EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

SELF-CONFIDENCE

SHARINGOALS

THE SYSTEMIC COACHING MANUAL
FOR FOOTBALL COACHES
AROUND THE WORLD

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1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Scientific research

1.1.1. Definition

We hear athletes and coaches on all levels always talking about self-confidence and its importance in life and in sport, but what does it really mean? Self-confidence is a positive attitude towards one's skills and abilities. It is a form of self-assurance, where a person has trust in their own abilities, capacities and judgements.

Being self-confident means that you would like to perform an action or behaviour and you believe that you can do it well, that you can get the job done: kicking a ball, sticking to training schedule or setting goals, coping with challenges and hardships, learning new things and making use of your strengths.

It is also defined as the certainty that a person has or their belief about their ability to succeed in everyday life and/or to do well and succeed in carrying out specific tasks or behaviours (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Where that belief is tied to one specific task in one specific situation, research usually calls it self-efficacy rather than self-confidence (Bandura, 1977).

Trait and state self-confidence

In line with the above definition, researchers have distinguished between two dimensions of self-confidence: dispositional self-confidence and state self-confidence (Vealey, 1986).

A person who has dispositional or trait self-confidence, has an innate belief, a natural disposition to be more certain of their success. Trait self-confidence is a generalised or global belief, it is part of someone's personality and is usually stable over time, unlike state self-confidence that relates to a particular moment or a specific task and is therefore unstable and changeable depending on the desired behaviour and the situation where the desired behaviour will be carried out.

As a coach you might notice that some players are generally more self-confident than others and are open to trying new things, take on responsibility and overcome challenges that present themselves (they possess trait self-confidence).

You might also notice that other players are more forward on some days than others, or that they feel more confident while passing than while scoring (their self-confidence unstable depending on the situation they are in).

Sport-confidence understood in this way is associated with higher self-efficacy and lower competitive anxiety in athletes (Martin & Gill, 1991). It is important to note that even the player with the highest trait self-confidence experiences low state self-confidence in certain situations such as after a great defeat or playing in an unfamiliar field or changing positions within the game.

Characteristic	Dispositional/ Trait Self-Confidence	State Self-Confidence
Determined by	Innate Disposition	Situation
Stability over time	Stable	Unstable
Scope	General ability to succeed	Succeeding a particular moment/ Task specific
Monitoring questions	"How do I usually feel?"	"How do I feel right now/ about this specific task?"

Figure 1.1: Difference Between State and Trait Self-Confidence

1.1.2. Scientific Research and Models

Self-confidence has been studied in sport under several overlapping labels, and it helps to keep the main models apart before drawing practical conclusions from them.

Self-efficacy theory

The oldest of these frameworks does not describe confidence as a general personality trait at all. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can carry out a specific task in a specific situation, and it is built from four sources: previous mastery experiences, watching others succeed, verbal persuasion from people whose judgement is trusted, and the reading of one's own physiological and emotional state (Bandura, 1977). The order matters: what a player has actually done outweighs what they have been told.

Vealey's model of sport-confidence

In sport, self-confidence is a well-known and researched predictor of the quality of the undertaken behaviour. Hence, self-confidence indirectly impacts a player's performance and different questionnaires and tools have been developed to measure both types of self-confidence such as the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) and the Competitive Trait Anxiety Inventory-2 (CTAI-2) among others. You might be asking yourself how self-confidence indirectly affects performance and how performance in turn impacts state and trait self-confidence. To answer your question, you would have to look at Vealey's (1986) theory of self-confidence (Figure 1.2). In this model of sport self-confidence, athletes are present in a sporting situation or context where the level of trait self-confidence along with the competitive orientation directly influence state self-confidence. Let us look at it more closely.

A football player with a disposition to have low self-confidence and who has a highly competitive orientation in football, meaning the player is willing to compete and focuses on winning or beating the opponent will have low state self-confidence in the situation he/she is in such as performing a free kick during a match. This in turn will lead to the player exhibiting a certain type of behaviour (example: being anxious, avoidant, tentative rather than sure about their moves...) or failing at delivering the free kick, leading to a poor performance. This poor performance will incite some subjective feelings or thoughts about it, such as disappointment, regret and sadness which will impact the state and the trait self-confidence as their overall belief in themselves and their belief about shooting a free kick or being in that same situation.

Conversely, a football player with a general high innate self-confidence and who focuses on performance goals (I.e., having a good posture, giving the right power...) instead of the score and winning will have high state self-confidence while taking a free kick during a match. The player's behaviour will show motivation, high self-esteem, approach towards the situation and will allow the player to deliver a good performance. Once the free kick is carried out well, the player will feel satisfaction and happiness which in turn would positively impact the player's state and trait self-confidence feeding his/her overall belief in him/herself that they can be successful and their belief that they can take the shot again and perform well.

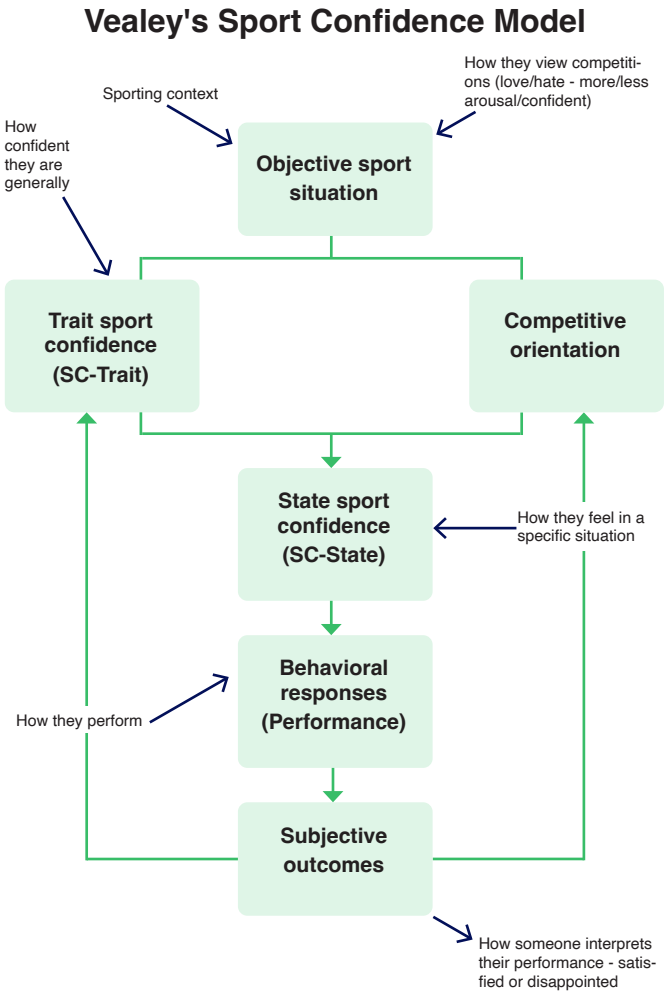


Figure 1.2: Vealey's Model of Sport Confidence (1986)

As Vealey's model shows, both good trait and state confidence are important for performance. Self-confidence has been shown to decrease performance anxiety and improve performance through different mechanisms, including effective control of negative emotions, inciting positive emotions, facilitating concentration and increasing how much and how long a person can exert physical and mental effort, yet confidence must reach an optimal level without surpassing it, for the player to reap its full potential.

