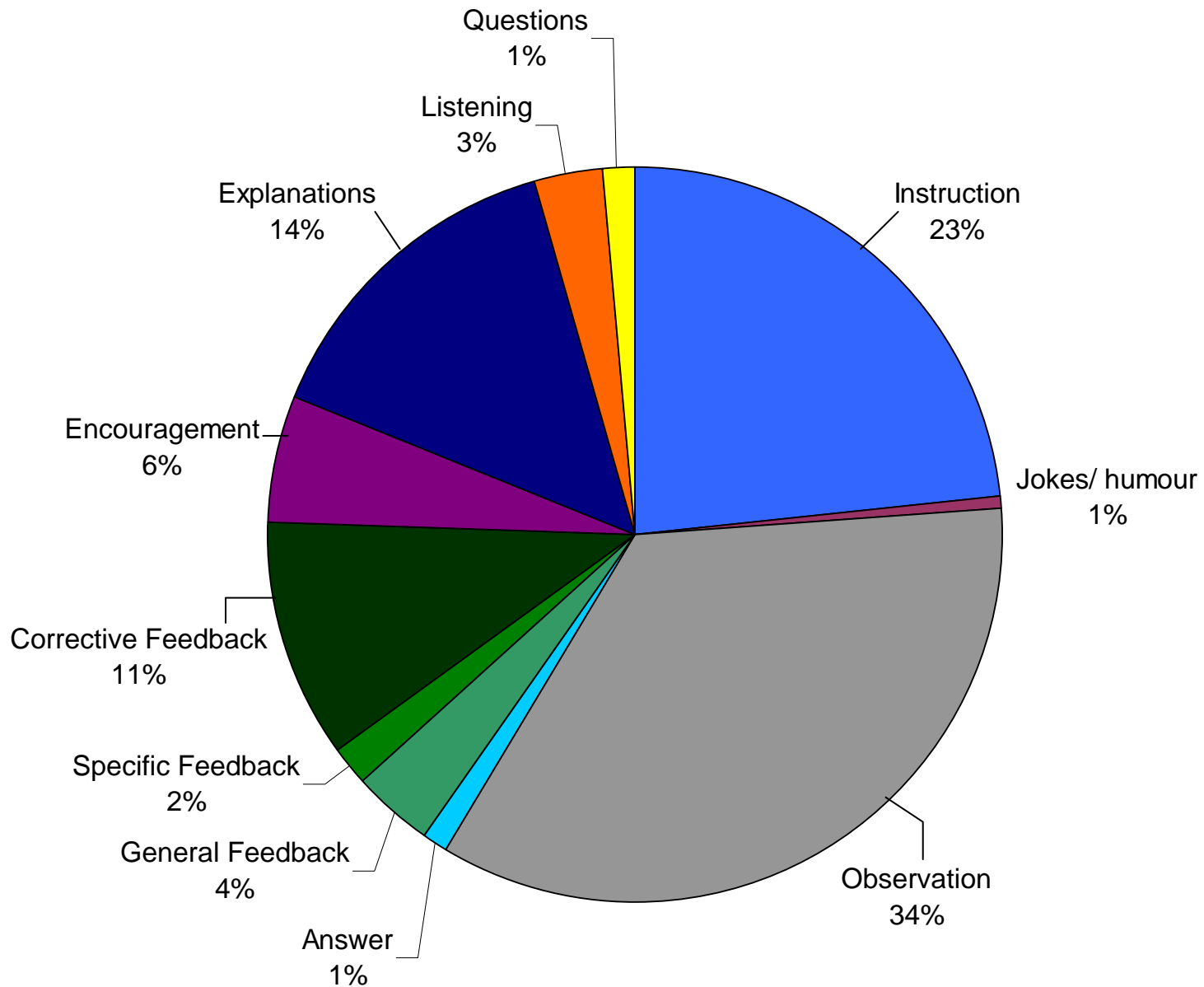
Communication

“I hear what you say, but
I’m not listening”

Blikkies Groenewald
(Northern Transvaal R.U.)



