

SPORT TRACKER

SEMINAR 111 - COOKSTOWN

6 DECEMBER 2008

Philosophy

The philosophy of SportTracker is to work with sports people of every shape and make.

Framework

Amateur Groups and individual sports players have long sought frameworks, expertise and knowledge to improve performance and gain more enjoyment from these pursuits.

SportTracker provides amateur sporting clubs and our members with the capability to track and analyse an individual and/or team performance information. SportTracker products and services combine sports science, coaching expertise and technology.

M.C

Pete McGrath

Guest Speakers

Pete McGrath, Brian Dooher, Jim Kilty, Brian Cody,
Brid Stack, Tomas O'Se, Tony Donnelly,

Roadshow Partners

FSL Electronic Scoreboards, MC Sports, Thorn Sports Surfaces
Fitness by Design, Goalpost Ireland, Opel Kit for Clubs

Daily Star helped out with co-ordinating the Roadshow

This is the second year of SportTracker Roadshow.

Launching new Diaries and Analysis Books.

A new electronic mobile system will be launched in February 2009.

Tracker Diaries for 2009 are available in Football format,
Hurling format and Individual books for sale.

Junior Tracker Diaries now developed, aimed for 8 to 12 year olds in Football and Hurling.

Guest Speaker: Pete McGrath

Former Down double All-Ireland winning coach, and former Irish GAA International Rules manager

Pete is the co-founder and Technical Director of SportTracker. He's worked with the Company over the last three years on Technical Analysis that the company is involved in, both in terms of its published programme but also on the terms of its central application that the company is working on at this time.

A number of players have been using our resources and we get a selection of them to come to the Roadshow to get from them their experiences of using the diary and their experiences as Inter-County players. Hopefully the questions that I ask them will draw out information and experiences which you as coaches/managers will feel useful.

This seminar will be in an informal format. After each speaker has spoken we will encourage people to ask questions on what that person has been talking about. At the end of the day there will be a final Q&A session when again we will encourage you to ask any questions in relation to GAA football or hurling. Obviously you have come here to learn and we hope that you will all leave having enjoyed the seminar and having been stimulated by what the speakers have said.

ANALYSIS:

In relation to that help tip on the products that we have to assist people on the particular facet of team management.

We at SportTracker realise the importance of analysing team and individual performance. Peter Larkin, Managing Director of SportTracker, really started the company on the platform of providing results to help coaches, managers and people in charge of teams, to provide material and results for them to analyse team and individual performance. Since then the products that we produce and offer mushroomed and grew. Analysis was the paper we started with and things have grown since then. The first question that you need ask is what is meant by team performance analysis? We would like to think that our results provide opportunities for people to dissect and analysis a game by looking at the key figures that really make up what, I presume, contributes to a team performance. We also would appreciate and realise our products are really geared to Club teams rather than County teams. Some County teams would benefit from them.

County Teams have financial resources at their disposal which enable them to use results that are maybe very high tech. Normal clubs do not have those financial resources at their disposal.

What we provide are resources that are the power to the Club. Any form of analysis is meant to identify and assess the key indicators to how players contribute during the game. Analyse team performance and coaches and managers taking the time to do this part of team management has been neglected. These are very easily identified, some input into training the team, coaching the team, team tactics, team selection, how often the team trains, how the team gets to matches.

Somewhere in this list of functions and tasks, how high in the priority list has been the whole area of analysing team performance. The manager doing it on a consistent basis is beneficial so that at different times he can provide reliable accurate information to his players about what is actually happening during games.

Analysis should be a much higher place in our priority list than it currently enjoys. In the 90s, there was very little systematic analysis done. It was done in a very ad hoc way. I would suggest that County teams took it very lightly. Club teams that have success, and get the very best out of their players, do some kind of regular systematic analysis. SportTracker provides results to help people to that.

WHY ANALYSE?

- To improve performance. Anything that does not improve performance from individual players to the team collectively, forget about it. Analyse to identify and build strength. Assess information that has been collected to identify and reduce weakness. You learn more from defeat than you do from success. A good analysis system will give you the rudiments of factor management needed to interpret that information
- What players need today is to be the best they can be. Any manager is trying to ensure that opportunities are provided to make his players the best that they can be. What they need is accurate information, facts, data that is going to be presented to them in a positive way, in a mature way, that they can take on board and can discuss with their coach and together a consensus is reached about what they did wrong and what they did right, what they need to do to improve and to move the thing forward.
- If what you present to a player is just your impression of a game then a serious player will see through that. It's the responsibility of a coach/manager to be able to show to their players accurate information. Not hearsay, recollections - some kind of accurate information and which they cannot deny.
- Books SportTracker have - hardback form - positive and negative aspects of team performance. Books produced looked at each area of the field.

HOW TO USE THE DIARY?

- The Diary can be used for a lifetime. Information you collect has to be used to tailor your coaching system.
- Information that is collected has to be and should be used then to determine what you do at your coaching sessions. For example, if you are conceding a number of scores to fouling you need to do a lot of work on good defending, proper tackling, etc.
- The information is to be shared with the players and it will stimulate and encourage proper discussion in team meetings and what you are able to present to the players are facts that they cannot disagree with. First thing a player will do is defend themselves and at least when you have some form of analysis you can then have a form of debate, discussion on the data.
- We have to be prepared to invest in time, energy and effort to make sure that the little edge we have might make the difference to our team and analysis is the one thing that will do that.,

ALL NEW ELECTRONIC TRACKER SYSTEM

The new electronic tracker system brings forward even more the whole philosophy behind team analysis. The system is even more user friendly than the one distributed and will be launched in February 2009. We are still testing it.

