

SPORT TRACKER

SEMINAR 11 - MAYO

22ND NOVEMBER 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, Jim Kilty, Brian Cody,
Brid Stack, Tomas O'Se, Mickey Harte

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

"MOTIVATION"

I was involved in Clubs, Coaching and Schools before I became an Inter County Manager.

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: Giving the current impasse in Cork between the Players and the County Board, if you were Gerald McCarthy and you had 28- or 30 players that were dissatisfied, would you stay in the position?

A: It's sad what's going on in Cork and I could not stand up and advise Gerald McCarthy on what to do in the whole situation. Everybody has their own opinion on it and the more that has been spoken about it, the more harm it's doing also.

Q: How do you keep your players motivated to want to play for you every year?

A: The squad has Spirit. Very much, we always talk about the Panel. 33 players last year. They have respect within the group for each other. We have talent and superstars like Henry Shefflin who constantly work hard and his dedication to the team and the sport is unbelievable. Young players come in and see the dedication that there is and it helps that we have players who constantly want to improve and stay at the top of their field.

They know that if their standards drop then there is always somebody else waiting to step in and take their place. We only have one team in Kilkenny, no second teams. Every member of the panel is well capable of doing the job. They know what to do. Some good players were substituted in matches, it happens. For example playing against Cork in 2006, three of our players who played that day were outstanding. The following year those three players were not playing, others were on the field but they were still part of the panel. At the end of the day, you are on the panel and you should could easily be off the panel.

Q: *What do you do to get that Spirit in the team?*

A: When I came into the job, I did not feel that I did anything phenomenal to gain the respect of the players. Spirit is borne out of respect. For me, I just rolled the sleeves up and got down to work. It's about doing the right thing and putting in the effort, even little small things. If you make demands of the players, they see that they have to constantly ask questions about themselves and by making demands of the players, it makes them put in the effort to be the best player they can be.

If you get stroppy, it rubs off on the players. If you are on top of things and constantly looking for perfection then they follow suit.

Q: *What would you say is the key ingredient for a team in the dressing room before a match or at half time, whether it be an All Ireland Final or a Club Match?*

A: I suppose it's a personal thing. Different time, different managers do things in different ways. I was never hung up on fast rules. No rules at all really. I would allow the players to develop as individuals. I would see the players as being the most important thing in the long run. People would often ask what do you say at half time? I don't really inspire or say very much. The best times in the dressing rooms are when the players take ownership of themselves. Some players are good leaders and take it on board and lead the team.

Q: *Obviously when training you get to a stage where you reach your peak. At what stage in the Championship do you reach your peak? With Galway against you this year, will you change your policy?*

A: Again, I would rely massively on the physical trainer's expertise. Freshness is important. I don't have the expertise to judge players fitness and would rely on the advice of my trainers. I would also expect the individual players to let me know how they feel and if they feel their fitness is on top form. Players have a feel for it and I trust their complete honesty. You want to communicate with your team and really you just rely on your gut instinct. You want to be fit for most matches but it's a progressive thing and we certainly peaked in the All Ireland Final.

Galway and Leinster, will not alter my policy. It's fine. I would certainly not be of the opinion that Leinster group is handy and there are no threats in Leinster. I don't believe that. I believe that Wexford and Offaly are very strong teams. Dublin are getting better and will make a strike and could very easily win the All Ireland in a few years time. Laois are good as well. In the qualifiers this year, for our game against Offaly, we prepared for a Leinster Semi-Final. It was a massive challenge for the first half of the game. If we were not fully prepared then we were in trouble because Offaly were very serious. Galway are one of the teams that could win the All Ireland in the next few years and the potential is there.