Each individual has a personal "optimal level" of self-confidence. An optimal level of self-confidence is defined as having the strong belief that you can successfully reach your target or carry out the task and you will work hard to do so, but it does not mean that you have the belief that you will never perform badly but you are doing your best to reach your full potential every single time.

Unfortunately, performance problems can arise if a player has too little confidence or too much confidence.

Think about the athletes you work with. Do you notice the extremely self-confident player? Do you sometimes notice that they do not prepare/train enough because they are overconfident, they will win/succeed? Such players show overconfidence, and they believe that they do not need to put the required training hours in to succeed. Usually, their sense of self-confidence is a false one, in that their confidence is a lot more than what their abilities allow, as self-confidence can only go so far and cannot replace physical and technical incompetence. What about that player who has very low self-confidence? Do you find them doubting themselves so much that they are unable to execute experience, environmental comfort, situational favourableness). The three groups are not equally durable: confidence resting mainly on social climate is the most exposed, because it depends on conditions the player does not control. This distinction was subsequently folded into an integrated model of sport-confidence (Vealey & Chase, 2008).

Taken together, these models point in the same practical direction, which the rest of this chapter follows: confidence is built primarily through accumulated mastery, supported by preparation the player owns, and sustained – but not created – by the climate the coach sets.

1.1.3. Impact on performance

Self-confidence is one of the more consistent psychological predictors of performance in sport. A meta-analysis of 48 studies in competitive sport found a positive relationship between state self-confidence and performance, and that this relationship was significantly stronger than the relationship between cognitive anxiety and performance; it was also strongest at higher standards of competition (Woodman & Hardy, 2003). A later systematic review with meta-analysis confirmed the positive self-confidence–performance relationship across sports and competitive levels (Lochbaum et al., 2022).

Part of the effect is indirect. Self-confidence changes how competitive pressure is experienced: players with higher self-confidence and sport self-efficacy show a weaker link between competitive anxiety and impaired performance, which suggests that confidence buffers the cost of nerves rather than removing them (Besharat & Pourbohlool, 2011). Sport-confidence is also associated with higher self-efficacy and lower competitive anxiety in athletes (Martin & Gill, 1991).

On the pitch this is visible in decisions rather than in technique. A player low in state self-confidence still has the same skills, but takes fewer of the actions that expose them: asking for the ball in a tight area, taking on an opponent, shooting from distance, taking responsibility at a set piece. Because those actions are also the ones that generate mastery experiences, low confidence becomes self-sustaining unless the coach designs situations in which success is still reachable.

1.1.4. Impact on social cohesion

Confidence is not only an individual property. Its team-level equivalent, collective efficacy, is the shared belief that the group can meet the demands of a task together. In professional teams, cohesion and collective efficacy are positively related, and collective efficacy mediates the relationship between cohesion and team performance – that is, teams that stick together perform better partly because sticking together raises what they believe they can achieve (Heuzé, Raimbault & Fontayne, 2006).

The link runs in both directions in a squad. Players who trust their own ability make themselves available, communicate, and accept responsibility for difficult moments, which gives team-mates something to rely on. Players who doubt themselves tend to hide: they position away from the ball, pass responsibility on, and avoid the moments that decide matches. Repeated across a group, this reduces both the willingness to depend on each other and the shared belief that the team can cope.

The coach's behaviour is part of this climate rather than external to it. Need-supportive coaching behaviours are associated with adaptive outcomes in players, while controlling behaviours are associated with maladaptive ones (Abós et al., 2021), and the same behaviours are experienced by the whole group, not only by the player they are addressed to.

1.1.5. Correlations with private and family life, academic and work career

The belief a player builds about their own competence does not stay inside football. Self-esteem follows a predictable trajectory across the life span and prospectively predicts outcomes in relationships, work and health, which means that the period covered by this framework – childhood through late adolescence – sits on the steepest and most consequential part of that curve (Orth & Robins, 2014).

How children arrive at a view of themselves is domain-based rather than global: young people evaluate themselves separately in areas such as schoolwork, appearance, peer acceptance and athletic competence, and their overall sense of worth depends heavily on how much they value the domains in which they feel competent and on the support of the people around them (Harter, 2012, 2015). Football is, for many of the players in this programme, one of the domains they value most, which gives what happens in training unusual weight.

That weight can be used deliberately. Reviews of interventions designed to change self-esteem in children and adolescents find that the approaches most likely to work are those that build genuine competence in a valued domain and strengthen support from significant adults, rather than those that address self-esteem directly through praise or affirmation (Bos et al., 2006). This is close to a description of a well-run training session. Goal setting, problem solving and performing under pressure are among the life skills sport is consistently found to teach, and they transfer into school, work and family life when coaches deliberately teach for that transfer rather than assuming it (Gould & Carson, 2008)

1.1.6. Development of self-confidence

Self-confidence is not distributed evenly across childhood and adolescence, and the way it is built changes as players get older. Two developmental facts frame everything in the Training chapter.

First, the capacity to evaluate oneself in a specific domain – and to compare that evaluation with peers – emerges around the age of seven or eight and sharpens through middle childhood. Before that, children's self-evaluations are typically high and only loosely connected to their actual performance; afterwards, they become more accurate, more differentiated by domain, and considerably more vulnerable (Harter, 2012, 2015). A drop in a player's confidence at nine or ten is therefore often a sign of developing self-awareness rather than of a problem to be corrected.

Second, self-esteem does not rise steadily. It typically declines during adolescence before recovering and increasing through early and middle adulthood (Orth & Robins, 2014). Stages 4 and 5 of this framework fall inside that dip. Coaches working with these age groups should expect confidence to be lower and more volatile than it was at Stage 2, and should read that as normal development rather than as a loss of commitment or ability.

How many times have you heard coaches, athletes and even parents saying, "Either you have self-confidence, or you don't!"? Despite self-confidence's variability, it is possible for players with low self-confidence to not only increase their state self-confidence but also their trait self-confidence. As with other physical, social and emotional skills, practising self-confidence can greatly improve one's general belief in succeeding and/or one's belief about succeeding at a particular task. Just like a muscle, if it is used and worked on, it grows, new neurons are activated, if not, it can cause a severe blow to one's overall self-image.