SportTracker have identified all the main aspects of a team on a daily basis. Stats and graphs can be recorded. Any information can be obtained from the information on the graphs. It might seem complicated but is very simple. People have to embrace it and decide this is worth investing in, whether it be in hardback form or electronic form. Is it the manager's responsibility to carry out regular systematic analysis?

Benefits:

- Information is uploaded through a wireless network automation.
- Stats available to manager, coaches and players immediately at the end of the game
- Half time stats available in real time
- Can monitor both teams
- Details what changed the games' outcome and at what stage
- Critical for team and players development, finds team and player weaknesses
- Keeps records of all teams and players under a system
- Monitors the actions of your team so you know their needs and helps you know what you need to be looking at.

Q: The method of reporting the statistics. Is it just held on a hand held device? Any idea of what cost it's going to retail at?

A: Electronic Tracker System is a hand held device and it will cost approximately €300 per club.

Q: Is the cost a one off payment or do you have to update it every year?

A: *Peter Larkin:*

There is a one off payment of €300 but there will be a licensing fee of €150 because the system is linked to a website and it creates the information you require for your players.

All other information you can get from the website after that. I have seen a similar device that records information in the same way and it's very good.

The difference with the new electronic system is that it is on a mobile phone and it will be wireless so the minute you input any information from the bench, it automatically goes to the website. The computer will then send back information and give you the ½ time stats, i.e. whatever area you're looking at, you will be able to get only so much information on the mobile phone but if you had a computer on the sideline, it would give

you a lot more information that you require. It will give you a lifetime of information and if used correctly it will determine the outcome of games.

Q: *Will this tell you why you are losing?*

A: *Pete McGrath:*

There is a menu and listed is the important things that we feel are key in the game like breaking ball, kick outs, scores conceded, etc. You can chose on the menu what you want to analysis and it's just a question of clicking the information.

Peter Larkin:

The developer sat with Mickey Harte, Pete McGrath and Brian Cody and they gave him all the options you need and you have 22 options available. You can pick what you want to analyse before the game. The more you use it, the better you become at it.

Q: *Before you started the company, had you got two or three people taking specific details down on a book?*

A: *Pete McGrath:*

You just need one good man to do the work. It maybe a player who is injured or it could be someone within the Club or your management team who is prepared to do this work. If you are hitting one or two important aspects in a game, learning that and taking it forward from game to game then I think you are doing your team a good service. We all take notes for years. If you had say 3 people you could carry out analysis of three or four aspects of any one game.

Q: *Whatever particular weakness you have on a particular game, could you follow that through during the week to your training session?*

A: Yes, if say you are tackling or losing from passes and the stats from a particular match are alarming then you will say to the manager that we have got to do a lot of work on say good handling, good passing, handling the ball, etc. You learn from that game and you do the work to improve that aspect and bring it forward to the next game. Every player knows what they are doing and the accept that in a match last week they gave away say six points by freeing and they know that they have to work on that then I think that makes them more focused, more eager to put right the mistakes they are making and if they think they are doing well then you have to encourage that. Sharing the information is essential. It's time consuming but your team is worth it.

Q: *How do you apply these changes at half time when you have just five or six minutes to relay those findings to the team?*

A: I remember Mickey Harte saying about one particular match a few years ago, the players were giving away say 20 frees in the first half and you did not think that but the analysis showed just that. Once you have the facts you can say this to the players at half time. It can be a wakeup call for them, you don't have to crucify them with the facts, just say

look this is what is happening here, we have to be more careful and have got to address the problem. It makes the players more focused on what they have to do in the second half to turn the match around but it has to be done positively. It should not be a case of trying to embarrass the player or trying to put them in the dock. It's all about positive, constructive analysis and you as coach/manager/trainer should put that into play.

Q: The person doing analysis should be interested in doing it?

A: Yes, the person should be interested in it and also be able to see the benefits of it. They should see it as an important function of the team. Maybe somewhere within the team structure there is someone willing to do that.

In conclusion, some form of regular consistent analysis is the responsibility of the Manager of a team. We ask a lot of players at club level and county level and I think it is incumbent on managers at this level to be in a position to provide and collect meaningful information to use for the benefit of their team. No good coach wants to be accused of not looking after their team.

Guest: Brian Dooher

Member of All Ireland Winning Tyrone Football Team

Q: An outstanding year for Brian Dooher. It's your second year as Captain of an All Ireland Senior Football Team and there was some good performances this year, if not outstanding. Mickey Harte said that the point that you scored in the Final was probably the best point ever scored in Croke Park. There are people here who are looking after club teams, Minor teams, etc. If you were asked to give them one point of advice as a player what would you say to people interested in managing/looking after the younger players?

A: From my point of view as a player with Tyrone, Mickey Harte is a good judge and would look after new younger players when they come into the team. No manager has all the answers but you just work with the players you have got and listen to what they say. If you see talent, nurture it and give them the chance to become the best player they can possibly be.

Q: How important is targets in your game?

A: It's very important to set targets. We set targets with our fitness during the year and our training programmes. A team works better with targets. Targets give you something to aim for. You can see what you have done, have you reached those targets, you can see if you're improving and how you are improving.

PMcGrath: Mickey Harte said he had four targets for 2008. He wrote them on a big sheet and he would see them

For Example: Win McKenna Cup , Win National Football League,
Win Ulster Championship, Win All Ireland Final

He didn't win the first three but he did win the All Ireland Final – he got the main one. But those were his targets for 2008.

He would emphasise the importance of have targets for his team and to share this with the players. You have to have targets which are realistic, meaningful and reachable.

Q: All managers and all teams suffer setbacks. Obviously Tyrone suffered a major setback in the middle of May when Down beat Tyrone in the replay of the first round match. Without revealing secrets, how did Tyrone deal with that?

