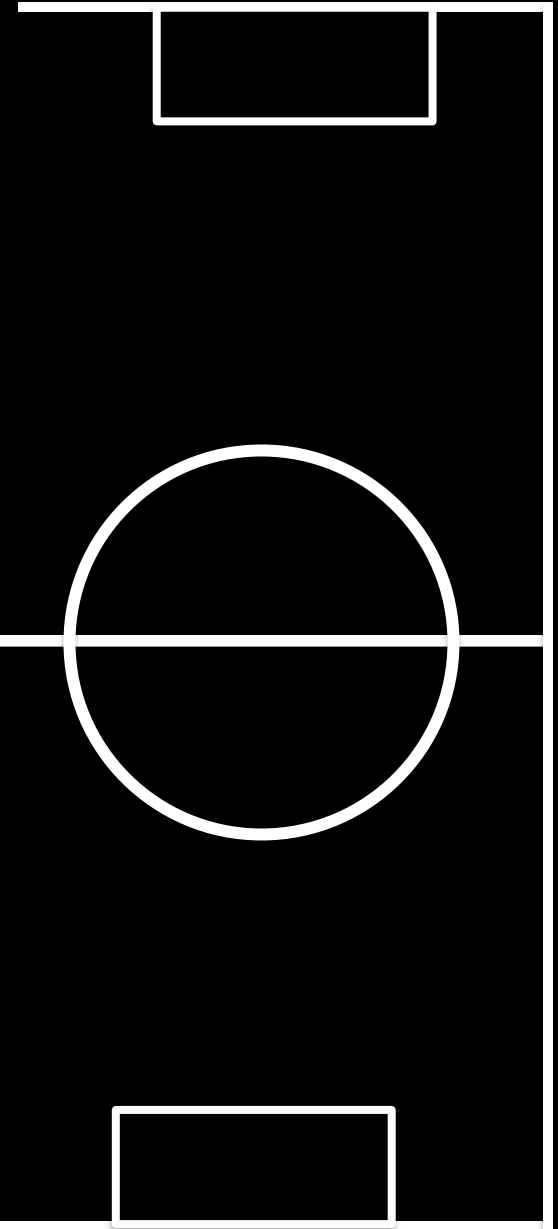


Reading the Game

Mental Skills for High-Performing Engineering Teams



My journey from player to coach



My journey from player to coach



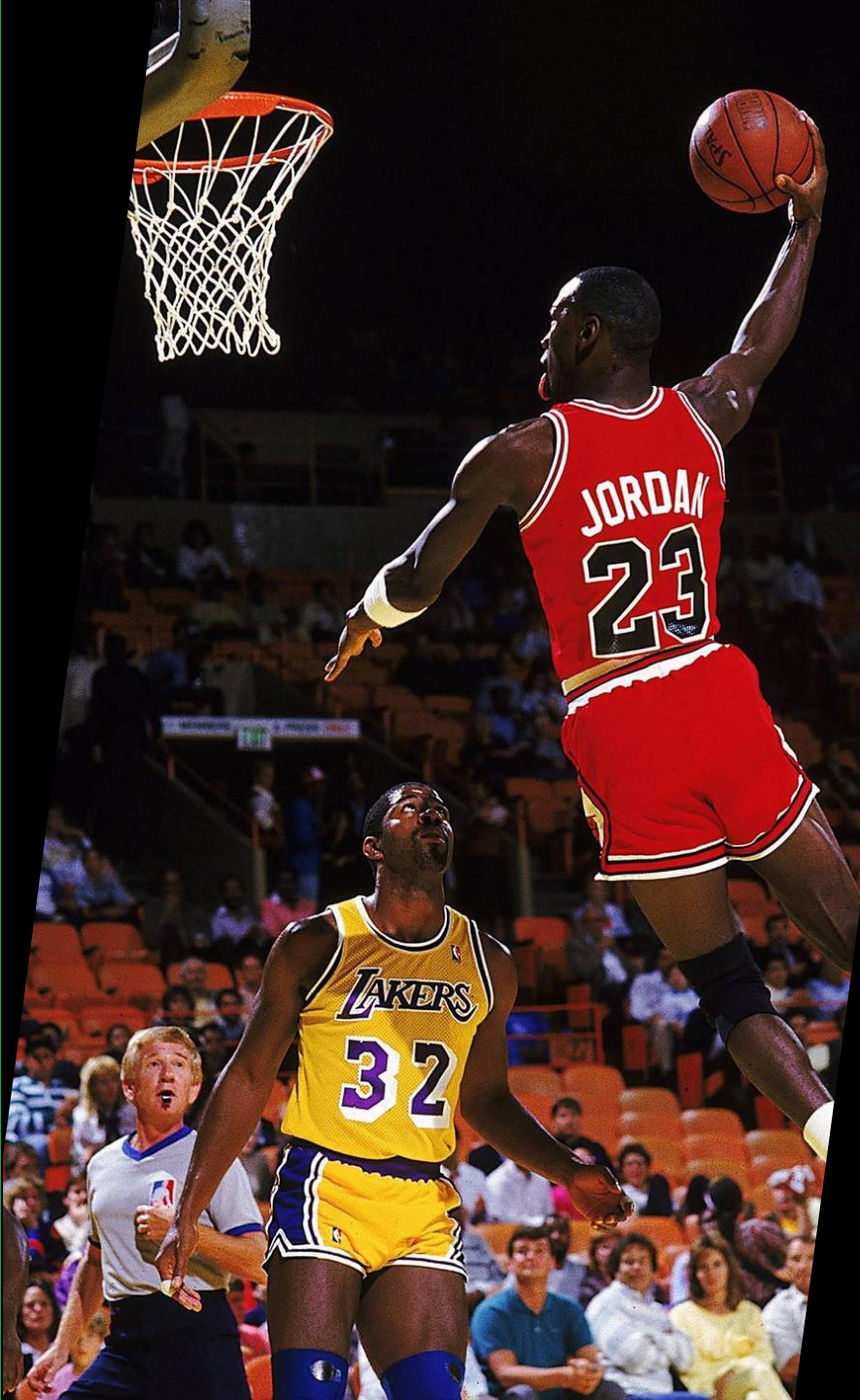
My football team

- 7v7 played on half a pitch
- Over 30s women's league
- Average team age over 45yrs
- Most started playing football over 35yrs
- Self-selecting team



Good teams need more than
individual skills - they need to
adapt to each other





**“The game is 80%
mental and 20%
physical”**

Michael Jordan
(and also many other coaches)

In sport, it is “easier” to observe
how to adjust to one another



Observe: In **match** behaviours

- Reaction to **own** mistakes
- Responses to **team member** performance
- Team dynamics and key player **interactions**
- Factors that support sound **decision-making**
- Drivers and drains of team **energy**



Interpret: Why **timing** matters

Immediate post match analysis

+

Being in the bar

=

Not much really



Act: Signals **before** the match

- Distraction / Multi-tasking
- Needing to vent (talking a lot)
- Quieter than normal
- Looking confused
- Bouncing around full of energy!



Things that can affect a player's performance

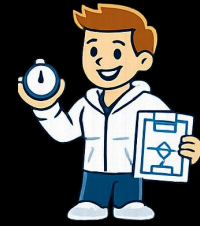
- Lack of **confidence** in their own abilities
- Not knowing what their **role** is in the team / game plan
- Not feeling **trusted**
- Not feeling part of a **team**
- Other life **distractions**

*From sports psychology sources





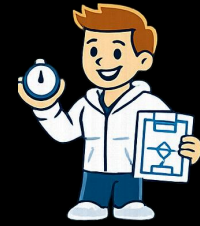
Coaching myself



- Allow time and space for individual **questions** (or **emotions**)
- Be **prepared** to explain some things more than once (and don't let it annoy you)
- Accept that my Dutch (and **domain knowledge**) is not always understood



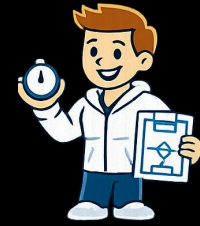
Coaching myself



- You can't **control** everything
→ **Focus** on what you can **influence**
- Be **open**, allow space for **others** too
- Ask what people **need**
- Ask how to **help**



Coaching myself



