MIND GAMES

INSPIRATIONAL LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SPORTS STARS

Jeff Grout & Sarah Perrin

Foreword by Sir Clive Woodward, OBE

CAPSTONE


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First published 2004 by
Capstone Publishing Ltd (A Wiley Company)
The Atrium
Southern Gate
Chichester
West Sussex PO19 8SQ
http://www.wileyeurope.com

CIP catalogue records for this book are available from the British Library and the US Library of Congress

ISBN 1-84112-613-6

Typeset in Dutch 801 11/15pt by Sparks Computer Solutions Ltd
http://www.sparks.co.uk

Printed and bound by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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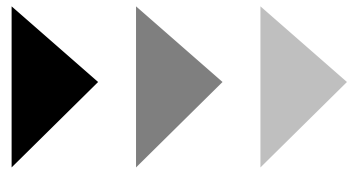
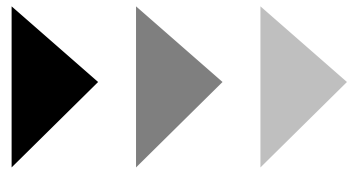


FOREWORD BY SIR CLIVE WOODWARD OBE



THE MENTAL SIDE OF SPORT is massive.

Before setting off to Australia for the 2003 World Cup I said that the competition would be won 'in the head'. It isn't necessarily the best team or the team with the most talented players that wins games, but the team that can 'think correctly under pressure': T-Cup for short. It's what's between the ears that counts.

This T-Cup ability separates out the true champions from the rest. Martin Johnson, Lawrence Dallaglio, Jonny Wilkinson, along with the rest of the team, don't panic under pressure. They think correctly and make the right decisions about what to do. When the England squad seized victory in the closing minutes of the World Cup final, the whole team had proved it could make the right decisions under the greatest pressure imaginable.

The great mental strength showed by the England team didn't just happen by chance. It was the result of sustained mental preparation during training.

The England team's success has also come by setting challenging goals. I have always aimed high, setting goals for myself throughout my playing career. As England's first full-time professional coach, I set one simple goal: for England to be the best team in the world.

The England team truly believed we could win the World Cup – and we did. That self-belief came as the result of a lot of hard work – repetitive training routines, meticulous preparation, attention to detail and mental rehearsal.

We also work as one team. Winning the World Cup resulted from the combined efforts of all players and all members of the coaching team. None of us could have achieved that result without the others. The England squad draws strength from a combination of leadership and 'teamship'. Leadership is about communicating an inspiring vision of the future, stimulating change, setting clear and measurable objectives and clearly communicating what is required from each individual. Teamship acknowledges the vital importance of peer pressure and peer approval, and that team decision-making encourages commitment and greater motivation to work hard.

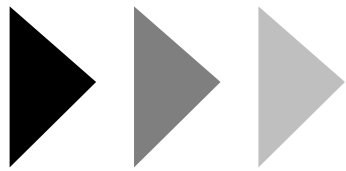
Our shared attention to detail has proven invaluable. We use any and all information that can help us. If we can improve one hundred things by 1%, the total impact is huge. We embrace new ideas from any source in our efforts to maximize team performance.

The England rugby team's path to World Cup victory was not without its setbacks. Champions learn from their mistakes and grow stronger as a result. They don't feel inhibited by the fear of failure, but are stimulated and motivated by it. They also learn from their successes. With the England team I pay more attention to understanding the causes of our successes than our failures. It is the successes that we want to replicate.

Mind Games draws on the experiences of elite sportspeople, from many sports, focusing on the mental techniques they use to perform at their best.

Sir Clive Woodward OBE

A WORD WITH … RENZIE HANHAM AND CERI EVANS



IN OUR EXPERIENCE THE MENTAL COMPONENT of sporting performance is seldom given the same level of attention as other aspects, such as physical skills. More often than not athletes only consider mental skills when they're underperforming. It's less common for an athlete to seek assistance when they're already performing well.

Yet, in the highly pressurized cauldron of international sport it is accepted that when all else is equal, it is often the individuals who seem to have the strongest mental conditioning that succeed.