A: There are no secrets. We were not playing very well in the National League but after the replay against Down a lot of people thought we were not going too far. The team put their heads down, worked hard and got themselves together under Mickey's guidance. We had a few weeks break and after that we had a lot of players coming back from injury so that helped us getting back to basics.

Q: *Most people would say that Tyrone's turning point in the season was the Dublin match. Up to that point in time, people would not really have considered Tyrone as serious All Ireland contenders. You had beaten Louth, Westmeath and struggled against Mayo in Croke Park. The Dublin match changed all that. Going into the Dublin match, was there a total confidence that you were going to do good. The team put in a massive performance that day.*

A: We knew it was not going to be a walk in the park and we had to work hard. We had been steadily improving in all our previous matches so we were confident going into that match. But nobody should underestimate Dublin.

Q: *During the season when you had to change the team meetings, who organised it for you, did the manager organise it?*

A: It was the players ourselves who actually came together after the match. We don't have team meetings as such but the players all got together in our own time.

Q: *After you were beaten by Down, had you a players meeting and try to reassess all the happenings of that match or was it just a matter of getting back into training and throwing yourselves totally into focusing again.*

A: Again there was no real meeting as such. We are about long enough to know that it's the sort of thing you can decide without having a meeting. We don't have meetings for the sake of it. It's really what happens after the meeting that is more important when the players get back to basics and put their heads down.

Q: *Do you think you were under prepared for the Down match?*

A: No I don't think we were under prepared. At that time we thought we were in fairly good shape but when you look back in hindsight you see really that we weren't in top form. We had struggled during the League. Down gave us the kick that we needed. I don't think we got too cocky. It just wasn't happening.

Guest Speaker: Tony Donnelly

Assistant Manager with All-Ireland Final Winners Tyrone (Mickey Harte's right hand man)

In order for me to try and do justice to an excellent company and their diaries for any players, I will go through a couple of aspects of it with you.

If you accept by and large that teams are doing well, the whole mental side of things need addressing. If you wish to have that cutting edge or wish to move ahead then we have to look at mental preparation, mental state of mind and career attitude.

DIARY PHILOSOPHY

- Diary is not unique. It's good for all players to know that things can go against you. Use this as an opportunity to do better next time. Use it to help to improve your team game and/or individual's talent. This will not suit all but some players will take it seriously.
- 2009 Diary – The 2009 Diary gives the individual the opportunity to do self monitoring and take responsibility for your own performance. . You can take good things from it. If we do not take a record, we can get very scrappy and it's good to keep track of what you are doing and take charge. Taking the time to do a diary is the start of having quality dedicated athletes on your team. They believe it's going to help them.
- The diary is to be shared with coaches. In the last year the players of Tyrone kept a diary. It was fascinating to see how somebody is progressing and at times when you are injured. It's lonely when you're injured because you will not be part of the group and it's frustrating. You wonder if you'll ever be back to the level you want to be at and even putting down those thoughts it does help to get it off your chest.
- Identifies good traits in individuals. Reinforces how well they do and the players can see that for themselves. It provides valuable information for the manager rather than him ranting and raving about rubbish. Coaches and managers have the responsibility to be good facilitators and try to help as many people as possible to come together.
- Gives guidance towards best practice. We striving to be the best we can be. How are you going to make yourself a better player? Ask the questions and then come up with the answers.
- It gives a player self esteem and helps them feel good about themselves and their game. It also gives a player an opportunity to evaluate how the season went from both a team and player perspective.
- Diary is not for everybody but those who use it do things well. Gets players to peak at the right time. Quality Vs Quantity - Doing the best with every opportunity you have. Good quality trainers and coaches have it all prepared in advance. If you focus on quality you will have people working at a high skill level.
- Every good team needs an open line of communication, ensuring that there is equality within the group and talking to players and letting them know what they give to the panel.

- Some would say that a player's diary is another way of squeezing our every ounce of meat for that player. Getting the best out of a player helps you realise his potential. That cannot be seen as treating him as a piece of meat. The key components are all about player welfare and player well being.
- After the Down defeat, if the players had not been accountable for what happened, you would have come down to the blame game. Thank god we have players who take on accountability. We can do more than this, we can do more in training and if the players are doing this then you are a long way down the road of making improvements and getting where you want to go.
- No point in trying to stay at a high level all the time. You need to be fit to train NOT train to get fit. Energy should build up as the season goes on. Adds intensity that brings you to new levels.
- Gives fresh ideas and positive encouragement – it's something to be enjoyed, not endured.
- You get a sense of team spirit. Team spirit is built up over time. You have to appreciate each other's strengths. Every player wants their place on the team.
- This team would be better served by a team leader. You have to be flexible, putting the team first. Essence of team spirit. Enjoy each other's company.
- The process is about getting/identifying something unique and keeping one's identity.
- We are an amateur sport. It's very important to build a rapport between the manager and team so everybody then feels part of the team. Players want to contribute to the overall team and respect everybody's contributions.
- Giving the best of yourself and asking the best of those around you. About relationships, what can I give out, not what can I get!
- Also, make new players feel welcome. Bring new players into the fold. Make them feel comfortable and continue to build on what you have.
- Enthusiasm – Lots of it and bring it into the fold. You need quality within your group. If you want to be part of a good team there has got to be enthusiasm. You got to be an energy giver – not an energy sapper.

Q: *Tony Donnelly: Would you have won the All Ireland if Down had not beaten you?*

A: I think in any business or any company you cannot pre-plan for what you don't know is going to happen. We did not under prepare for Down. We prepared as best as we thought we could and in the teams room after that defeat it was just devastation. It really broke everybody in the whole group, players, managers, everyone having to lift it again. Defeat is so sore, so lasting that you never want to go back there and probably those things helped us in that against Mayo. Our first preference is go the direct route, straight on and win but I think the reason you have to learn is you learn more from losing but I think now you have to learn more from winning.