To reach the optimal level, there are ways to build self-confidence in players and provide overconfident athletes with the right tools to be able to build real self-confidence rather than an inflated belief about their abilities. Nevertheless, when working with young players, coaches sometimes find it difficult to "practice" or transfer self-confidence, an abstract construct that players in middle and late adulthood struggle to grasp and that adolescents see fluctuating non-stop. Young elite athletes just like world-class athletes need self-confidence to successfully perform and both draw their self-confidence from the different sources, but research has shown that young players have similar but fewer sources of self-confidence than elite adult athletes. The sources set out below correspond to those identified in the sport-confidence literature (Vealey et al., 1998) and to the four sources of self-efficacy described by Bandura (1977).

- Accomplishments: highlighted by Vealey's model on sport self-confidence, successful performances and outcomes strengthen the positive feelings and beliefs about a player's own ability and allows for other successes to take place.
- Adequate social support: healthy and stable relationships with coaches, teammates, friends and family along with good social support boost young players' self-confidence through positive feedback and encouragement during training and competition.

- Preparation: young players, especially adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15, rely more on physical and technical preparation rather than psychological preparation as a main source of self-confidence. Players who feel strong and have particularly good fitness levels feel more self-confident than those who feel that they are not in their best shape. Preparation also includes other aspects such as healthy and adequate nutrition, level of team preparation and being able to identify and rectify any lingering weaknesses.
- Vicarious experience and modelling: young players look up to adults around them like their parents and coaches and they also often have a role model in their sport that they would like to follow in his/her footsteps. When children watch role models deal with situations that they deal with and succeed, their belief in their competence grows and they internalise the feeling that they, also, can succeed. Along with their self-confidence boost, young players model their role models' behaviours by retaining and mentally practising technical movements and reproducing them during training leading to successful performances.
- As we have already explored, self-confidence is affected by experiences and external factors for young players and by practice and work, as it cannot come purely from an innate trait or purely from the situations that present themselves, and the belief in one's ability to reach success in sport is not limited to physical performance or ability as self-confidence relates to perceptual, learning and psychological abilities thus being dynamic as well as multidimensional.
- Ask any athlete or coach on what is the mental skill that helped them win or succeed then consult the research about what is the most consistent mental skill that is a predictor of good performance, and the answer would probably be "self-confidence". That is why it is highly important for coaches to build this skill among their players especially in football where:

1) Defenders:

- Low self-confidence: Defenders with low confidence may become anxious when facing an approaching attacker. They may struggle to make quick decisions and may be hesitant in their actions, allowing the attacker to bypass them easily.
- Optimal self-confidence: Confident defenders approach the situation with motivation and energy. They are proactive in their defensive actions, making it difficult for attackers to pass through. They trust their abilities, maintain composure, and react decisively to the attacking threat.

2) Midfielders:

- Low self-confidence: Midfielders lacking confidence may hesitate in passing and taking risks on the field. They may be easily affected by steals or misplaced passes, becoming discouraged and hesitant in their decision-making.
- Optimal self-confidence: Self-confident midfielders confidently pass the ball and take calculated risks. They have the resilience to bounce back from mistakes and maintain a positive mindset. They provide scoring opportunities for forwards by taking risks and displaying confidence in their abilities.

3) Strikers:

- Low self-confidence: Strikers with low confidence in high-pressure situations may avoid the ball or mishandle their shots. Fear of criticism from fans may impact their performance, causing them to doubt their skills and shy away from taking chances.
- Optimal self-confidence: Self-confident strikers believe in their abilities and remain determined even in high-pressure situations. They demand the ball, take shots with conviction, and understand that even if they do not score, they can create other opportunities and give their best on the field.

4) Goalkeepers:

- Low self-confidence: Goalkeepers lacking confidence may struggle to maintain focus and composure. They may be easily distracted or intimidated by opponents, affecting their performance. Conceding a goal may demoralize them, leading to difficulty in bouncing back.
- Optimal self-confidence: Confident goalkeepers possess a strong presence in the goal. They can distract or intimidate opponents with their assertiveness. They have the mental resilience to bounce back quickly even after conceding a goal, staying focused and ready to make crucial saves.

In today's football scene, self-confidence serves as a crucial distinguishing factor between the most successful and less successful players. Footballers who struggle with low self-confidence often find themselves doubting their own abilities, which can have a significant impact on their performance. Even minor setbacks have the potential to deflate their self-confidence, leading to a decline in overall performance. Conversely, self-confident footballers can more readily transform their abilities and challenging situations into superior performance.

For these reasons, self-confidence is considered a driving force for athletes' behaviour, motivation, goal setting as having the best and most amazing football skills is not enough if a player cannot apply them with confidence. Good levels of self-confidence are always linked to better outcomes and better processing of negative feelings allowing players to thrive and overcome struggles and challenges. Teaching it alongside technical skills would ensure that young players, throughout their careers and into adulthood, trust their ability to achieve their goals.

1.2. Window of opportunities

A window of opportunity describes a period in development when a competence, or the components underlying it, develops disproportionately faster than at other times. Self-confidence does not have one. There is no single age at which it peaks or bottoms out, although self-esteem follows a broadly predictable life-span trajectory, dipping during adolescence before recovering in adulthood (Orth & Robins, 2014).

What the evidence does support is starting early. From about the age of five, children can already describe themselves as good or bad at particular skills, compare their present competence with that of their former selves, and take visible pride in the progress they have made. The raw material of self-evaluation is therefore in place well before organised football begins.

Comparison with others follows, and with it the first decline. Self-evaluations are extremely high in early childhood and become considerably more accurate around the age of eight, when children turn self-critical and begin measuring themselves against teammates. Children who feel they are falling behind show frustration and a visible loss of confidence in the activity itself.



The decline continues through the changes of adolescence, where negative self-evaluation is common, before improving again as young people come to understand the complexity of their own person into their twenties. Stages 4 and 5 of this framework sit inside that dip, and confidence at those ages should be expected to be lower and more volatile than it was at Stage 2.

Working on self-confidence from the first year of practice therefore lays a foundation for positive self-perception rather than repairing it later. Self-awareness, and the brain that supports it, take time to develop, and confidence built alongside physical and technical work acts as a buffer against the demands of the sport — wins, losses, selection and pressure.

Coaches and parents can apply confidence-building strategies with young players to help them construct a realistic perception of their own ability, and to build the emotional skills that allow them to handle pressure, defeat and mistakes. The adults around a player during growth make the largest single imprint on the confidence that player carries.

Two qualifications matter. Self-confidence is shaped by both nature and nurture and does not simply grow with age; and the age bands below describe tendencies rather than individuals, with substantial differences inside every group. The practical conclusion is that self-confidence warrants deliberate attention at every stage rather than at one, with the emphasis moving from building visible evidence in the early stages to protecting participation through the adolescent dip and, finally, to handing the process over to the player.

