

The mental tools

The player looks out onto the training pitch...another session!

She's exhausted so she reaches for her tools...her mental tools...

She starts with self-talk – she makes sure she's talking to herself – goal-directed self-talk that will focus her mind (See the work of @Alex_T_Latinjak on self-talk in sport)

She fills her self-talk with her intrinsic drivers:

“Come on, another chance to pursue mastery. I gotta be better than everyone else...I love striving to improve my skills...what am I going to work on today...”

(See the work of Robert Vallerand on intrinsic motivation)

You see, she finds it easy to muster energy when she thinks about mastering her sport. She finds it easy because she grew up in a family environment where striving was common place. Where the pursuit of excellence was normal.

(See the work of Lew Hardy, Tim Lees and others on The Great British Medalist Project)

And because she was exposed to the importance of human striving from such a young age, she finds herself high conscientious. She's industrious and self-regulating, far more so than the norm.

(See the work of McCrae and Costa on 'The Big 5' and conscientiousness)

And so she continues her inner monologue: “Ok, I've been working on the speed of my touch and pass when under pressure. I must make sure I'm intentionally working on this...checking in with myself as I train...”

(See the work by the late great Anders Ericsson on Deliberate Practice and a new one Deliberate a practice by Dr Edward

Coughlan and by David Eccles...and their podcast episodes with Dan Abrahams)

She'd been working on improving the speed of her touch and pass because when she asked a coach what he felt she needed to work on, he told her that her distribution was a little slow at times. So she was deliberately focusing on that in training and setting up specific activities to help her improve this granular detail

(See the Sport Psych Show podcast episode with Jay DeMerit which breaks down how he went from League 9 in England to Premier League...which includes Deliberate Practice protocols)

As she thinks about this she reminds herself of just how good her favourite coach is. He had really taken time to get to know her on a personal level and also he had taken time to sit with her and discuss her game

(See the brilliant works of @JowettSophia on coach/athlete relationships and Sergio Lara Bercial PhD) on world class coaching...and their podcast episodes with me)

She smiled. Not only was she ambitious but she also felt safe in her current playing environment.

Because of his care and attention she felt like she was learning and growing as a player.

Her smile made her happy. The self-talk was working. Her body was now functioning in a manner that sent signals to her brain – signals shaped as feelings of relief, happiness, and readiness

(See my podcast episode with @LFeldmanBarrett on the brain in sport)

She's mentally skilful. She's in charge and in control. She's now ready to go.