Q: *Around the Dublin match, at what point did you feel it was going to be your year?*

A: *TD:* After the Down match, I did not see that we were beaten by a poor side and that is very disrespectful to a very talented Down side. For different reasons, it was a quality game of football. It was then a matter of rebuilding step by step and regarding the draw it helped us improve round on round. After Mayo, there were times that we were trying different passages of play and if we could knit it tighter together we could then play well against Dublin. For the first 15 minutes against Dublin, we didn't know what was going to happen. Any performance that could go wrong did go wrong but it's anybody's game to have. There is also that belief in Tyrone, not arrogance, but belief that if we perform our best than we can do anything.

Q: *How did you use the diary? Had you a forum during the year whereby at certain times of the year players were encouraged to come to you and show you the diary and you could have a discussion about it?*

A: *TD:* It was more an individual process. You meet on a one to one basis and discuss things, there is no open forum.

Q: *How do you get the players to buy into the concept of the player diaries?*

A: *TD:* You will always get some people who are more willing to try it than others but Mickey can be quite persuasive and the respect that exists there between himself and the players meant that they were willing to try it out. When he is speaking about the diaries so passionately and then asking the players to take that on board, see what you think of it and then we will review it, everybody is going to at least look at it and see how they do it. I take you point about trying to get your players involved. Coaches have to encourage it, enquire about it, have to get their interest. Not just introduce it and walk away from it. Over the course of the season the players see the value of it.

Q: *You say that the players share the diaries. I presume that the players share the diaries among themselves, certainly from a team aspect would it be more beneficial to share it as a team?*

A: *TD:* The diary is personal to that player, it's an individual thing to the players and you don't want to get any kind of friction going. It's better if it's shared with the coaches in say a performance review, like what are you bringing into the group? We did not really see it as a collective forum for players to share their thoughts, we wanted to keep that to some degree of privacy.

Q: *How important do you think Sports Psychology is in terms of getting a sense of teamship?*

A: *TD:* We had a sports psychologist last year. Gaelic Football is a team game played by individuals. If individuals can be as good as they can be then that can only help the team effort. But team building comes from all the collective training, time together, time spend away, training weekends, etc. The diary certainly helps because everybody is seeing that they are doing the best they can be. If everybody is doing that then that certainly helps build team spirit.

Q: *Do you think a sense of ownership is greater than teamship?*

A: *TD:* It's a sense of ownership. You cannot have players cutting corners. If there are players cutting corners than the diary will show that. It will not answer everything. You are not going to get where you should be if you are not honest and truthful with yourself or your team and that you are doing as much as you can do.

Q: *Did you make any changes to your fitness programme this year compared to any other year?*

A: *TD:* The players added a day or two additional training to their programme on collective training. One or two weekly when you have time but a lot of work is done in small groups and that was a big thing last year. They continued to up those scores all along which was clear proof that the players were putting in the work. The panel is very dedicated bunch of players this year. It's a matter of trying to have good players all the time on the bench. We see enough in training and we see them doing individual or private training as well. They definitely did the work this year.

Q: *Did you think after the Down game and then running into the Westmeath game, if Westmeath had been more disciplined in the last 10mins then Tyrone could have been knocked out of the Championship. Would there have been another Derry thrown out the window that evening?*

A: *TD:* It's a thin line. Whether you win or lose and when you get to an All Ireland Final, there is nothing in it. We had a second chance against Westmeath and we lost a couple of times but those are part of the rules of the game. You break the rules, lack of discipline – it's all about keeping your discipline. We cannot apologise for Westmeath's lack of discipline nor can we apologise for putting them in those circumstances so it's like a bit hypothetical.

Q: *How do you keep your squad happy all year particularly when a former All Star wants to make a comeback?*

A: *TD:* Keeping the squad happy. When you are winning and progressing, the players know that they are part of something. We have said it before, those who get little game time or very little game time still keep putting the effort in and pushing the rest of the team. As regards Stephen O'Neill coming back in to the squad, we welcomed him back in and that came from everyone, the manager and the players. We are delighted we had him back to play, we were delighted he could play in the All Ireland Final. He's back now, his whole career has been resumed. He will be playing in the McKenna Cup in January and we are absolutely delighted about it.

Guest Speaker: Jim Kilty

Ireland's most successful athletics coach, Kilty includes World indoor champion Derval O'Rourke amongst his team of athletes.

"FITNESS & CONDITIONING"

Terms of reference to say how the diaries can be used to suit the manager, coaches and players aims for the year.

Fitness and Conditioning: What does that mean?

FITNESS IS A STATUS: The Status that you want your players to reach. Fitness can be physical, skilled and tactical but it is a status and it depends on your philosophy on what level of fitness and what type of fitness you want to bring your players to.

CONDITIONING IS A PROCESS: The process you use to get your players fit.

Main components of Fitness are:

- Skill
- Speed
- Agility
- Stamina
- Flexibility
- Power
- Strength

SKILL fitness is the most important. If skill is not at the top of your list then you should be coaching a different sport.

SPEED fitness: Fitness for an athlete is how fast they can run a distance. Fitness for a footballer or hurler is how fast they can run 5 yards, 10 yards, etc.... All aspects have to be looked at over the demands of your sport. That is the type of fitness you need to get your players to.

AGILITY: A Study from an Australian University showed that if you're running a straight line and then you change direction, for every 10 runs you make, only one is in a straight line.

