

# Psychological profile of elite soccer players

## Bill Beswick-Team Psychologist, Manchester United

This is one of the best sessions that I attended at the NSCAA Convention in Indy. I had heard Bill Beswick speak at last year's convention. Since then I have been fortunate enough to hear him at the Premier coaching course and at the NCAA Final Four. Some of you were also fortunate enough to find a seat in this lecture and to hear Bill Beswick, the leading team psychologist in the world, speak on this topic. I emailed all of you and told you that his book "Focused For Soccer" is a must read. I know that several of you have purchased the book and hopefully some more of you will go to Barnes and Nobles, Borders, etc. to buy it as well. It truly serves as a great resource for coaches who wish to go beyond the strategies and teaching x and o's of our sport. I have written down some of the highlights from this lecture. He performed two lectures. The other titled: Talent is only a starting point", I will share with you in the next newsletter.

### Notes:

- At Manchester United, they do not call a player talented before the age of 12. Until then, the emphasis is on playing and having fun. All players that are 12 and under in the Manchester United Youth program do not put on the "red jersey". Instead they wear a t-shirt and a training vest. That is it.
- There are personality changes in progression of the top-level player. The stages go from initiation, to development, to perfection.
- He then compared Roy Keane to the movie Gladiator. This is the age of the disposable player. Roy Keane is a task-oriented leader. In the movie Gladiator, Maximus, is very much a task oriented general that has the love and loyalty of his troops. Keane does as well. He is a warrior on the field!
- Quote: "If you can't be a star, then don't be a cloud." Meaning that keeping elite players happy that they have to realize that not all can be a star, but they shouldn't hide either.
- At Manchester Utd, they always ask "why" to get to "how."
- Manchester United always ends training with a challenge. Such as: Hitting the crossbar from a spot, juggling so many times, etc. Keeps players always on their toes and not wanting to be the last one to accomplish the challenge.
- As a trainer of players, you need to teach your players how to thrive on pressure. "Top player is an ordinary person with extraordinary talent." Players keep a reminder card. Example, Roy Keane is a magnificent player with a fiery temper. So Beswick has Keane keep a reminder card about keeping his temper. Helps him to thrive when pressure is on.
- Top players must also self manage. Manchester United warms up the same everyday. Steve McClure, the first team coach, will ask Roy Keane when the team is ready then they will go into their training session.
- As a coach remind your top players that you will attack them as a player, but love them as a person. McClaren stays with a player and works with them every training session.
- Include everybody. He then shared a story about Ole Solksaer, the forward that plays around 20-30 minutes per match, yet scores important goals. One day, Ole was frustrated with his playing time. Bill asked him, what do forwards do? He replied, they score goals. Bill then asked what else? He then said things like: pressure the defense, lay balls off, and make runs to unbalance the defense. Bill then said, "Well, you can have a good game without scoring goals then can't you?" These are just a few highlights from the lecture.