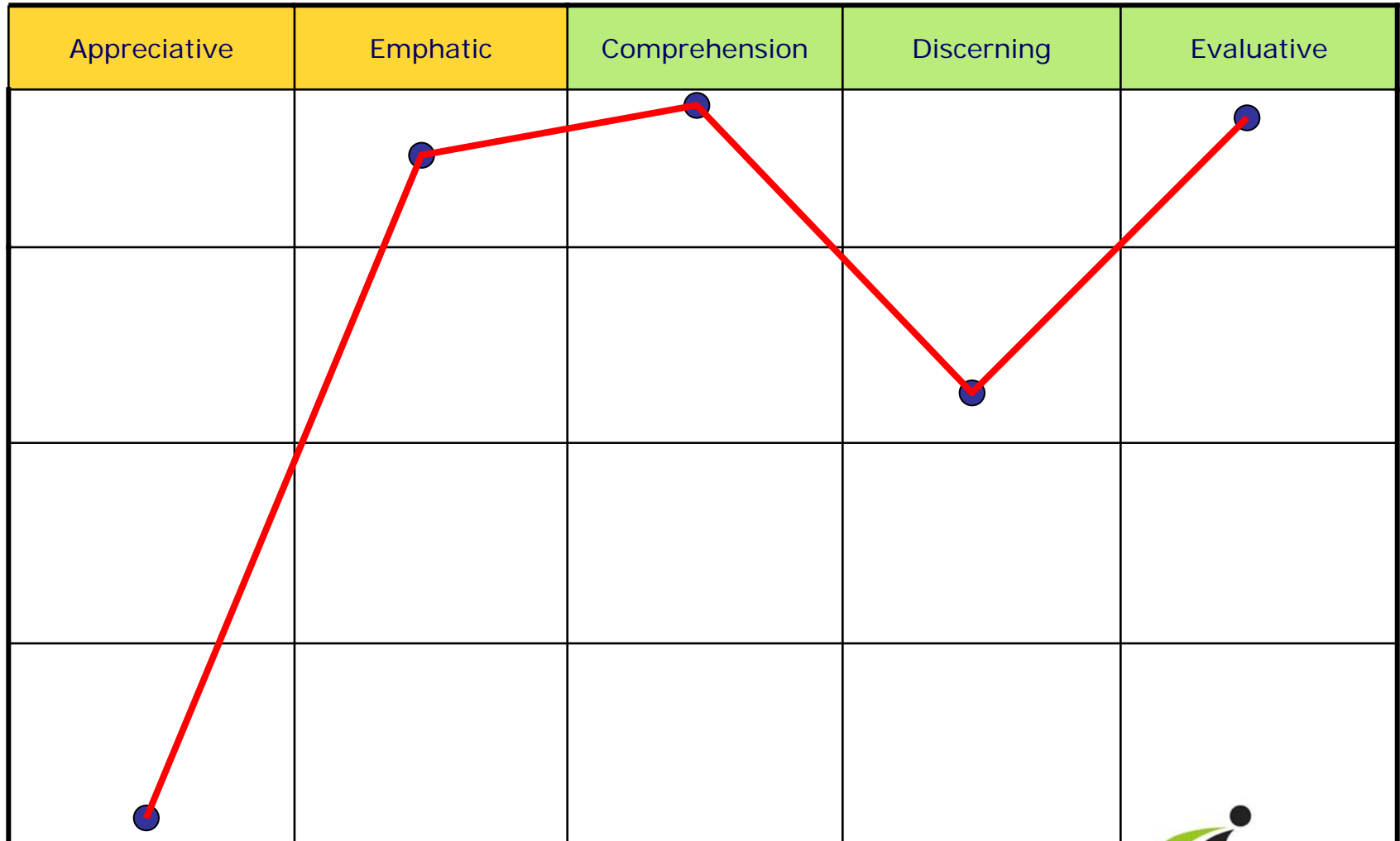
Communication Analysis Profile



EXAMPLE: Listening profile.

FEELING-ORIENTED

INFORMATION-ORIENTED



Learning Styles & Preferences

Types of Learning Preferences

Processing...

ACTIVE ← — — — — — → **REFLECTIVE**

Perception ...