STAMINA: What is the stamina you require your players to run? Do you want your players to be able to run all day? What is stamina in your sport? A full forward line and a full back line makes between 40 and 60 runs in a game. Half back line/Half forward line - Stamina is the ability you require to repeat 20m, 30m runs.

FLEXIBILITY: Flexibility work. The work you do one on one is flexibility work the likes of which you do with your team.

POWER & STRENGTH: Some people get this mixed up. What does strength mean? In some sports you need powerful men or strong men. A strong man is someone who can apply force and it doesn't matter how long it takes him to apply it. A powerful man can hit the ball quickly before he's hooked or blocked.

Strength & Speed = Power. Power: Make it as powerful as possible and maintain that.

We want our players to reach various stages. The process we use is conditioning in training, preparation, centre programme.

Many modalities / Options / Systems: Running, Circuits, Weights, Hills, Field/Road/Track.

The system we choose should be suited to your own individual sport.

Should be picking out the terms of demands that the sport makes on the bodies of our players.

The Coach / Player / Athlete. Coach makes the call. Player completes the work – trains, practices and recovers. Rest/Recovery is just as important as work. If you have no recovery after training or practising then there will be no progress. For example, if you go five points down after the first five minutes then the last training session was too hard. Players tire earlier if they are training too hard.

It is important that the player keeps a record. What does a player record? One good point about recording training for a player is that it provides motivation, provides a sense of accomplishment, sense of achievement but above all it provides a sense of achievement for oneself. Write down what you did in the squad sessions. Write down what you did on your own so the feedback to the coach / trainer / manager is important. The manager should keep a diary too.

To the medical staff, in case of injury, it's important and to the player himself. The simple way that this can be done is like how do my muscles feel now? What is my game like now? Do this immediately after training. It builds up a history of your training and it maybe something that works for you.

Coaching is three major things: The demands of the sport that you coach in terms of physical and skills needed. The individual needs of the player.

Look at training and what you have to do with the players. Auxiliary training is very important. There is no individual programme in a team sport. They have got to get the hard work done together. But there has to be certain individual training programmes. They should be private to the player.

The most important thing in your sports is the skills of your chosen field. How do you improve that?

Functional Competency: How competent is your body to move? This is about preparing your player that all the muscles in their body are able to help them play their sport better. Something coming into training this year is assessing your players.

Functional Screening: Identifying functional competency, which muscles are tight, which muscles are weak - identify the imbalances.

Q: *When you look back to the Club players and them doing weights, they obviously need to do the proper weights and it could be more harmful doing weights than not doing them at all?*

A: It they are not screened, it's true. What would I say to the club players for best training is to stand against the wall with some weights of say 15Kgs. Doing weights is very helpful to everyone and doing hypertrophy will burn fat .

Q: *What age groups do you start training young lads at with weights?*

A: A young boy should start at 16 but from 14/15 they should be learning the technique. I worked with a team and there was a lovely gym kitted out and I said get rid of all the machines. I said I wanted loads of dumbbells, squat racks, an incline bench and loads of freeways. That is what you need because when you are inside a machine, the machine is doing all the stabilisation work but when someone kicks you on the football field you have to do it yourself. Doing work with dumbbells squats, dumbbell lunges are much better for the players.

Q: *Is hypertrophy important through the season and do you have to train at championship pace?*

A: You have to train at championship pace and that means you need more rest in your training schedule. Give the players a little break in the intensity because that is what they get in the game.

Q: *What age would you start at?*

A: About 13 up. The window of opportunity is important not to miss. There are two separate windows of opportunity, one around 6/7/8 – girls are slightly more ahead of boys at around 10/11/12 and the second window would be 11 to 13. Girls first and only one window of strength and that happens say 13-15 for girls and 16-18 for boys. You need to have the skill of lifting weights then or the year before that.

No matter what age a man starts lifting weights at he can get as strong as he is going to be. A woman player never gets strength. The later you start, the less stronger you become.

Q: *On training throughout the year, how often do you think we should go to the gym and would once a week be enough?*

A: Yes, once a week should do it. You must remember if you are building muscle, lifting the muscle when its tired will give you a good result so if you train on the pitch on a Tuesday night then lifting on a Wednesday night is probably a good time to do it. But if you are coming into speed work and fast lifting then it has to be done before you train and should be done the day after a rest, either two or three days before you go out training.

Q: *Senior Club Players. Would they start weights before the Club training starts?*

A: I am involved I Ballymun club hurling team and we lift weights three times a week for six weeks before we ever go to the pitch and then when we go to the pitch we stay out on the pitch. We keep the weights then to once a week to maintain.

Q: *That is before your pre-season training starts?*

A: That is our pre-season and we may play a league match or two. I remember playing a very poor Portmarnock team who were just on the six weeks of weights lifting and were nine points up at half time. We were lucky that at 10mins to go there was one point in it and I do not know where the guys got it because we had done nothing out on the field.

Guest: Brid Stack

Defender Cork All Ireland Winning Ladies Football Team 2008

Q: It was a very successful year for Cork - Fourth All Ireland win. Cork has been a very highly competitive world of ladies football for the last four years and to what do you attribute to Cork's success as a

A: Ladies football has evolved so much over the last number of years. We've been together for five years and our team is all on the same professional level and that keeps driving us. From the start of the year we set goals to try and achieve the results from the League through to the Munster games and then to the All Ireland. Our manager is very dedicated and there is great communication between the manager and the team. The players are very honest with one another and with the manager and there is also great respect among one another. Unless you are on the same page and striving for the same goals then you are not going to achieve anything. We achieved all our goals for the year. The manager brought in new players at the start of the year so that keeps the person focused to do the best they can because nobody is assured of their place on the team.

The team is never named until just before a match so you never know if you're playing or not.