Stage 1
7-8 years



- Fine motor skills
- Organised their thought processes.
- Developing vocabulary and can associate the words with precise definitions
- Grasp the meaning of self-image
- Extra-confident

Stage 2
9-10 years



- Approaching puberty
- Issues with self-image and self-confidence
- Develop self-judgement
- Comparison with others around them
- Develop a negative view of themselves
- Very self-critical
- Recognise that they can both have strengths and weakness, and/or good and bad qualities
- Transform shallow friendships to more meaningful ones

Stage 3
11-12 years



- Higher self-awareness
- High self-consciousness
- Worry about what others think of them
- Physical changes and negative self-perception
- Physical, social and emotional fluctuations
- Question their abilities
- Try to fit in
- Low self-confidence also leads to higher risk-taking behaviour
- Possess the ability to demonstrate abstract thinking
- Better understanding of the self

Stage 4
13-14 years



- Same development features of their younger peers
- Optimize the learnings about the self and the world around them
- Self-confidence still heavily relies on others
- Debilitating entourages and unsupportive individuals
- Extreme self-consciousness

Stage 5
15-16 years



- Still cannot understand themselves
- Worried about different aspects of life
- Critical onset of depression
- Trying to define who they are
- Struggling to find what they are good at
- Belief about their abilities is shaken

Stage 6
17–18 years



- Turning point in development
- Recognise that they are complex individuals
- Less dependent on the “reactions” of others towards them
- Know better how their self-confidence is shaped
- Invest the time and learning process to become better
- Stable inner self
- High self-confidence
- Self-confidence continues growing and improving up until the mid to late 20s

1.3. Correlation with other skills and competencies



Correlation with Emotional Competencies
Creativity requires self-confidence, as you need to believe in yourself to invent something new and unique. Grit depends on confidence, because players persist at something they believe they can do. Coping with emotions allows confidence to survive setbacks by handling the emotions that follow a mistake.

Correlation with Physical Skills
Endurance adds to confidence, because well-conditioned players trust themselves to perform until the final minutes. Strength contributes to confidence, as adolescents in particular feel more confident when they feel physically strong.

Correlation with Technical Abilities
Dribbling & Juggling is attempted more often by confident players, because a failed attempt exposes the player publicly. Shooting in decisive moments depends on the confidence to accept a miss that everyone sees.

Correlation with Social Competencies
Trust and confidence reinforce each other, as confident players make themselves available and give teammates something to rely on. Leadership ability, especially in difficult situations can be shown more easily by someone with a confident picture of themself.

Correlation with Cognitive Skills
Decision-making is where low confidence shows first, as hesitant players choose the option that exposes them least.

Correlation with Tactical Principles
Penetration requires the confidence to play the pass into space or make the run beyond the last defender. Offensive unity depends on every player being confident enough to take part in attacking actions that can fail publicly.

1.4. Key learnings

- Self-confidence is the belief in one's ability and competence (stage 1-6)
- Trait self-confidence = innate belief that they can generally succeed and State self-confidence = situation/task-based belief that they can succeed (stage 3-6)
- Self-confidence is a predictor of success and good performance in sport (stage 2-6)
- Gaining self-confidence is a dynamic, multifaceted and complex process that is best nurtured in the early stages of childhood (stage 1-6)
- Self-confidence in young athletes is built through accomplishments, social support, preparation and vicarious experience (stage 1-6)
- The main sources of self-confidence for young athletes are external and coaches play an important direct role in shaping players' self-confidence (stage 1-4)
- The development of self-confidence fluctuates throughout a player's lifespan, especially before adulthood (stage 4-6)
- Working on self-confidence with young players is important to protect them against stress and allow them to progressively grow a strong, stable and positive belief in their ability (stage 1-6)



1.5. From science to practice

The research reviewed in this chapter converges on a single practical principle: self-confidence is built mainly from mastery experiences the player can attribute to themselves, supported by preparation they own and a climate that makes attempting things safe. What changes across the six stages is not that principle but how much of it the player can run without the coach, and which sources of confidence they are able to draw on.

Across the stages, the work moves from arranging visible success for players, through helping them notice and name their own competence, to handing over the ability to rebuild confidence after setbacks without external support.

Stage 1
7-8 years



Confidence at this age is high, global and only loosely tied to actual performance. The coach's task is not to raise confidence but to attach it to something real: sessions are designed so that every player experiences visible success at a concrete task, and feedback names the specific action rather than the child.

Stage 2
9-10 years



Social comparison is now active and self-evaluation becomes domain-specific. Confidence begins to depend on how players believe they rank. Coaches work with self-referenced comparison – progress against the player's own earlier performance – and start making effort and preparation visible as causes of success.

Stage 3
11-12 years



Players can now identify their own strengths and articulate them. The work shifts towards helping them build an accurate rather than an inflated picture of what they are good at, and towards drawing confidence from preparation, which they control, rather than only from outcomes, which they do not.

Stage 4
13-14 years



This stage sits inside the adolescent decline in self-esteem, and confidence becomes both lower and more situational. Coaches focus on the self-regulation sources – physical and mental preparation, routines before difficult tasks – and on separating a poor performance from a judgement about the person.

Stage 5
15-16 years



Players are increasingly able to monitor their own confidence and recognise when it is dropping. The coach moves from supplying confidence to teaching players how to rebuild it, and to noticing which sources they personally rely on most.

Stage 6
17–18 years



By this stage confidence should rest mainly on achievement and self-regulation sources rather than on social climate, so that it survives a change of coach, club or team. The coach acts as a sounding board while players take responsibility for maintaining their own belief.

2. COACHES' BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Coaching style

2.1.1. Scientific grounding

The coach is one of the nine identified sources of sport-confidence, and for children and adolescents it is among the most influential, because young players have fewer independent sources to draw on than adult athletes (Vealey et al., 1998). This gives coaching style unusual leverage – and makes it unusually easy to damage.

The direction of that influence depends on whether the coach supports or undermines players' sense of autonomy. Autonomy-supportive coaching – offering choice, explaining reasons, acknowledging players' perspectives – predicts need satisfaction and gains in initiative and identity in young athletes (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). Conversely, need-supportive and controlling coach behaviours are associated with distinctly different adaptive and maladaptive outcomes in players (Abós et al., 2021). Controlling language and conditional rewards are therefore not a neutral alternative style; they work against the mechanism this competence depends on.

Because confidence is built primarily from mastery the player can claim as their own (Bandura, 1977), the coach's most powerful tool is not encouragement but session design: arranging tasks in which success is reachable, visible, and clearly attributable to what the player did.

Coaches along with other significant adults in a player's environment constitute an important source of self-confidence especially when working with children and adolescents.