The role of developing the mental skills of an athlete is often undertaken by the coach, who may or may not have had training in this area. Usually they have their own experiences to draw upon, and sometimes this is sufficient. Often coaches have a particular aspect of mental skills that they consider important. For some, it will be goal

setting, for others it might be visualization, or whatever they think is relevant at the time. Generally these skills are developed in isolation with little thought given to the 'bigger picture', and there is very little connection between the core mental skills and the physical attributes they enhance.

Consequently, what would be helpful is a framework and structure that encompasses the primary mental elements that contribute to superior performance.

The same mental skills that a champion athlete uses are similar to the skills that a mother of two requires to cope with getting the children to school on time, the award-winning chef preparing his menu for the evening or a sales person pitching for a significant piece of business. The critical internal processes are essentially the same.

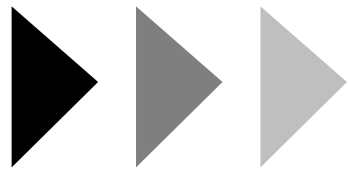
This is why so many businesses see relevance in how athletes prepare and cope with the pressure of performing.

This book presents real-life examples of how some of the world's premier athletes use and adapt these core skills. In each chapter you will find analysis from various experts in the field and a commentary on the theory that underpins these skills.

The book can be used as a resource or as a casual, at-a-glance read. Either way there is an abundance of useful material, which will inform, enlighten, entertain and perhaps even inspire.

Renzie Hanham and Ceri Evans,
Gazing Performance

INTRODUCTION



GERMANY 1:ENGLAND 5

THIS SCORELINE IN THE RUN UP to the 2002 World Cup remains a cause of joy and wonder for many an English football fan. It offered the bright promise of England regaining its long-awaited place at the top of international football.

That historic September 2001 World Cup qualifier against Germany was England's seventh match – and sixth win – under Sven-Göran Eriksson's leadership. Even more astoundingly, the England team achieved their triumphant result away from home, in Munich. The previous time England had played Germany, in October 2000, was also the last time Kevin Keegan sat in the manager's seat; on that occasion England was shamed at Wembley, defeated by one goal to nil.

So what made the difference in that one year gap? Commentators were desperate to know what magic Sven-Göran Eriksson had worked to transform Keegan's lacklustre side into this magnificent goal-scoring machine. After all, he had essentially the same set of players to select from and work with. So how had he done it? Sven's response when questioned was: 'First you must start with the head.'

That comment provided the initial inspiration for this book. Since then the England rugby team's triumphant victory in the 2003 World Cup in Australia, under the transformational leadership of Sir Clive Woodward, has stimulated further debate about what creates success in the sporting arena.

These inspirational wins fired our curiosity. We wanted to answer the question, what makes a champion? Why do some people consistently break records, cross the line first or hammer the ball into the net with pinpoint accuracy? Natural talent, regular training and fitness are obviously vital. But with two equally matched sportspeople, something else makes the difference and provides that champion factor – and that extra something is the mind.

Mind Games sets out to identify the mental characteristics that really differentiate a champion from the 'also rans'.

On our exploration we have called on the first-hand experiences of acknowledged champions from a range of sports. By talking to them about their attitudes and approaches to their sporting activities, we have tried to highlight common themes that apply to them all. We consider their beliefs, motivations and the training they do on the mental aspect of their games. We relive moments of high pressure – when a rugby match hung on one kick, when a gold medal depended on an explosive, focused race to the line. How do sports stars control their nerves, channel their adrenalin and deliver a peak performance on cue?

Sally Gunnell, one of the many champions we interviewed, had no hesitation in stating that the mental side of her performance made 'the difference between silver and gold'.

Celebrated yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur believes that mental strength, particularly determination, is an essential ingredient of any successful, competitive sailor: 'It's crucial. You can have the best

boat in the world, but if you don't have the determination to finish the race, you may as well not start it. Determination counts for more than it's given credit for.'

David Platt, former England footballer and World Cup scorer, and former coach of the England Under-21 squad, acknowledges that top players have to have talent and skills. But he says: 'Mental strength is a major, major factor. They have to be ruthless; they have to be arrogant; they have to believe they are the best.'