Q: Personally, as an individual player, what do you try and do on a personal level?

A: You have to be very motivated, driven and committed. I have never missed a training session with the County and there is a high level of commitment from the girls as well. As I said, we also have a fantastic coach. I've never trained under someone like him. The longest our training session will be is 1¼ hrs.

Q: From a coaching point of view, I heard you speaking about Eamon Ryan before, and you are very highly impressed by him. Would you say that his training methods and decisions are in line with what Jim was talking about in terms of quality, training sessions not being too long, and them being to the point and game related?

A: Definitely. Of course we do running at the start of the year but every trial is with a ball. We've never done any trial without a ball and everything is game related. Even just to mix things up, he is very innovative. He brought a Rugby ball to training one day and we were learning tag rugby basically. We were doing a lot of running even though you would not realise how much you were doing and our ball handling improved because we weren't used to handling a rugby ball. It keeps us on our toes. You give all you've got in the training sessions.

Q: *Last season you used the Tracker diary. What advantages did you think the diary gave you this year?*

A: I take each year as it comes. I started training in January '08 and started the SportTracker diary around the same time. There are no divas on the team and we play each match as if it's the last. I found having it a great advantage in 2007 when I was in 4th year college. I had a lot of things going on and when I look back at the records in it I can see I was tired, nutrition was not up to standard and there was a lot happening around that time which affected my game. The onus is on you to go to the manager and show him what happened the previous year and he then knows your strengths/weaknesses from that.

Q: *I'm currently coaching 13 girls in Dublin and a proposal has gone forward which will go to vote next week to abolish competitive games, like league and championship. Proposal is for U10s and U13s and as far as I am aware this will probably be piloted to U10 and U12. They want to try and bring back the fun element in girls football so the plan is to run 7 a side blitzes so all girls have more touch of the ball and every girl will have a game or a match. I would just like to get your opinion on that and how you feel about it?*

A: I know it's fantastic to get girls involved and to get girls involved you have to re-emphasize the fun element of it. I train a lot of local clubs like the school teams where I am teaching and I also try to instill the fun element in to the games but there is that competitive edge and they are not going to be U13 forever. It's important that there is a small touch of competitiveness in the games but I would also emphasize fun. It's good at U10 or U13.

Q: *Having been involved with Armagh girls against cork in 2006, how do you keep going? You have had four in a row so how do you keep the freshness and motivation?*

A: Every year it's getting harder and harder to win. You have to put in that extra bit of work every single year. Again it's all credit to Eamon Ryan, he is just such a humble and modest person and he keeps us all motivated in that respect. As I said before, bringing new players every year into the panel and you are never assured of your place. We have had a statistician in for the last four years and you are never going to be the perfect player but he highlights areas where you need to improve. He does encourage us but you are always trying to get that bit more for him.

Q: *How do you balance Camogie with Ladies Football?*

A: There was a time when a lot of the girls on the team also played camogie, they were playing hard and training every night either for Camogie or for Football. Some were playing Camogie on Saturdays and then having a County match on the Sunday and I don't know how they did it. But there comes a time when you have to choose one or the other. It's impossible to do the two.

Guest: Tomas O'Se

Captain, Kerry All Ireland Senior Final Team

PMcG: Tomas is very keen to be here in Tyrone.

Q: How many All Ireland medals have you won?

A: 4

Q: I spoke to you a number of weeks ago and we just talked very briefly about last year and the All Ireland Final. You said it's gone now and I'm just looking forward to the New Year and getting back on the horse again. One thing that always impresses me about Kerry is they can take it on the chin and yet you come back the next year as enthusiastic as ever. What is it in the Kerry make up that doesn't keep you down?

A: It's a lot to do with history. Kerry is steeped in history. There is no other real sport in Kerry. A lot of the past players are still very much involved in GAA. You have to be gracious in defeat as well as in victory. It makes you stronger the next year. We love football and training and looking forward to the next season. We take it one step at a time, we look forward to the League and then to the Championship. We, as players, are constantly striving to get back up there the next year.

Q: You never get beyond your station. There's always a target to reach?

A: I don't think there is many GAA players that are cocky about what they have done or what they have won. Everybody gets a taste of winning then you want to win more and that drives you on. That is why successful teams come back and win again because they know what it takes and they try to replicate that.

Q: It was a difficult year for Kerry?

A: Yes it was. On the training pitch, it didn't bother us but coming up to games it did. It's a very thin line between winning and losing. We are not that far of the mark and we will have another chance next year.

Q: *This year you used the SportTracker Diary. How did you find it? You are a successful sports person, successful player. You get this diary and use it for the first time – what advantages or edge did you think the diary gave you this year that you had not got in previous years?*

A: I personally wouldn't find anything too easy. It was something I tried last year and it was something I enjoyed doing myself. Everything is covered in it. Basically, everything is covered in it and all the components are there. It only takes a couple of minutes to write in it. I would write everything down in it and after a game, whether it be a good game or a not so good game, I would look back on the previous two weeks and see how I trained, how I felt, and that would give me an indication of what went right/wrong in that game. I found it especially helpful towards the end of the Championship to keep referring back over the season to see how I trained, what I did right, wrong, etc. Everybody who plays Inter-County football is very sensible and knows what they can and cannot do before a match.

With regard to training, club teams have come on so much over the last few years and historically managers did everything. I think if a player is very serious and wants to improve his game then to keep a diary is a good thing. It's a very personal thing and not everybody goes with it. Anything that can make a player better is a help.