SENSING ← — — — — — ▶ **INTUITIVE**

Input...

VISUAL ← — — — — — → **VERBAL**

Understanding...

SEQUENTIAL ← — — — — — → **GLOBAL**

PREFERENCES ARE NOT THE SAME AS STRENGTHS



V

Visual



Multimodal

A

Aural



RK

R

Read/Write



VK

AK

VAR

K

Kinesthetic



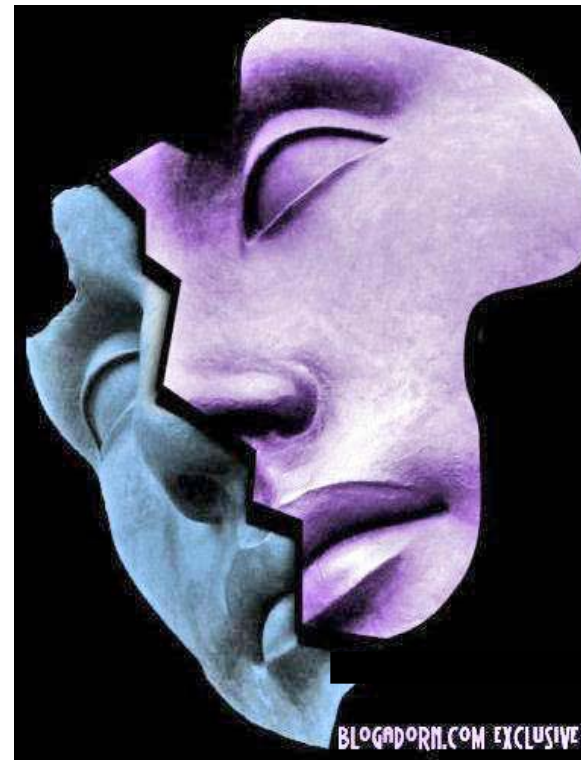
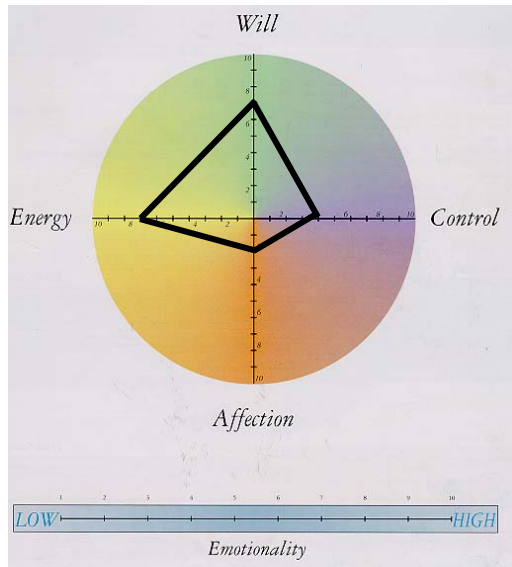
VARK

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Personalities & Performance

Profile sheet



Source: **Claire Whittington - PTP Associates**

Individual differences - Personality

- ❑ Personality is generally described as
‘a person’s typical or preferred way of behaving, thinking and feeling’
- ❑ Personality is *consistent and stable*
- ❑ Individuals cannot modify their personality
but they can modify their behaviour