In addition to the champions themselves, our research has also led us to sports psychologists, coaches and specialists in human behaviours. We have tapped into their expertise to identify some of the techniques that elite sportsmen and women use to strengthen their mental armoury, whether through visualization or mental rehearsal, or simply by setting ever more specific goals.

Coaches such as Frank Dick, who helped many top international athletes achieve repeated success, know how important an individual's mental outlook or attitude is to delivering winning performances. Dick says:

> *'I think 70% or 80% is about attitude. Once you've made sure that everybody's prepared for the task, it's just that – it's an attitude. The good news in life is that you can choose that. You can't always choose or change the circumstances in your arena, but you can always choose or change your attitude.'*

Our aim in writing this book is partly to offer insights into the techniques that sporting champions use to deliver their best performance when they need it. However, the insights and techniques identified here are not only valuable in the sporting sphere; they also have relevance to other areas of all our lives.

Ian Lynagh, Australian sports psychologist, and father of Australia's greatest ever fly-half – Michael Lynagh – certainly believes that sport provides a framework for personal development. Sport appeals to people because it meets a basic, instinctive need to want to take on challenges and succeed, and it encourages them to develop skills along the way.

'It's the challenge of wanting to conquer and establish control over a task. It becomes an internal challenge. Sport, at its ultimate meaning for human beings, provides us with a structure which is helpful in growing as a person. It doesn't have to be sport. If it's not sport it might be climbing a mountain or running round a country. The human race has always done this – "Let's challenge ourselves to do something that's really difficult, that requires a lot of skill development, physical and mental development and also challenges us to overcome our weaknesses as a human being." By doing it we become a better person. To me, that's the ultimate meaning of doing sport.'

Rising to the mental challenge is an essential requirement for success in all endeavours, sporting or otherwise. The techniques that proven champions use can help us all, in any situation, where peak performance is a desired goal. Controlling your nerves, developing greater belief and visualizing your success can have a positive impact on activities as diverse as making a best man's speech or improving your team leadership skills at work.

Ron Dennis, the boss of the McLaren racing team, sums up our view of the importance of mental strength perfectly. If he, and we, are right, then using any techniques we can to improve our mental strength can only be a great benefit not only to ourselves, but to those with whom we live and work. As Dennis says:

'Life is a mind game. Every relationship you have is a mind game. Where does anger, tranquillity, happiness come from? They all come from your mind. In the end everything feeds into your mind, and everything starts from your mind. If you decide to be a muscular person your mind takes the decision to do the work to be a specific athlete. If you want to be a successful athlete or a businessman, it all starts and finishes with the mind. Life is a mind game.'

Eriksson understands this supremely well.

'In football, it's difficult to do more in terms of physical, tactical or technical areas. But where you can do a lot more is in terms of mental work. In football I think we are behind other sports, such as tennis. Mental training is the future for football.'

We hope *Mind Games* inspires you to raise your game, whether in sport, your work or your personal life. The champions we met have achieved amazing feats, but they believe their success owes more to their mental strength than their natural talent. We can all learn from them and improve our own personal performances – increasing the enjoyment and satisfaction we gain from life as a result.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We could not have written this book without the help of many people. In particular we would like to thank Renzie Hanham and Ceri Evans from Gazing Performance, mental conditioning specialists. Their willingness not only to explain the Gazing approach, but also to comment on our own findings and analysis, proved invaluable. A special thank you also goes to sports psychologist Professor Graham Jones from Lane4, a specialist human performance consultancy, for sharing his research and insights. We are also indebted to sports psychologist Ian Lynagh, who helped us to develop our initial research plans and whose enthusiasm was inspiring.