Coaches cannot ensure a win in every match or guarantee success when learning a new skill, that is why when working with teams or individuals who are not going through experiences that foster self-confidence such as having lost 6 matches in a row, it is important to keep in mind and teach players that building and sustaining self-confidence is in their control. To improve players' self-confidence outside of self-confidence building experiences, we can use the following strategies:

2.1.2. Practical implications

Autonomy supporting leadership style

Autonomy-supportive coaching predicts need satisfaction and gains in initiative and identity in young athletes (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). To build players' self-confidence coaches should allow for autonomy during training and during matches so that the players feel that they are in control and that they have the capacity to make their own decisions and choices helping them generate and improve their sense of self-confidence. Another way to boost self-confidence is to allow players to express their feelings and opinions and acknowledge their respective perspectives while providing them with an opportunity to show initiative and act independently. Coaches should also refrain from using criticism and controlling words and rewards (for example: "I will only let you play if you... ", "if you win the match, I will allow you to... "as this can negatively affect players' autonomy and self-confidence; controlling coach behaviours are associated with distinctly more maladaptive outcomes than need-supportive ones (Abós et al., 2021).

Physical and mental training and conditioning

Players who feel strong and have very good fitness levels feel more self-confident than those who feel that they are not in their best shape, making rigorous quality training regiments essential to building players' confidence and good sporting performance. This also applies to mental training, as players who practice consistently and who are committed to their mental skill development as they are for their physical conditioning build their self-confidence.

Preparation and planning

Can you go on a good trip without preparing the materials you need and planning your itinerary and budget? Just like for trips, preparation for any task in and outside of sport can make anyone more self-confident about their abilities to succeed. By preparing well, players would have done everything in their control to ensure their success. As preparation cannot be separated from planning, plans are important for players so that they know what they will have to do and when, hence increasing their self-confidence. To boost their self-confidence and for a good performance, players can prepare their flexibility, stamina, strength and speed by training, can prepare for matches by establishing pre-competition routines, can plan what they will do on the day of the match, what meals they will eat, what their attack plan is.

Healthy dealing with mistakes

Coaches are often inclined to dictate and supervise every aspect of their players' sporting career and even personal life, thinking that it would reduce or even prevent mistakes and yield better results on the field. It is important to note that mistakes during training are learning opportunities that allow players to develop and evolve in all dimensions. As they worry less about making mistakes, they feel more self-confident. As thoughts and feelings negatively impact self-confidence especially after a failure or mistake, coaches should teach players to stay away from debilitating emotions and unproductive behaviours and reactions and train players to respond with acceptance of the bad feeling they got, centring themselves and redirecting focus on the task at hand and thinking about the next step or strategy to undertake. As they learn to confidently respond to mistakes, they limit the effects of their subjective feelings and perceptions and gain confidence to go back to the match and/or repeat the task.

Acting and thinking confidently

It is a common understanding that the body and the brain have a strong connection and just as feeling self-confident affects posture, posture alone can greatly impact one's self-confidence. By exhibiting self-confident behaviours and statements, coaches can allow players to respond and model these behaviours when they look up to their coaches. Players should act confidently, instead of giving away what they are feeling or thinking, with an upright posture especially when they start losing confidence when facing an opponent as it helps them persevere and try their best while keeping their opponent guessing. As players show that they are self-confident on the outside, it is also essential for players to feel self-confident on the inside, and one way to do that is through positive self-talk. Players who tell themselves phrases like "I can do this", "I am good at my sport", "I can make it if I keep calm and focused" increase their motivation and their belief that they can succeed.

Focusing on performance/behaviours/attitudes

Rather than focusing on the score and demanding the players to win and crush their opponent, coaches should encourage successful behaviours and provide constructive feedback when they notice a player has learned a new skill, mastered a move, has shown persistence or extra effort. This not only builds a positive climate for players to grow but also maximises players' feeling of self-confidence and their sureness that they can master the skills needed to carry out the task at hand. Successful behaviour breeds more successful behaviour!

Supporting those with low self-confidence

Although sport participation can improve self-confidence, it is very likely that every player will not be influenced in the same positive way. Children and youth go through different levels of self-confidence during their lives and even though it is common for young children to have an unrealistic high level of self-confidence, some children may exhibit low self-confidence beginning early childhood. As children start being aware that others are judging them, they may struggle with self-confidence if they find that they do not fit in with their peers (Harter, 2015) and the existing stereotypes. They may also exhibit frustration and withdraw from social groups if they feel that their abilities do not match those of their peers, and they are falling behind on executing certain skills. Children with low self-confidence would not be able to say that they are good at a specific task, they may seem unenergetic and sad or have thoughts and express the following "I am stupid", "I can't do it" …

Adolescents with low self-confidence may show symptoms of depression and anxiety, feelings of worthlessness, lack of energy and motivation and may lose interest in the activities that they undertake. That is why it is the coaches' role and responsibility to lend more attention to support those with low self-confidence using different strategies. Coaches can work on making the trainings more enjoyable, offer a safe space for players to express their inner worlds, remind players that it takes time to learn certain skills, focus on the learning process, comfort players with genuine and honest support and allow for opportunities to improve their belief in their competence and ability.

2.2. Choice of words

How coaches praise has a measurable effect on players' self-confidence, and the effect is not always the one intended. Inflated praise – praise that overstates what was achieved – predicts lower subsequent self-esteem in children who already have low self-esteem, because it sets a standard they do not believe they can meet again (Brummelman et al., 2016, 2017).

Praise that compares a child with others produces poorer motivation after a subsequent failure than praise for mastery of the task itself (Ogle & Love-Geiger, 2006). Children and adolescents also distinguish sincere praise from flattery, and respond differently to the two (Fujiwara et al., 2023).
Three rules follow, and they hold at every stage:

- praise the action rather than the person,
- keep it proportionate to what actually happened,
- and prefer effort and mastery to ability and outcome.

The coach can use words and statements that boost players' self-confidence and how coaches and parents praise have a huge effect on players' self-confidence. While younger children benefit from vague cheerful messages, maturing children look for genuine support from the adult figures surrounding them.

Coaches' words to praise and give complements should be honest and sincere as children and adolescents can detect when praise is not deserved and is inflated given the situation they are in. Insincere, inflated and overly positive praise is not innocuous, and it can lead to low self-confidence and negative feelings especially in children who do not believe in their own abilities (Brummelman et al., 2016, 2017). Children and adolescents also distinguish sincere praise from flattery and respond differently to the two (Fujiwara et al., 2023). Even though the coach's praise might be sincere, extreme praise sets high expectations and standards on the players and heightens fear of failure. Also note that extreme praise in early childhood, especially between 7 and 11 years old when children are starting to build their self-image, may lead to narcissistic traits in children with high innate self-confidence and to lifelong low self-confidence in children whose level of self-confidence is healthy or low as they are expected to do well every time.

Another negative effect of inflated praise appears when coaches praise for easy tasks rather than difficult tasks or for ability rather than their efforts. Praise that compares a child with others also produces poorer motivation after a later failure than praise for mastery of the task itself (Ogle & Love-Geiger, 2006). Children feel that the coach is praising them because he/she thinks that they cannot do better and cannot take on the difficult tasks or that that their ability is fixed, and their efforts are useless.

