

Mental Rehearsal: Imagery, Visualisation

Mental rehearsal or imagery/visualization gives you a chance to deal effectively with an upcoming match in your head before you confront in real life. It is a method you can use to help you get the best performance out of yourself in the next game.

The best players work extremely hard at developing mental imagery skills.

Below is a step by step guide to successful mental rehearsal.

1. Before you start to mentally rehearse for the match, relax. Make sure you are in a quiet place. You should adopt a comfortable position (sitting or lying) prior to the session. Your eyes should be closed to assist you –your bed is probably the best place for peace. Take five deep breaths, inhaling deeply through your nose and out through your mouth, controlling your breathing when exhaling.
2. Player are conditioned to using a warm-up prior to the start of any physical training session. Continue this theme in a mental training session. Start by spending a few minutes on relaxing your mind and your body as outlined above.
3. The mental rehearsal should be done in the correct timeframe. You should see the event as you do in real life. Attempt to use all of your senses.
4. Imagine yourself in the game on Sunday going through all your skills, doing them to perfection.... trying to use all the senses when imagining these skills, in other words...smell the freshly mown grass, hear the shouting from the line, see the football flying through the air, feel the football in your hands, feel the tackle you make or take. Go through every that you will do on match day.
5. When you are doing M.R. always see yourself doing the skills well, playing well, taking a great score, timing your tackle, winning possession ahead of your marker, having a great first touch, fielding a high ball, securing and driving with the ball, looking up while protecting the ball, using possession well, whether it be by slipping to support player, placing the ball into space for team mate to win, always making yourself available to receive the ball, working hard always, alive to the breaking ball, taking on responsibility, breaking the gain fine, encouraging team mates, being strong in the physical battles, running through the ball, keeping to the game plan, being composed and in control all the time, etc.
6. Focus on the skills and the tactical job required for your position on the team.
7. Always think about playing your best.
8. If you have negative thoughts replace them immediately with positive thoughts.
9. Imagine every skill, play, etc. as if it is happening now at this moment.

10. practice regularly, start with three/four times per week, when you get better do daily work leading up to the game, two to three times a day, (10 minutes per time will be of greatest benefit). It may take time to get it right. It will improve your performances.

Mental Preparation for a Physical Battle

The game is very much a physical one and it is important to be confident about your own ability to "mix it" physically, to win 50:50 balls, etc. and yet remain composed, in control and focused on the ball and the game.

To help in this regard use M.R. in thinking of how tough, physical or rough the game is going to be.

See yourself being comfortable in this battle, imagine yourself taking a big hit and coming out with the ball and scoring a point or delivering an excellent pass.

If you prepare over and over in your head for a battle, then when it happens in a game you will be able to cope with it. If you repeat to yourself... "I am ready for the battle"...."I am ready for the battle".... and "if the opposition try to bully or intimidate me ...I am ready for the battle" -you will be able to deal with it as you have played it through in your head dozens of times!

You will be able to deal with the physical battle while keeping your focus on the ball and its usage and come out on top!

Cyril Kevlihan
July 2004