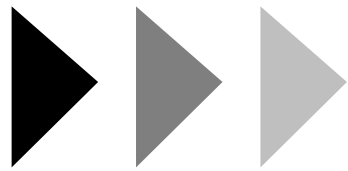
We would also like to thank the following for their generous help in sharing their experiences for this book:

- Sir Clive Woodward OBE, England rugby head coach
- Sven-Göran Eriksson, England football coach
- Matthew Pinsent CBE, rower, three times Olympic gold medallist
- Nick Faldo MBE, Britain's most successful golfer
- Ellen MacArthur MBE, fastest woman to sail around the world single-handed
- Steve Backley OBE, three times European and Commonwealth gold medallist and Olympic silver medallist in the javelin

- Roger Black MBE, 4 × 400m relay World Champion and Olympic silver medallist
- Jonny Wilkinson MBE, England rugby fly-half, arguably the world's best kicker
- David Platt, former Aston Villa, Sampdoria, Arsenal and England footballer and former manager of England's Under-21 team
- Sally Gunnell OBE, former Olympic, World, Commonwealth and European 400m hurdles champion
- Dr Stephanie Cook MBE, Olympic and World modern pentathlon champion
- Lawrence Dallaglio MBE, England rugby captain
- Ron Dennis CBE, boss of the McLaren Formula One motor racing team
- Howard Wilkinson, former Sunderland and Leeds United manager and former Football Association technical director
- David Lloyd, former Davis Cup captain
- Michael Lynagh, former Australian rugby captain
- Lord Coe OBE, former double Olympic 1500m champion
- Sir Chay Blyth CBE, round-the-world yachtsman
- Jack Charlton OBE, former England footballer and Ireland manager
- Gill Clark MBE, former European badminton doubles champion
- Adrian Moorhouse MBE, former Olympic 100m breaststroke champion
- Mark Richardson, 400m Commonwealth silver medallist
- John Regis MBE, former European 200m and 4 × World 400m relay World Champion
- Richard Dunwoody MBE, record-breaking champion National Hunt jockey
- Ron Roddan, athletics coach (including coach of Linford Christie)
- Frank Dick OBE, former national athletics coach
- John Syer, sports psychologist to Tottenham Hotspur
- Graham Shaw, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) trainer
- Steve Sylvester, sports psychologist

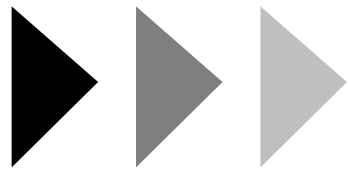
Part I

PERSONALITY POWER



Chapter 1

TRUE GRIT



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A CHAMPION? Talent, certainly. But talent isn't enough to be a world-beater. In sport, as in other areas of life, personal characteristics and mental qualities make the difference between repeated success and failure, between taking a champion's title and finishing in the last four.

These characteristics – the desire to win, the ability to learn from failure, the willingness to try new techniques, to name a few – arise time and again in the elite sportsmen and women who have managed to maintain their form over repeated competitions. Such personal features are considered throughout this book. First up for examination is the requirement for discipline and determination, a touch of selfishness and the essential killer instinct.

EARLY DISCIPLINE

Champions generally have to start training at a young age. That means they often show a natural sense of discipline.

Ellen MacArthur surged to fame when she became the fastest woman and the youngest person ever to circumnavigate the earth in a single-handed race, completing the 2001 Vendée Globe in second place. MacArthur is dedication personified. So strong was her passion for sailing that she made sacrifices to support her activity throughout her childhood.

> *'When I was about 14 I was already thinking about trying to save up my money for a small boat that I could live on as well as sail on the coast. My first boat was a little 8-foot dinghy, but you can't really live on a boat like that and I really fancied the idea of travelling places and having something that you could live on and cruise around in. In fact, I'd been saving up since the age of 8. Saving for a boat was a massive goal, which is why for lunch at school I'd have either nothing, or soup which cost 4 pence from the soup machine, or mashed potato and baked beans which cost a total of 8 pence. I saved everything because we didn't get pocket money as kids and birthdays and Christmases were quite spaced out, so it was basically about making savings every day.'*

Jack Charlton remembers the commitment his brother Bobby – 'our kid' – showed to football from an early age. While Jack would go into the countryside looking for birds' nests and picking blackberries, Bobby would spend all day kicking a ball against a wall, or knocking it with his head. Local people who knew Bobby when he was growing up readily predicted that he would be an international player. And so he was. His early talent, combined with his great dedication, marked him out for the highest sporting success.

Adrian Moorhouse, Olympic gold medallist in the breaststroke in Seoul in1988, showed early dedication in the training regime he adopted as a youngster.