Q: *Jack O'Connor is coming back as Manager. You had Pat O'Shea for two years and you had Jack prior to that. Was there much different in their styles of management or in what they actually did with the team, in terms of training, preparation?*

A: Not really. Pat O'Shea came on board and his attitude was that if it's not broken then don't fix it. With all teams that get to All Ireland Finals, it's hard to keep them motivated. Jack O'Connor has been around for a while and I think he is a great organiser around the place and everything is prepared so all you have to concentrate on is your football. We will be back in training in January and Jack will bring his own thoughts to the table and we all know him and what is required so it's up to the players to perform.

Q: *Every single year you seem to turn out very successful players. Can you pinpoint what that is down to or what the set up is in Kilkenny?*

A: It's very simple really, every school and every club have volunteers/teachers who encourage kids to play football. Without that encouragement and drive for youngsters to play football then there's nothing.

Q: *My own county Armagh won the All Ireland in 2002 and it's hard to feel that could be replicated. Is there a difference having one 4 All Ireland medals? Is there a difference in each one or is it exactly the same for you?*

A: Everybody loves winning. When you go back training in January it's a good kick up the backside and you get back to work straight away. Your first medal is very special but everyone is special in its own way. Last year it would have been great to win but that wasn't to be. Every year it seems like it was the first. You get the build up, it's a long year and you start in January and then when September comes it seems like a different year altogether and it seems like your first. I could not really pick out one. I treat them all separately and equally important.

Q: *Is Club football in Kerry very competitive?*

A: Yes, very strong. I live in West Kerry and if your club is strong enough they can go but if you feel your club is not strong enough you can go play for a different side. The County Championships would be very different. If you get out of Kerry club you have a fair chance of getting all the way. The only thing is the success the County team has holds clubs back a small bit. The competition in Kerry is very tough.

Q: *I just want to ask about Paul Galvin after his suspension, would he continue training with Kerry or what did he do?*

A: I would be very good friends with Paul. The minute it happened in fairness to him he just stood back and stayed at home and took it away and would not step back into training until maybe a couple of weeks before the All Ireland. It was tough for him because he was Captain that year and it was a very difficult time. It would not really affect us as a team until just before a game when every journalist would ask you the same question about Paul and it wasn't really fair. You know it was like a player was injured and that's the way I described it. Hopefully we will have him back this year and he will behave himself!!

Q: *Is it a fact or just a coincidence that where Kerry Managers are concerned, that if they lose an All Ireland Final they are either sacked or resign because Kerry seem to have gone through many managers this last seven or eight years?*

A: I don't think so. Kerry would be very fickle. If you lose you come in for a fair amount of criticism and it gets a bit personal. The managers are trying their best and they all want what's best for Kerry and what that would be up there winning All Ireland Finals. I think when Kerry are winning, you're great and everything is great but when you lose it's a different story. It's very hard for the managers. As players you are together as a team but with the manager he is on his own.

It was very tough for Pat O'Shea this year, not from the media but from Kerry people. It might have a bearing. But if you are managing a county team then you are tougher than you look. We have had managers that have come back from defeat as well.

Q: How important is it for players to adapt to different positions?

A: It's very difficult. You can come up against different teams. Managers know which players adapt well in different positions and that seems to be the way the game is going at the moment. I think it's happening in every game but we adapt as we are required and just get on with it each year.

Guest Speaker: Brian Cody
Five times All-Ireland winning manager with Kilkenny

"MOTIVATION"

I have been with Kilkenny for the last 10 years. When I came into the job first as Kilkenny managers I did not have a terrific CV. It was a poor CV to be honest about it. Just like yourselves, I was involved in Clubs, Coaching and Schools before I became an Inter County Manager. I had played at Senior level but never won anything. The Kilkenny job came up and I wouldn't have been top of the list for a lot of people but I came into it and what stood to me was confidence in my own ability to do the job. I was going to work very hard at that.

What sort of ideas or philosophies do Kilkenny have as a team?

- Essence of Kilkenny team is Spirit. The success of the Kilkenny Hurling Team over the past number of years has been down to Spirit. I wanted to win an All Ireland Final and doing so put spirit in the whole county and the Kilkenny fraternity. Spirit is the key to developing a successful team with everybody moving forward together.
- Spirit and the desire to win was going to give Kilkenny the chance to win, not just a Leinster Final or a one-off All Ireland, but to give an opportunity to develop a team that would stand the test of time and would continue to grow. Central to that was building a spirit through the whole County and everybody involved in Hurling, from County Board to Team Managers, Coaches and Players.
- Unity will lead Kilkenny so that means other people are involved in the whole team, not just the 15 players on the field.
- Unity of purpose is not just a particular manager or player but the team collectively - Everybody building together and driving forward. Team point of view is that everybody is important from trainers to backroom staff. This means giving everybody involved the opportunity to do their job and not tell them how to do it. Let the team get on with the job.
- Have confidence in that person that they will do their job to the best of their ability.
- Facilitate the people who do the job and do it very well. Spirit is borne out of respect which is important in developing a team or building a team. Respect one another, the full panel of 33 players, not just the 15 playing on the field at that time.
- Communicating, talking and listening to each other, and the thoughts and values of various groups and people you deal with.

- The whole panel is very important, not just the players. For example, Jackie Tyrell has developed himself in a major way from Club Player to Inter-county Player. He maximises his belief in developing himself physically. What every player strives to do is to play to the best of their ability and that is in the player's own hands. The individual diary plays a major part in all that. I try to encourage the players to take ownership of themselves, to drive and to set standards for themselves and the team as a whole.
- Spirit is bursting out of the dressing rooms.
- What do you say at half time to continue the drive in the team? Nothing. The players are so driven and so motivated that they take on board themselves what they need to do to get the best result possible. Even those who are not on the main team on that day are always encouraging those who are playing and so the whole panel is one team. Everybody is part of one team, there is no second team in Kilkenny. Players know that they need to keep their standards up and to work for the sake of the team. The buck stops with the manager and he has to be seen to make hard calls when the need arises. It is essential for players to see that a manager is there and will make the hard decisions when it comes to it and will not be afraid to do so. Players are very committed and determined to be the best they can be.
- Focus: Manager is limiting the number of decisions in the dressing room at half time, the main train of thought is all about focusing on the game and the job that has to be done to get the best result possible. Players want to be part of the set up.
- Players are there because they enjoy it and when they get to a certain level they see that the opportunity is there to be successful. They are part of a serious training session and part of a serious team.
- ABSOLUTE FOCUS is essential.