Q: *I am a coaching officer in Galway and I am very interested in the coaching structure in Kilkenny. How the players can make the transition from coming out of a coaching structure and then go on to be successful in adult level?*

A: The whole structure in Kilkenny is very strong and very sound. The Schools play a very important part at primary level and there is a lot of teachers who promote it very well, all of that is in place. Clubs have also done good work but even the past four or five years it has snowballed. Kids from 5years onwards have taken to it, are very committed and have great structure. Regarding transition up to Senior level, it varies from player to player. Some players just have that something special. I've thought about this. There are some players who are not destined to become great stars. However, there are some plays that would have been discounted and written off at 16, 17 or 21, and then they just come along and you can see that they have that certain something. Seeing fellas like that and then have serious Inter-County careers is great, for example, Derek Lynn, he never played in a Minor final and never made the team until he was 23. He put in the work and looked after himself and got his place on the team.

Q: *What is your opinion of Sports Psychology? In your set up, does that play a role?*

A: Have never had a sports psychologist work with the team. Sports psychology is very much common sense. It's always been there. I've often thought about it and feel that there may be certain players/individuals who might benefit from it. Kilkenny never used it. I think that all managers are a bit of sport psychologist as you have to feel for what sport is about. It really is about common sense and I think it is worthwhile. It's there and a part of sports today.

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. What would you say are the reasons why Cork has achieved so much success in recent years.

A: Ladies football has evolved so much over the last number of years. 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: How important do you think it is for the Manager to set goals for the team at the start of the season?

A: Our coach is the best we've ever had. He's very organised and sets goals at the start of every year and at the start of the different games, i.e. start of the Munster Championships and start of the League. Our training session is no longer than 1¼ hrs and we train to a very high density. We respect his honesty and dedication and we give the rewards.

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 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.

Guest: Tomas O'Se

Captain, Kerry All Ireland Senior Final Team

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. 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: Your career to date is one of great success and one of disappointment too. Who would you rate as difficult opponents that you come up against on a one to one?

A: That's very obvious. We had great battles with Tyrone. Playing Tyrone has always been the best football and if you put Kerry Vs Tyrone against one another in another 10 or 15 years time then you will have good players there too. We have also had great battles with Cork for the last few years. Mayo, Galway and Dublin are good too. We have not beaten a Northern team. The games we have had with Tyrone are probably the most memorable. Hopefully we will get another chance to play them again.

Q: In an average training session with Kerry, would the emphasis be skill related, fitness related, or a mixture of both. Is it all being changed constantly or is there a common theme to which Kerry train?

A: A lot of our training would involve the Ball. We take the league very seriously and there is hard training put in then. Training would be mixed up during the Leagues and when it comes to the Championship it would be a lot of focus on the Ball. There is not an issue with fitness in our team. There are times in the Championship that you come so close to getting knackered out and you use your different skills on the day.

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.

Guest Speaker: Mickey Harte

Double All-Ireland winning manager with Tyrone, and the most respected and admired coach in modern-day Gaelic football

PMcGrath: Up until 2003 Tyrone had not won one Senior All Ireland Final and now six years later they have won 3 and the players can take an enormous amount of credit. We cannot ignore the work done by Mickey Harte and he took a lot of those players from U21 through to Senior levels.

DIARY PHILOSOPHY

- 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.
- Coaches and managers have the responsibility to be good facilitators and try to help as many people as possible to come together.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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!
- 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.
- 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.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: *General question to the top table. Most people in this room have come from an environment where we have enjoyed sport, have enjoyed success in football and our clubs have done very well, our Ladies football team have done well. However, are Senior team has played in six Senior Football Finals in 19 years without a win. What in your view is the missing ingredient in Mayo claiming the top prize?*

A: *Mickey Harte*

Far from me to tell anybody else what they can do. All I can do is speak from my own experiences. Success did not happen for me until 2003. You have got to be persistent. Believe that success can happen. Don't talk doom and gloom. Believe in what you are doing. I believe that there is good structure in Mayo and you have good quality teams at under age. Some people have pleasure in seeing Mayo lose so many finals but many teams have not been there. At least they have been at the top and the more times you get there the more experience you gain.