'I was pretty focused as a kid. I was training seven times a week at the age of 11. I'm a routine person, so if I know where I've got to be – the pool at a certain time – I'll get into the routine. I'm a very habitual person. I'll be there, I'll do it and I'll work hard.'

Former Olympic hurdles champion Sally Gunnell reflects with amazement on the dedication she showed in her early years. Looking back, she wonders how she did it – and she doesn't think she could do it again. Now she has had a taste of all the other things that a full life has to offer. As a youngster, while she went out to clubs with friends like any normal person, she loved her running more. It was her athletics that really mattered.

Gunnell seems to have inherited this disciplined outlook from her parents, who she describes as extremely focused and determined. Similarly, if Sally decides to do something, she just goes and does it.

Amazingly, Gunnell maintained a part-time job during much of her athletic career. From 1986, when she won the 400m at the Commonwealth Games, until she won the 1992 Olympics, she worked in the research department at accountancy firm Pannel Kerr Forster. Although many people might find this a stressful combination, Gunnell found it helpful. She says:

'It was really important to me because I could get away from athletics there. Athletes are so intense. If I got injured I could throw myself into my work. It also took some pressure off because there was always a certain amount of income coming in, but the firm gave me all the time off I needed for training.

'No one there really understood what I did. I could go and run a Grand Prix the night before and people would ask how I got on. If I was second or third, they'd say, "What a shame you didn't win." It just kept my feet on the ground.'

Sir Chay Blyth's achievements include becoming the first man to sail around the world against the prevailing winds and currents in 1971, for which he was awarded the CBE. Five years before that he broke the record for rowing across the Atlantic with British Army Captain

John Ridgeway, completing the 3000-mile test of endurance in 92 days.

Blyth describes himself as having been 'a wild young boy', but he was also one with great capacity for discipline, as his childhood experiences show. That youngster was so inspired by a chance encounter with an Olympic swimmer that he took up swimming and embarked on a demanding training schedule.

> *'Through his encouragement I took up swimming and ended up training three times a day. I was 10 or 11. We lived about two and a half miles from the swimming baths and I would get up and run down there at 7 o'clock in the morning and then train, and then go to school, then come back at lunch time, and then go back in the evenings. Training three times a day must have taken quite a lot of determination – to be able to do that at that young age.'*

It is just this kind of determination that was to support Blyth during the planning and execution of his epic voyages.

Commitment to regular training was a characteristic that champion golfer Nick Faldo showed from an early age. He relished the fact that with golf, you could spend all day out on the course practising by yourself.

> *'I played my first round on my fourteenth birthday and from about 15 I'd made the decision that I wanted to be a pro golfer. I scraped through the next year of school and left at 16. I then went to the practice ground every single day, religiously, in every weather. That was my commitment. I left the house at 8 o'clock and was on the range by 8.15. I hit balls all morning and then I played all afternoon.'*

Chris Evert, who won three Wimbledon titles and a total of 18 Grand Slams, certainly trained hard as a youngster. She was drilled by her father to practise shots over and over again, hitting forehands and backhands down every line of the court. These early years contributed hugely to her tennis success as an adult. The training approach

was quite different to that used by the young Lloyd brothers, David and John, who weren't drilled to hit the same shot so repeatedly. John particularly showed huge natural talent, but perhaps didn't have the absolute discipline required to make it right to the top of the game. David says:

'John realized that practice would make him good, which he wanted to be. But sometimes he would say, "Ugh, I can't practise today; it's too hot." Or it would be too windy. Therefore he didn't follow through. Becoming a champion definitely requires a control of your mind, and it's very important to be able to learn that at a very young age.'

David Lloyd believes that aspiring tennis champions need to understand that what they do on the practice court has direct bearing on how they will do in matches. They learn their matchplay on the practice court. Therefore, coaches look for kids with the ability to practise consistently well, day after day – like Tim Henman did as a youngster. When Lloyd worked with him between the ages of 12 and 16, he never put in a bad day's practice.

Former badminton champion Gill Clark was inspired towards the end of her career by a coach called Lee Jae Bok from Korea. He demanded 100% effort in training and Clark was prepared to give it.