Verbally expressed positive evaluations of players drives can improve self-confidence when done correctly but players should not only gain self-confidence through a passive process like praise alone and should be engaged in their self-confidence building process.

The coach can ask questions that stimulate self-reflection with players. When asking these questions, coaches should actively listen to their players and prompt the players for answers that boost their self-confidence and give genuine and sincere feedback and praise to their players when appropriate.



Stage 1
7-8 years



Confidence at this age is global and not yet tied to evidence, so language should attach it to something the player has just done and can see. Keep it concrete, immediate and specific.

Example tone:

- *"You stopped the ball with the inside of your foot that time."*
- *"That was hard and you kept going."*
- *"Show me that again – I want to watch it."*
- *"What did you do well today?"*

Stage 2
9-10 years



Social comparison is now active, so language should keep the point of comparison inside the player. Avoid ranking, including favourable ranking.

Example tone:

- *"That is better than last week – what changed?"*
- *"You practised that, and it worked."*
- *"You were not sure about that pass and you played it anyway."*
- *"What are you getting better at?"*

Stage 3
11-12 years



Players can now describe their own strengths. Language should help them build an accurate picture rather than an inflated one and start pointing at preparation as a source they control.

Example tone:

- *"What are you good at in this team?"*
- *"What would you need to do this week to be ready for that?"*
- *"That did not come off, and the decision was right."*
- *"Who in this team could you teach that to?"*

Stage 4
13-14 years



Confidence is lower and more volatile at this stage, and criticism lands harder. Language should protect the person while still addressing the performance, and should point towards routines the player owns.

Example tone:

- *"That performance was below your level. You are not."*
- *"What do you do before a game to feel ready?"*
- *"What is one thing you can control in the next ten minutes?"*
- *"I am putting you there because you can handle it."*

Stage 5
15-16 years



Players can now monitor their own confidence. Language should support that monitoring rather than substitute for it, and should make the sources of confidence a topic in themselves.

Example tone:

- *"Where is your confidence at right now, and what moved it?"*
- *"What has worked before when you felt like this?"*
- *"That is one game. What does the last two months say?"*
- *"What do you want from me when it is going badly?"*

Stage 6
17–18 years



By this stage the aim is confidence that survives without the coach. Language should hand over the process and check that it rests on sources the player carries with them.

Example tone:

- *"Talk me through how you get yourself back after a bad game"*
- *"What are you basing that belief on?"*
- *"What would you tell a younger player in that position?"*
- *"What do you need to keep doing this without me?"*

2.3. Body language

Coaches can support their players' self-confidence by exhibiting confident body language. Having an upright posture, "tummy in and chest out", maintaining eye contact when talking to someone and showing appropriate facial expressions are ways to show self-confidence. By doing so coaches give the appropriate parameters for players to model that self-confidence, at least on the outside.

Celebrations of achievements and praise even when expressed with the body and the face should be sincere.

Eye Contact

- Hold eye contact when handing a player a task; it signals trust.
- Find the eyes of a player who has just made a mistake.
- Keep eye contact calm during corrections; never stare a player down.

Facial Expression

- Stay composed; visible irritation says the player let you down.
- Show pleasure in effort and progress.
- Keep expressions sincere; players can spot a forced smile.



Gestures

- Use open, calm movements; never throw your arms up at an error.
- Applaud brave attempts, whether or not they are successful.
- Keep celebrations in proportion to what was achieved.

Posture

- Stand upright and open, tummy in and chest out, especially when losing.
- Stay still and steady when players look to you after setbacks.
- Model the posture you want players to carry after a mistake.

Positioning & Distance

- Stay visible and reachable during difficult phases of a game.
- Go to a player after a mistake instead of calling across the pitch.
- Correct up close and quietly; encourage where it can be seen.

3. TRAINING

THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

of self-confidence from foundation to maturity:



7-8 years

1. Take risks - shooting, dribbling, or asking for the ball - rather than playing it safe.
2. Immediately jump back into action after a mistake rather than retreating from play.
3. Name one thing you did well and say what you did to achieve it.



9-10 years

1. What can you do now that you couldn't do before, based on your past actions?
2. Choose the harder option when offered, and keep trying after unsuccessful tries.
3. Encourage a teammate by naming something specific they did well.



11-12 years

1. Name what you're good at - preparation, decisions, and support - not just results.
2. Complete an agreed preparation task between sessions and report back.
3. Judge your performance by what you set out to do rather than by the score alone.



13-14 years

1. Keep asking for the ball and playing even after a visible mistake.
2. Call for the ball during tough game phases, not just when winning.
3. Act on feedback and keep playing at the same level afterwards.



15-16 years

1. Use a consistent pre-action routine for high-stakes moments.
2. Acknowledge your nerves before a tense situation, then take action anyway.
3. Set your own personal performance standard and review that, not the result.



17-18 years

1. Plan and manage your own preparation without being directed.
2. Ask for the ball and accept responsibility in tough moments.
3. Strengthen a teammate's confidence with specific evidence of their successes.

Training

7-8 years



3.1. Stage 1 (7-8 years)

3.1.1. Stage characteristics

As children reach the ages of 7 and 8 years, they experience significant developments in their abilities. They become more confident in performing fine motor skills such as handwriting and drawing, and they exhibit improved organisation in their thought processes. Additionally, their vocabulary expands, enabling them to associate words with precise definitions. Moreover, they start to comprehend the concept of self-image and gain a deeper understanding of its meaning. Overall, during this stage, children exude a constant sense of heightened or extra confidence in their own abilities.

3.1.2. Specific learning objectives

At this stage self-evaluation is still generous and only loosely connected to performance. The objectives put visible evidence underneath that belief before accurate self-evaluation arrives.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

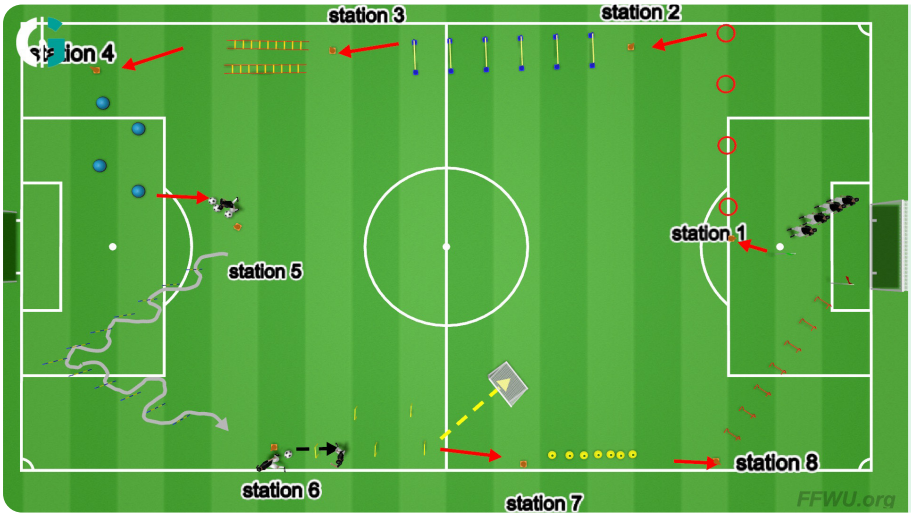
1. Take risks - shooting, dribbling, or asking for the ball - rather than playing it safe.
2. Immediately jump back into action after a mistake rather than retreating from play.
3. Name one thing you did well and say what you did to achieve it.