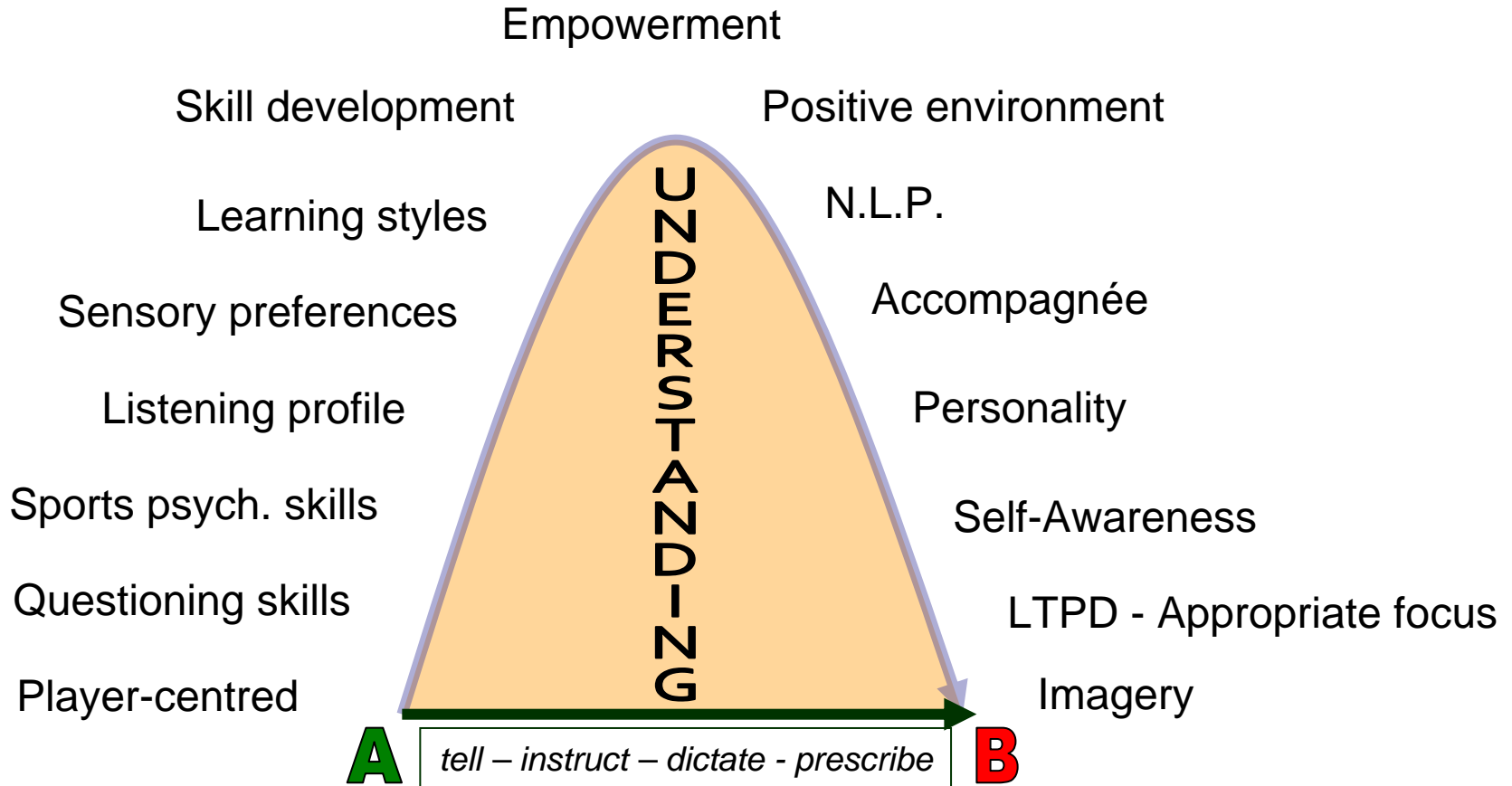
Source: **Claire Whittington** - *PTP Associates*

Personality Influence on behavior



Source: **Claire Whittington** - *PTP Associates*

An Integrated Approach



LTPD Implications & IRFU Coaching Programme

IRFU LONG-TERM
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT
FROM 6 TO 6 NATIONS

TRAIN TO WIN

TRAIN TO
COMPETE

TRAIN TO
TRAIN

LEARN TO PLAY
& PRACTICE

FUNDAMENTALS

The future game we desire will...

influence the players we want ...

and the coaches we need.



When is enough ...enough?

Too much...

- Content
- Anxiety
- Pressure
- Expectations
- Insecurity
- Control



Sport is a reflection of life

The Players play the Game – not the Coach

Coach:

A good coach engages in a COACHING PROCESS which assists participants become independent so that they are able to identify options and find solutions for the changing demands of their sport and lives.

Ref: A Coaching Strategy for Ireland August 2008

Thank you for your attention!