'I thrived on the fact that he demanded 100% all of the time, but some players started to pace themselves. If they had a four-hour practice session, they wouldn't give 100%. But what is the point in practising badly? You only reinforce bad habits. This is something that I think is the difference between contenders and champions.

'It is absolutely fundamental that you give 100%, and not only physically, but mentally. You've got to have the necessary mental concentration to practise properly, because it's that quality that you need in a match. If you play and practise with that sort of intensity, when you actually do come to the Olympics and you've got that extra adrenalin rush, your body is used to performing to that high

level that you set yourself in training, and will actually move you on to an even higher level. People who have sub-standards in training will only reach a high level in competition – but not the top.

'I've seen coaches working with players and getting them to hit 500 drop shots. What's the point? If you try to get 5 out of 50 to land within a square foot on the other side of the court, which would be a brilliant shot, to me that's fantastic. Next time you practise it you'll want to get 6 out of 50. So you start practising quality. And quality is a lot more fun than quantity.'

JUGGLING DEMANDS AND MAKING CHOICES

Dr Stephanie Cook, who took the gold medal in the modern pentathlon in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, knows all about discipline. Before becoming a full-time sportswoman she initially maintained her training regime while working as a junior doctor. This was in the days before modern pentathlon was even an Olympic event for women, so she didn't even have the inspiration of winning one of the sporting world's glittering prizes to spur her on.

'If ever I'm doing something I will always try and put 100% into it. It doesn't have to be sport. I always try to do the best I can. That was a driving factor behind me doing well in the modern pentathlon.

'I think my determination showed when it involved getting up at 5.30am to go swimming before going to work. As a junior doctor I was running around all day, so was absolutely shattered after work. But then I'd get home, put my kit on, go out for a run or sit in the car and drive for an hour to go fencing, and then come back. You're absolutely shattered. I did that because I loved it, because I got more out of my life, and I got more out of my job by doing that – but so many people thought I was completely crazy. I didn't know many other people who would actually do what I did and go to the lengths that I went to at that time. At that stage there were no guarantees that women's pentathlon was going to be in the Olympics. I wasn't looking to the Olympics at that point. I was

looking to go to a world championship. That, for me, was enough of an incentive.'

Once it seemed likely that the women's modern pentathlon would be made an Olympic event, Cook finally opted for the easier option of giving up her job to train full-time with the backing of lottery funding: 'I could sleep properly and eat properly and I wasn't rushing off to go to work. It was great,' she says.

Cook was training for between six and eight hours a day. Her motivation to keep focusing on it to such an extent came from the fact she enjoyed what she was doing so much. She just loved riding, swimming and running. The training was hard, getting injured could also cause problems, and she sometimes felt under pressure to achieve certain results. But despite all that, she still thought of her sport as fun. Having the opportunity to train full-time was, she says, 'brilliant'.

However, success at the Olympics brought fresh challenges.

'I was being pulled in all sorts of directions, with invitations to be here, there and everywhere. You have to find a balance in terms of what you want to do. I remember a conversation with my performance director. He said to me, "I know that if you decide to carry on taking pentathlon seriously, the only way you're going to be happy is if you actually train hard and concentrate on your performance, so that you will do well. Therefore you need to be able to say no to certain things in order to be able to focus."

I'm the kind of person who loves doing everything, and I wanted to accept all the invitations as well as do all my training. But I needed to find a balance.'

Cook learnt to be more selective in terms of how she spent her time and, as a result, won gold in both the European and World Championships in 2001.

Even when champions are established stars in their field, there are no shortcuts in terms of the hours of training required – hours that are often unsociable. Three times Olympic champion Matthew

Pinsent starts rowing on the Thames at 7.30 in the morning. Does he ever ask himself why he's doing it? Yes, he certainly does – most mornings. Training for four years just to win one race – Olympic gold – isn't easy. He knows it is inevitable that there will be some bad days, as well as the good ones.

His training routine puts him out of step with most people's daily lives. He may get some time to himself that other people would be spending at work, but the strange hours aren't easy.