3.1.3. Coach insight

Children at this age will tell you they are the best player on the pitch, and they are not lying – before about seven or eight, self-evaluations are genuinely high and only loosely connected to performance (Harter, 2012). Your job is not to correct this and not to inflate it further. It is to give that belief something real to stand on, so that when accurate self-evaluation arrives at nine or ten, there is evidence underneath it. Design so that every player succeeds visibly at something concrete in every session, and name what they did rather than how good they are.

EXERCISE

SKILLS CIRCUIT



Players	6+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	full field
Equipment	4 balls, 1 ladder, 6 sticks, 4 hoops, 1 mini-goal, 52 cones (6 red, 30 blue, 8 yellow, 8 orange)
Duration	total: 33 min play: 30 min breaks: -
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- Players go one by one (with a safe distance) through the obstacle course
  - Station 1 – Speed & Agility: Run through hoops
  - Station 2 - Strength: Jump over cones
  - Station 3 – Rhythm: Run through the ladder placing one foot in each part
  - Station 4 – Balance: Jump with one foot through 2 cone gates, then switch to other foot
  - Station 5 - Dribbling: Dribble with the ball through the cone gates
  - Station 6 – Passing & shooting: 2 players pair up, pass the ball to each other through the gates and shoot into goal
  - Station 7 – Passing accuracy: Pass the 2 balls into the 2 zones (ball has to stop in the zone)
  - Station 8: - Shooting: Shoot the ball into the goal
- A failed attempt at any station is retaken immediately rather than rejoining the queue.

Coaching Tips

1. Increase the level of difficulty **gradually** so that confidence builds **progressively**.
2. Let players **repeat** the station they **feel strong at** — doing what they are good at **strengthens confidence**.
3. Praise effort, determination and progress **genuinely**, and pay **particular attention** to players with low self-confidence.

Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1 Attempt the station you find hardest rather than only the ones you are good at.	○ *Which obstacles were hard or easy to overcome?* ○ *How do you think you did?* ○ *Which station did you want to avoid?*
2 Move on to the next station immediately after failing one.	○ *What did you do straight after an attempt that did not work?* ○ *How did it feel to try again right away instead of waiting?* ○ *Did a failed station change how you approached the next?*
3 Name one station you did well and say what you did to achieve it.	○ *How do you feel about your progress and success?* ○ *Is there a past obstacle you can now overcome?* ○ *What exactly did you do that made it work?*

Training

9-10 years



3.2. Stage 2 (9-10 years)

3.2.1. Stage characteristics

During the transitional period between 9 and 10, children undergo a significant shift in their self-perception. They progress from being aware of others' judgements to developing their own self-judgement. With sturdy thinking skills and being able to realistically compare themselves to others around them, they can view and say that they may "not always be good" at what they do and often develop a negative view of themselves in contrast to the high self-confidence they displayed in earlier years. They must learn that becoming good at something requires learning, training and time and youth at that age are usually self-critical.

At this stage, they also learn to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their positive and negative qualities. Moreover, they start perceiving these qualities in others, which paves the way for transforming shallow friendships into more meaningful connections. This transformation enables them to better comprehend their roles within the groups they belong to.

3.2.2. Specific learning objectives

Players begin comparing themselves with teammates at this stage. The objectives make that comparison internal and give players a way to support each other.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

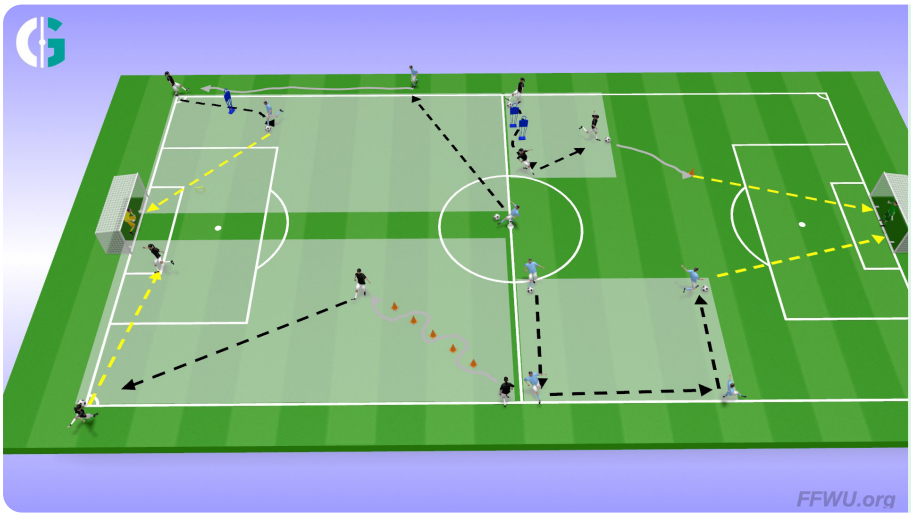
1. What can you do now that you couldn't do before, based on your past actions?
2. Choose the harder option when offered, and keep trying after unsuccessful tries.
3. Encourage a teammate by naming something specific they did well.

3.2.3. Coach insight

This is the stage where a player first tells you they are "bad at football". It usually means they have started comparing themselves with team-mates, which is a developmental step forward, not a crisis (Harter, 2015). The mistake is to answer it with reassurance – "of course you are not" – which the player will discount, because they can see the comparison you are denying. Answer it with evidence instead: show them what has changed since last month, and keep the comparison inside the player.