Q: *You have been talking about the Sports Diary. Would you bring them into development squads or is that too soon?*

A: I think a development squad is certainly right for them. They are an individual thing really. We had them at Kilkenny for the past year and I have never pushed them on anybody. I introduced it to them, gave them out to them and left it with them. At different stages players would come to me and mention something about it. But I think it is massive for the development of any team. Getting players to take ownership of their own careers is important, write it down and you have a record of what you have done and not done.

Development squads, it's the coming together of talented players with potential who will develop to a very high level. You can never encourage young players too much and the more you give them the more they want.

Q: *I was at the National Coaching Conference in Croke Park last weekend and Martin Fogarty did a session with some youngsters from Erinsowen and Castlecomer, he seems to have great enthusiasm for it. I was wondering how often have you changed trainers or has Martin been there for long and how do you work on the training aspect?*

A: Martin Fogarty has been a selector since 2005. He is a top class worker and is a teacher as well and does terrific work. I believe at that level you have got to experience the intensity of Croke Park in your training sessions. I think it's massively important that we do that. Your training has to be at high level at all times, you are giving 100%. That is what builds experience and enjoyment from that and keeping everything on the pitch. At training it's vitally important. The players themselves would be driving the whole thing and making serious demands of each other and would not tolerate any slacking. Quality not quantity is key. You are better to do less rather than more. If you do too much, it does not work. If anything we have to cut back and do not overdo it.

Q: *If you could have analysed a game you had played in, how do you bring that you're your next training session or do you talk to the players before?*

A: I suppose we just tend to keep doing things and at the same time you are conscious of training. As regards tactics, hurling is to me a very simple game and players can put too much emphasis on tactics. We keep things very simple and would be also conscious of allowing the players to use the skills that they have and I would not be inclined to coach individual players too much because I would want them to just play and if I brought that drive into their game they are going to be very difficult to beat then. Be aware of the team you are playing against, the opposition. In 2006 Kilkenny Vs Cork, Cork were going for 3 in a row and we obviously were not having a great game. We had to sit down and talk about it and come up with another plan, the players brought forward that plan themselves and very quickly realise what they needed to do. Our own game is dictated by the players you have.

Q: *When you took over the Kilkenny job you said that you are very motivated. What was it that was driving you on? Was it fundamentally the love of hurling?*

A: Basically that is it, my love of hurling. That's the same as so many other people as well. At the end of the day we are all volunteering and we are all in this thing because we want to be in it. First thing you must have to do any job like that is enthusiasm for the job and you really want to be there. If you have the slightest "I don't want this and want to be here" then you should go away from it because there is a lot of work involved in it. To me you have the opportunity to deal with the top players in the country. You wind together and lose together. It's just essentially sharing a passion for the game. That is what it is.

Q: *Do you think the performance in this year's All Ireland Final was the zenith/the spirit you talked about?*

A: Certainly, our spirit is our starting point and without that we are diluted. If there was any dilution in that then I would have to walk away. If something is lost then we cannot go forward without that. This year's final was a terrific occasion for us as we were going for three in a row. It was a massive driving force for the players, etc. It was just an enjoyable place to be that day.

Q: *What's your opinion on the Cork situation?*

A: It's not something I would go into much detail on. It's sad what's going on in Cork. It's become very personalised and something that every GAA person in the country would like to see not there, like it never happened in the first place. To be honest I would rather be losing All Ireland Finals to Cork than to see Cork not playing hurling. It's the game at the end of the day and it's all about the young people. Young lads playing in Cork want to look up to their heroes out there playing on the field as well. It has to end sometime. All disputes end sometime and hopefully that should end soon and they can get back onto the field and play again.

CONCLUSION:

Peter Larkin (Managing Director, SportTracker)

When I started it was all GAA related and, from a business point of view with Peter Quinn, we looked at the idea and branched out into all sports so we have diaries covering all sports, golf, athletics, rugby. When I first approached Brian Cody, Mickey Harte, Pete McGrath, they all were supporters of Club games and that is one of the reasons they came in and supported SportTracker.

SportTracker has a good, honest name and wants you to support us and help us bring the brand throughout Ireland. SportTracker is trying to be a national company, building on the back of the GAA. We put four Roadshows together and it took about 150 people working hard for each Roadshow.

Next year we are hoping to do a National Roadshow which is going to cover all sports

All the people here today will be supporting it and we also need your support to do this. We need you to work with us and help us and if we can build it, the idea of the company is to float it and turn it into a public company next year, probably in the next 12 months so we are going to build up to that

SportTracker is done by professional people and aimed at you the supporters. The reason that we have Brid Stack, Tomas O'Se and Brian Dooher speaking is because of their honesty and their belief in the concept.

SportTracker Directors, who work full time with the Company in terms of contributing to our products, are Pete McGrath, Brian Cody, Mickey Harte, Jim Kilty.

Jim Kilty and Dr. Liam Hennessy, Fitness Director of Irish Rugby Union, have both linked substantial tutorials at the back of the trainer diary for this year.

GAA Football diary is presented by Mickey Harte

Hurling Diary is presented by Brian Cody