

How to win an FA Cup tie

By John Sinnott

So you are in the FA Cup third round and you want to write yourself a giant killing page in the history books.

But how do you prepare for a one-off game like this?

Motivational guru Humphrey Walters, who was part of Sir Clive Woodward's backroom staff during their 2003 World Cup triumph, has been applying business principles to developing winning teams and leaders for the last 30 years.

As well as teaming up with Woodward, Walters has also advised Premier League teams, notably Bolton, where he has worked closely with psychologist Mike Ford.

Walters gives BBC Sport his blueprint on how to win an FA Cup tie



Gerrard scored with seconds to go in the 2006 FA Cup final

GROUND RULES FOR WINNING TEAMS

1. Think from the basis of ruthless simplicity. When you book a plane ticket you don't want to receive 10 pages of travel conditions with your seat number. All great teams have a philosophy of keeping it simple.

2. There are no dumb ideas. When I started working with the England rugby team I was horrified to discover that the Twickenham changing rooms were dirtier than my garage.

Matt Perry had the idea of getting a television makeover company to completely redo them. You would be amazed the impact that had on the players.

3. Look for every inch. The coach of the Green Bay Packers Vince Lombardi always emphasised the importance of making small changes.

From that I came up with my own proverb - "Unwise to get human beings to jump wide chasm in two bounds."

But it is also about every team member contributing those small inches. The idea of winning must never seem too out of reach for the players.

4. If you have run out of ideas say so. And if you do run out of ideas, bring in other people to help you. Outside stimuli can be really helpful and that is one of football's problems - it is too much of a closed shop.

5. It is okay to be frightened. The management of fear is huge. Jonny Wilkinson always said he looked at the gaps between the posts and in doing so the posts became irrelevant.

6. Think in ink. Write it down, otherwise it just remains a dream. Writing it down moves the idea from the back to the front of the brain.

You have to have dreams and when you write them down you would be surprised by how often they pop out of the woodwork.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Personal responsibility is increasingly being taken away from players.

I once asked Jonny Wilkinson why he worked so hard in training and he told me that I had believed in him and he never wanted to let me down.

For the England rugby team we used to run tapes of the opposition slightly quicker to make their opponents look faster than they actually were.

By doing that you raise the intensity for the players of what they will have to cope with

Coaching is helping the player see what he doesn't see and you have to develop the ability to see where your opponent is vulnerable.

But don't just study the opponent you are about to face - study how other teams have exploited your opponents' weaknesses. And never restrict the way you think.

You have to think far beyond the next game and the next opponent.



TEAM AUDIT

You have to know your own team.

Clive Woodward introduced a 5-5-5 system which comprised what we called "aviators, warriors and pilots".



Players such as Martin Johnson, Neil Back and Lewis Moody were pilots; high-risk players that you just had to let go.

Mike Tindall, Jonny Wilkinson and Martin Corry were pilots; more measured players, that were better at reading the game.

Warriors were players like Richard Hill, who made sure everybody knew what their job was.

That was not a glamorous role, but it was always appreciated by the other players.

GAME BREAKING IDEAS

Look at the dwell time - free-kicks, corners, throw-ins.

Bolton have done a lot of work on this. When they win a throw-in they don't wait for opposition to get organised.



Far better to exploit the opposition's disorganisation as quickly as possible.

MENTAL ALERTNESS

If you are on the bench you have to be mentally involved.

Players must go into the dressing room at half-time.



Clive Woodward would also position medics on both sides of the pitch, partly to get players treated more quickly if they were injured, but also because it allowed him to see the game from different angles.

DISLOCATE EXPECTATIONS

The Royal Marines have a saying - "When you jump out of the chopper it ain't going to be like you planned it."



But you can prepare for unexpected situations.

When you take a penalty in training do it 20 times and if you miss one, start at the beginning until you've scored 20 consecutively.

PERFORMANCE LOAFING

For years Manchester United have been winning games in the last five minutes. Too often teams assume they have got a game won.



Be careful in the last five minutes before half-time and the last five minutes before the end of a game, because those are the times you are most likely to concede a goal.

Those are the times for maximum effort and maximum concentration.

And stop arguing with the referee - he's never going to change his mind once he has made his decision.

What is worse is that you have mentally taken yourself out of the game and probably distracted three of your team-mates as well.

Make sure you only celebrate when you are 7-0 up.

How often have you seen teams concede goals just after they have scored themselves?

When you go a goal up that is the time to tweak the throttle and increase the pressure on your opposition.

GET IN THE OPPOSITION'S HEAD

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery always had a picture of his opponents - such as Erwin Rommel - in his command caravan.



He felt it was the closest he would get to his opponent and it was important to have that presence to understand how the enemy might be thinking.

We did the same with the England rugby team. Before we played Australia we'd tell Martin Johnson what the opposition's assessment of him was likely to be.

You have to tread a fine line with this technique but it can be a great motivational tool.