

Coaching the Mental Game - Motivation

January and February are interesting months for Camogie players, the start of a new season full of hope for success followed by pre-season training. Many of us make New Year's resolutions and as coaches develop goals for our team for the year ahead, however it can be a struggle to get motivated to start training and maintaining that motivation through-out the year can be challenging. As a coach you have a lot of responsibilities from planning and executing training to making decisions in a game. However, being able to create the right environment for players to be motivated to give of their best is the lynchpin to success.

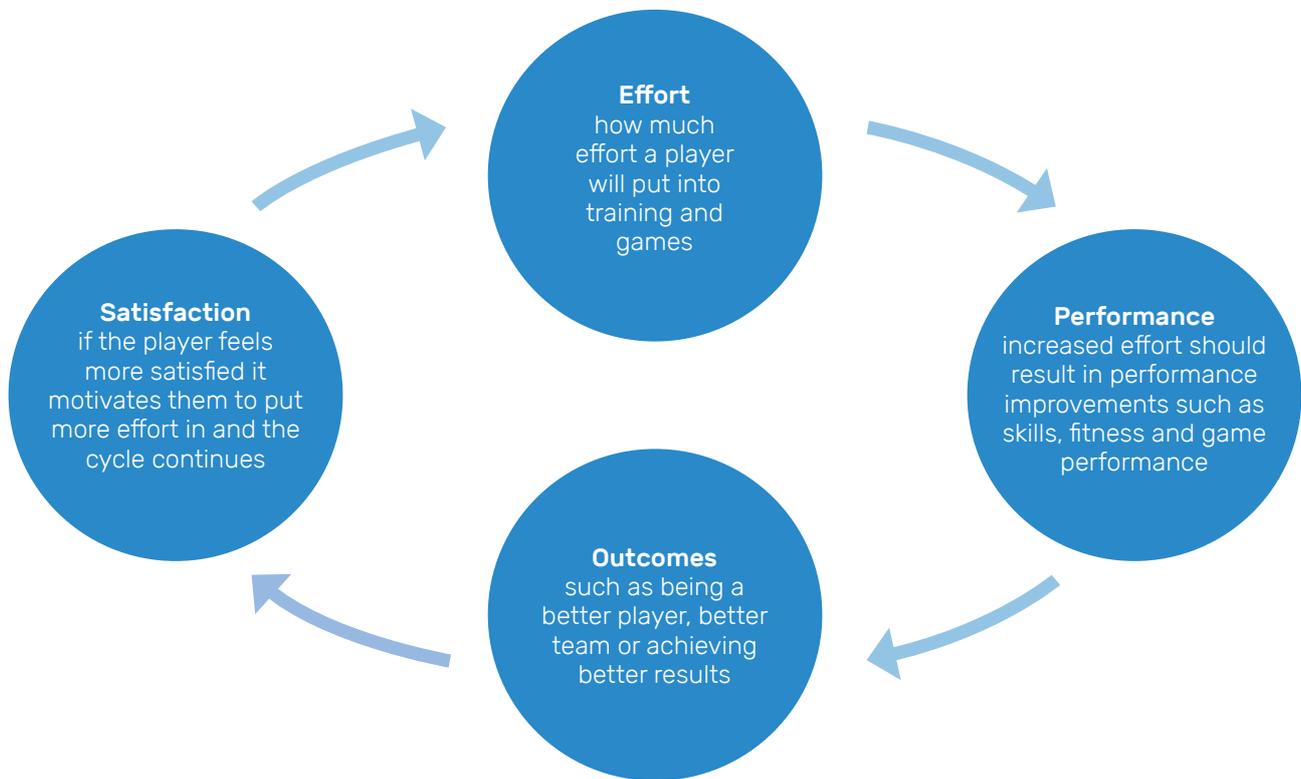
So, what is motivation and how can you as a coach create a motivational environment and develop the motivation of your players. We all may have experienced the motivational approach involving the highly emotionally charged dressing room speech accompanied by banging hurls of tables and lots of shouting. Whilst that approach can certainly get the adrenaline flowing and create an instant emotional response in players, motivation and motivating players goes beyond this simplistic view. Motivation is the inner force players have that energises them to direct their behaviour in a certain way and direction. Simply put, it starts a player's engine to enable them to train and play, providing the ongoing momentum to continue to put effort into their Camogie. Motivation is different for different players, needs to be understood, should be continually developed and nurtured with individual players and teams throughout the season.

There are many theories which explain different types of motivation which players may have including: winning, gaining recognition, winning awards, continuously improving, playing for enjoyment and being part of a team. Studies have found that players can have three main types of motivation (Amotivation, Extrinsic and Intrinsic) with research suggesting that intrinsic



motivation is the most powerful and sustainable type for a player in the long term. Therefore, as a coach enabling players to discover and develop their intrinsic motivation can have the most impact on performance over the course of a season. Intrinsic Motivation can be developed by focussing on three elements.

1. Competence – improving a player's skills and abilities to play the game, which will improve their performance.
2. Autonomy – allowing players to have an influence or some control on team matters enables them to feel more responsibility and control over their development, ultimately being more self-motivated.
3. Relatedness – building relationships amongst the team and creating a sense of togetherness through teambuilding can enhance the personal connection between players and increase a player's personal commitment.



Ultimately motivation influences players in a continuous cycle.

As a coach you are seeking to build intrinsic motivation and whilst theoretically this can sound complex however, building several key principles and practices into your coaching approach can enable you to create a motivating environment.

1. Build relationships with your players through communication, listening and observing. Use your relationship to understand your players, what are they interested in, what is important to them, what they like. Use this information to figure out how best to communicate and relate to them.
2. Enable them to create their own team and individual goals (**for Goal-setting tips see last month's article**), this can help create autonomy. Goals themselves motivate players to achieve them. Be challenge oriented, set challenging but reachable goals and provide feedback on progress throughout the season.
3. Build players competence in Camogie through a focus on skills development, if they become more skilful they will become more motivated to put more effort in.
4. Use teambuilding to build a cohesive team environment and relatedness where all players feel part of the group.

5. Provide positive feedback both information and rewards (praise) to players regularly.
6. Relate effort to performance, players will only increase effort if they believe it will actually improve performance.
7. Reflect personally on your interactions and what impact you are having on a player. Adjust your style with individual players and the team.

The proper time to work on motivation is not just before a game but in every interaction, you have with a player and the team. Build these principles and actions into your coaching approach. A good team motivator will seek to know their players and develop their coaching style to motivate. Ask yourself regularly are the things I do motivating or demotivating for players? Challenge yourself to adapt to the needs of the players and the team.

Ultimately motivation is a very personal thing for each player but the more you can consciously think about how you are creating a training environment that is motivational and interact with players in a way that enables them to develop their motivation you can have significant impact.

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