For many years it didn't happen for us but the tide turned and we enjoyed it because we don't know when the tide will turn again. If you have belief, it may happen but if you don't have belief then it will definitely not happen.

Tomas O'Se:

I agree with Mickey. From Kerry point of view, the last time we played Mayo sometimes the head dropped when we scored a few goals and I don't think that was the real Mayo team. Over the years Mayo has produced some great footballers. But it has to be belief that it can and will happen. I don't know what the answer is but keep trying and you will have to come through at some stage. The players are there so you just have to keep on trying.

Q: *I would like to ask Mickey – I think it was a big decision in the lead up to the All Ireland Finals to bring back Stephen O'Neill after he played Senior Final and you had been under pressure after the Down game. You got a lot of criticism from a lot of quarters. How did you prepare and arrive at that decision to bring Stephen back on in that game.*

A: *Mickey Harte*

I suppose it was a gamble as most things in management are a gamble. You and I know that you when you win a game then you're great and if you lose the game then you're not so great at all. I am a gambler and I am prepared to gamble on things that I have long thought ahead about and the question of bringing back Stephen O'Neill was the quality of a man we were bringing back, what he had given to Tyrone football for 10/11 years. I know him very well and I know how dedicated he is to sport and I know the standing he has within the Group but we had to put it before the players and I know you might say that there could have been a bit of friction between senior players and that might have been the case but at least we were prepared to consider their opinion and if there was a serious objection then that would have been taken into consideration. We had a good

knowledge how everyone would react and see if he was prepared to come back at that stage. When Stephen O'Neill got injured at 28 he was too young to retire. He was not going to come back to sit on the bench, he was coming back to be used. When Colm McCullagh got injured it was the perfect time to use Stephen. Kerry beating us in the Final would have been disastrous and would have wrecked the team and my head would have been on the line. I should have been gone after the Down match but all things are possible. I am not foolish enough to think that because we won the game we're safe. We are all people and we work with what we have before us and if we win, great and if not we still did good work but other people probably would not see it that way.

Q: *Mickey, you're an outspoken critic of Australian Rules Football. When I see your team play I see a lot of other sports in your play. What other sports influence you in the way you train your players?*

A: Firstly, let me clarify one thing regarding Australian Rules Football. I am not against Aussie Rules in general. I am anti the GAA involvement with the AFL because, when you get involved with the AFL, you are compromising your own game. I don't think our game should be compromised to go anywhere in the world because our games are good enough to stand on their own two feet and because we are getting involved in this type of game we are postponing the possibility of this being a reality. Never mind the violence which is a by-product of the AFL.

I can understand the degree of prestige when our players go there but people seem to miss the point that it's about the fundamentals of the GAA should be promoting GAA and not compromising. If AFL was to play in Manchester or Liverpool we would not be spending three weeks every two years going to it.

I think that we ought to have open minds about any new information we get towards our sports, gathering information, reading books, listening to other players and their approach or application to their sports. There are other things to learn and if we had an open mind then we are searching for new information out there. Have to have that thirst for knowledge, what's out there, could we use it? If players are becoming to think that way then that is why Gaelic games is evolving all the time and we should not be playing the way we did in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. There has to be something new coming into the game all the time otherwise it would stagnate. We can bring new styles to the game, bring new ways of thinking to the game. That would not be the only way GAA can be played. New styles are constantly evolving.

Q: *Tomas o'Se – The Media is everywhere over the last year or two. Certainly the O'Mahony case was going on all year. What effect did it have in Kerry on the team and panel that the focus seems to come from the media and then from officialdom within the GAA that it was carried on from the O'Mahony case right through all the year? From an outsider looking in, it seemed to have a big affect.*

A: In a way it did have an effect. What happened with Paul one of the problems I had was that it could have been dealt with quickly and they could have told us when he was coming back. The training I did not agree with. Over the past number of years people have picked loopholes in the GAA over training for themselves and the GAA do not have

their rules in order. It dragged on. The one point about it was that for three weeks coming up to a match there was no mention of Paul and then just before you were about to play and giving media interviews, that's all the media wanted to talk about. I don't agree with what the GAA did to him and he stayed away which was very difficult because he was Captain. They seem to be dealing with things a lot more quickly since then and hopefully that's now at an end.