Happy teams = **effective** teams

Stay with your ethos and core values

Stay your **authentic self**



Coaching **Team** alignment

- Actively focus on **strengths**, people generally remember weaknesses more
- Focus on **trust** and looking past mistakes
- Remove **fear** of mistakes
- Help **connect** people



The **limitation** (coach can't do it alone)

- As a coach, you can **observe, guide** and create awareness, and even **training**
- You can **support individuals**
- You can **influence** team behaviour **to a point**
- But you're **not** (always) **on the pitch**
- Performance is mostly shaped by **team-to-team interactions**



High-performing teams learn each other's **“user manual”**

- Everyone **communicates** and **processes** differently
- People are **not the same every day**
- Team members share what **motivates** them and **drains** them
- They **adapt** how they **communicate** and give **feedback**



Are you really **reading** the game?

- Are you noticing **signals** — or just the work?
- Are you fully **present**, or multitasking?
- Are you **adapting** to others' “**user manuals**”?

- What's your **game plan** when things get tough?



What's a mental skills game plan

- Helps you **handle pressure**
- Helps you **focus and refocus**
- It must be **practiced** — not improvised
- It should **adapt** and grow as you do



What's a mental skills game plan

- Used before **high-pressure** moments
- Creates **consistency** under stress
- Turns uncertainty into **routine**
- Example: **Chole Kelly** taking a penalty



What's a mental skills game plan



Visualise: see yourself succeeding before it happens



Self-talk: replace doubt with a simple, repeatable message



Recognise & reset: notice negative patterns → pause → refocus

Summary — Reading **your** game

- Observe **people**, not just work
- **Confidence, trust**, and **clarity** matter
- **Timing** matters
- Coach the team to **learn and adapt**
- Great teams **read the game together**





Thanks for listening

Start **reading** the game **tomorrow**