> *'Today we finished around 1 o'clock – that's a lot earlier than anyone else. So I get this afternoon and evening to do whatever I want and then come back tomorrow and do some more. It is a different routine to everyone else in life, which is kind of tough. You lose your weekends too.'*

Nevertheless, Pinsent has sufficient reserves of discipline and dedication to keep turning up at the river for more training.

> *'Part of it is simply knowing that there are going to be bad days. You just have to accept that there is no one in life who gets out of bed every morning thinking "Yeah, great, hooray", whatever job they do, however much they love it. But compared to 99% of the population … I love my job more than most.'*

Former badminton champion Gill Clark accepted the commitment she made to her sport because she alone had decided this was what she wanted to do with her life. She doesn't think it appropriate for people to talk about having to make 'sacrifices'. What top performers do is make 'choices'. Clark stresses that she chose to concentrate her efforts on developing her sporting career – it was a conscious decision to put other things to the side and make badminton her priority.

This choice wasn't necessarily an easy one. In Clark's experience her commitment to competitive badminton at the highest level made it hard to maintain personal relationships.

'I was forever on the road. It's not as bad as for tennis players, but you're on the road. Whilst it's getting better, it's still not really accepted that the woman travels and leaves the man at home, and he's got to do the laundry and cook for himself and all those sort of things. It's quite all right for a man to do that, to travel on business, but it's still not really acceptable for a woman. The other thing is, if you're deeply in love, and I'm flying off to Taipei and Japan and Korea, and I'm going to be away for three and a half weeks, you start missing him. So then, because you have all these negative emotions, it impacts your performance. Therefore, I made the choice that that was all going to have to be put on hold.'

Former 1500m Olympic gold medallist Sebastian Coe loved running. The pleasure made the effort worthwhile. Like Gill Clark, he doesn't think of himself as having made sacrifices. He enjoyed what he did and wanted to do it. Maybe this enjoyment was due to the fact he was successful at running. He admits that if he had bombed out in the county championship heats, maybe he wouldn't have continued training three times a day. Nevertheless, he genuinely enjoyed trying to go just that little bit quicker and finding out what he could do to improve further. He was intrigued by what he could do to improve.

RESOLVE, PIG-HEADEDNESS AND COMMITMENT

Ron Dennis, boss of the McLaren racing team, has had plenty of experience in assessing what it is that makes a top quality Formula One racing driver. The vital ingredient for him is 'steely resolve'.

'You can often see if someone has got what it takes. It's not when discussing with someone whether they should join your team, but when they are under stress and being pushed to succeed that you see their resolve. In our sport there are many drivers who are capable of winning races and world championships in the best car, but you rarely have a situation where the car is the best all the time. It's how the driver finds it in himself to make up for the performance

deficiencies of the car. It comes from their resolve and if they want to succeed.'

Just this quality attracted sports psychologist Steve Sylvester to Peter Ebdon, former World snooker champion, with whom he has been working. Sylvester recognized the 'steely reserve' that Peter has. He's the kind of guy who can come up with a strong performance when the chips are down.

David Lloyd certainly has great belief in the power of determination, which he applies in his business life. He likens the challenges you meet in sport and general life to an enormous wall. If there isn't an easy way through, you have to continue to find a way to get past the wall – even if it means making a compromise.

'Walls will come down all the time in everything you do – bloody high walls. When one does, you've got to get over it. If you can climb it, terrific; if you can't climb it, walk around it. You might have to compromise to get around the other side, but if you don't get around the side, you're dead anyway. You may have to compromise in tennis in the way you're hitting the ball; in business you may have to compromise on giving away a little bit more of the deal. But you've got to get around the other side of that wall.'

Michael Lynagh, the former Australian rugby captain, is one of Rugby Union's modern greats and Australia's greatest ever fly-half. He scored 911 points in 72 appearances for his country: until recently, the highest number of points scored in international rugby. Although a naturally gifted sportsman, Lynagh also acknowledges a somewhat determined streak in his own character. If he decides he wants to do something – such as winning a World Cup – he is almost pig-headed about trying to achieve it.

Lynagh's disciplined approach to the game actually increased over the duration of his career.

'When I first started playing amateur rugby at school and after school, I didn't do a huge amount of goal kicking practice because