Q: *Mickey, how do you prepare your free takers and how do you perfect their skills? How do you deal with the good players who cannot get rid of the bad habits?*

A: Free kicking is something that a player will have a certain aptitude for and there are certain players you would expect to do so. We are not the greatest in the world at free kicking but the players who do that have to do them on their own and Stephen O'Neill comes early to training or stays on late and does it individually but they cannot take up collective time doing that so they have to dedicate themselves to do that after or before their training sessions. They develop their own unique skills individually.

We try and focus on what the individual does well and not his faults. Show him videos of other players doing something similar and looking for his feedback on what was done wrong – trying to get him to see for himself what he's not doing right and how to go about changing it. We make it a learning point for this player, bringing it around in a non direct way.

Q: *Mickey, What is your view on collective training?*

A: Again, I am talking from my own perspective. Since taking on Tyrone in 2003 that is the way I have done it. I'm not saying that our work at group level is great but it's good for us. As far as training is concerned, we train one night weekly between January and March. The players each have the own individual training programme outside of that and obviously they will be doing something with their clubs during that time. Maybe a game at the weekend like the McKenna Cup or a session on a Saturday or Sunday morning. When the time changes and the hour goes ahead we then train two nights, Tuesday and Thursday, have a game at the weekend and/or a session on Saturday or Sunday depending on which is most suitable to most people.

We never do any more than three times together. That's the way it works for us. Most players look forward to a second night training on bright evenings when you should be looking forward to it. I'm not saying it's the whole answer but it works for us at the moment.

Q: *Mickey, what do you figure on the mental side of things? And what do you think of collective team meetings, how often do you have them?*

A: I think it's crucial because we are thinking people and if you don't bring that aspect to play then you're limiting your potential. We don't have a degree in sport psychology but we have to know where the value of it is and be able to tap into the sports psyche. Having the players thinking about their own performance and being aware of what makes them

tick but not to bog them down in it. It has to be an integral part of what you are doing. You have to bring it all together and interlink it.

Team meetings. There are no formalities. You have to judge it as you see it. Have your players comfortable with the whole concept of team meetings. You have to be comfortable handling team meetings. Why do you want this meeting? What do you want to get out of the meeting? How are you going to conduct it? How are you going to give everybody the opportunity to have a say without putting them under pressure? How are you going to go about it getting that team meeting and certainly what are you going to do with it? Will there be follow up? You don't have a team meeting for the sake of it. You don't want to be in a position where if there is a team meeting players are not looking forward to it. You have to read the situation and see when it's the right time for one and there's a purpose for having one.

A: There is no "I" in Team. Team is collective and has to go forward.

Q: Mickey, I think everybody here is trying to achieve success at club level. You were lucky enough to achieve success with your club. How do clubs instil self belief and self motivation in players? Going back to SportTracker, I don't know if we handed out 30 diaries to players, possibly 5 of them might use it. How do you develop self motivation from players at club level to be successful?

A: Sometimes it's not entirely accurate that all county players are motivated. They are all human and you will find some people who are not as motivated as others. Same goes for clubs, there will be some players who are motivated and some who are not. That's just the way it is. With regard to the diaries, if you give out 30 diaries and you say only 5 use them you might say "only". But I would say that was good that five people had taken on board that they can do better for themselves and be leaders instead of followers. To me that is huge success. How do you look at the perspective you buy into? People take time to want to know new ideas, new ways of doing things. For what it's worth, I would not be disheartened or discouraged by that and again I think that every team and every situation/group have to talk about what you find. We have to work with what we have, the skills we have and the people who are listening. That is what life is about – a work in progress.

CONCLUSION:

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.

Peter Larkin (Managing Director, SportTracker)

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