EXERCISE

I HAVE TWO FEET



Players	12+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	half-field
Equipment	3 balls, 15 cones
Duration	total: 33 min play: 30 min breaks: -
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- 4 Players at each station
- Two goalkeepers (changing after 3 shots)
- Station 1: Players pass the ball around the square, player closest to the goal dribbles towards the goal and shoots before the box
- Station 2: Players dribble through the gates (for round 1 blue gates, for round 2 yellow gates)
- Station 3: Players pass around the triangle, player closest to the goal dribbles towards the goal and shoots before the box (players follow up their passes). After each player has shot at one station, all 4 players rotate to the next station
- Before the group rotates to the next station, each player names one specific thing a teammate at that station did well with their weaker foot.
- Variations:
  - Have more/less players passing
  - Reduce/increase space

Coaching Tips

1. Give all players the **chance to pass and shoot** in both exercises.
2. Start with the **simple passing** and **shooting version** shown in the drawing.
3. Decrease the space to **raise the difficulty** once all players have mastered it, so confidence **builds progressively**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Describe something your weaker foot can do now that it could not do before.	○ *Does having a stronger foot mean you can't improve the other?* ○ *What can your weaker foot do now that it could not before?* ○ *How did you notice the change?*
2	Use your second best foot at the stations when the stronger one is available.	○ *Why are you more comfortable playing with one foot?* ○ *How often did you choose the harder foot?* ○ *What made you switch back to the stronger one?*
3	Tell a teammate one specific thing they did well with their second best foot.	○ *What did you say about what your teammate had done?* ○ *How did it feel to hear something about your own play?* ○ *Was it easier to give or to receive feedback?*

Training

11-12 years



3.3. Stage 3 (11-12 years)

3.3.1. Stage characteristics

As children enter their pre-adolescent years, particularly around ages 11 and 12, significant shifts occur in self-perception. Early adolescence is marked by heightened self-awareness and self-consciousness. Young people become increasingly concerned about their appearance, behaviour, and how peers perceive them. They begin questioning their role within the social sphere and worrying about what others think. Physical changes also become more apparent, often first in girls and later in boys. These transformations can increase self-consciousness as expressions of sexuality begin to emerge.

Fluctuating emotions, changing social dynamics, and physical development can significantly affect young athletes' self-esteem and confidence in their sporting abilities. Early adolescents may question their capabilities and downplay their confidence to fit in with peer values. They can feel confident one moment and awkward or insecure the next. Low self-confidence may also contribute to increased risk-taking, often driven by a desire for peer validation or to demonstrate courage and belonging.

At the same time, early adolescents begin developing abstract thinking abilities. This enables them to better understand concepts such as self-confidence and explore their own sense of self.

3.3.2. Specific learning objectives

Self-consciousness rises at this stage and players can articulate what they are good at, which makes the sources of their confidence visible and coachable.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

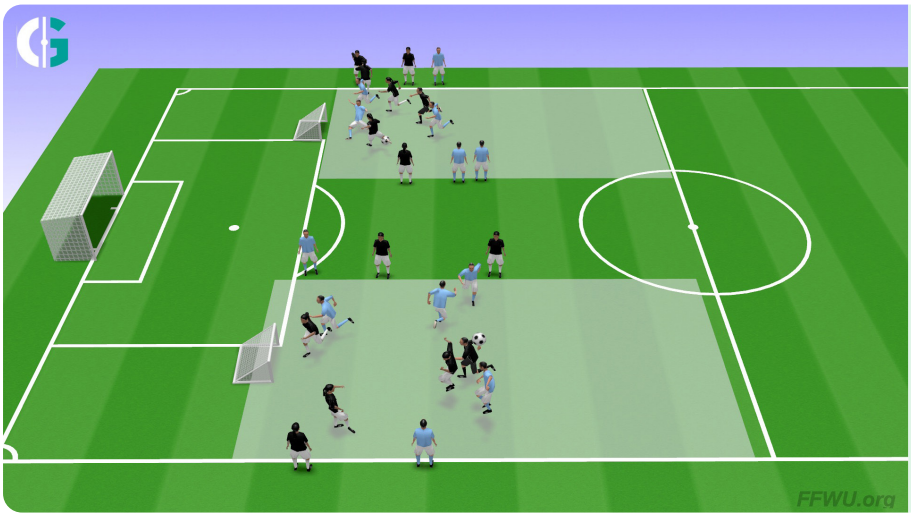
1. Name what you're good at - preparation, decisions, and support - not just results.
2. Complete an agreed prepration task between sessions and report back.
3. Judge your performance by what you set out to do rather than by the score alone.

3.3.3. Coach insight

Players at this stage can tell you what they are good at, and their answers are worth listening to closely. An answer that is entirely about outcomes – goals, wins, selection – is a warning sign, because those are the sources they control least (Vealey et al., 1998). An answer that includes preparation, decision-making or helping team-mates is more durable. If a player cannot name a single thing they are good at, that is worth more of your attention than anything technical that session.

EXERCISE

STRENGTH MIRROR



Players	16+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	half field
Equipment	2 balls, 16 cones, 8 bibs, 4 mini-goals
Duration	total: 37 min play: 6 x 4 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- Coach asks: “What do you think other players think about you?”
- Players can write their thoughts on paper or share out loud
- Set up two small sided games of 3 vs 3
- Game time is 4 minutes (repeat 8 times), 2 minutes of rest in between games
- Players on the sideline compliment an action to be allowed to substitute a player on the field starting with the players’ name
- Rules for compliments:
  - Based on that person’s strength
  - Truthful and sincere, Make direct eye contact
  - Receiving players thank the complimenting players and exchange places.
  - Before each game, every player states one thing they intend to do during those four minutes. In the rest period they say whether they did it, regardless of the score.

Coaching Tips

1. Prepare some **example compliments** so players know how to start.
2. Pilot the activity and **demonstrate** it, so players **understand when substitutions** occur.
3. Brief the referees on what a **valid compliment** sounds like; if the compliments **cannot be heard**, allow them only during **rest periods**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Name what you are good at, including the things you control, before the games start.	○ *What unique skills and attributes do you think you bring?* ○ *How did it feel to share appreciation? Why?* ○ *Which of your strengths do you actually control?*
2	Complete one agreed preparation task on your own before the next session.	○ *What did you prepare on your own before this session?* ○ *What made it easy or hard to do?* ○ *What will you prepare before the next one?*
3	Judge each four-minute game by what you set out to do, not by the score.	○ *What did you set out to do in that game, and did you do it?* ○ *Did winning or losing the game change your answer?* ○ *Which round were you most satisfied with? Why?*

Training

13-14 years



3.4. Stage 4 (13-14 Years)

3.4.1. Stage characteristics

During the ages of 13 and 14, young teenagers continue to experience developmental characteristics like their younger peers. However, as their growth advances, they refine their understanding of themselves and the world around them while their self-confidence remains strongly influenced by how they interpret the reactions of others towards them. In this stage of development, it becomes crucial to be attentive to negative influences from unsupportive individuals, such as friends, peers, family members, or teammates as their social networks play a significant role in shaping their self-perception. Additionally, extreme self-consciousness, often seen in this stage, can lead to the tendency to withdraw from social groups, which can be detrimental to their social and emotional growth.

3.4.2. Specific learning objectives

Confidence typically dips at this stage and is strongly shaped by how players read the reactions of others. The objectives protect participation when exposure feels costly.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

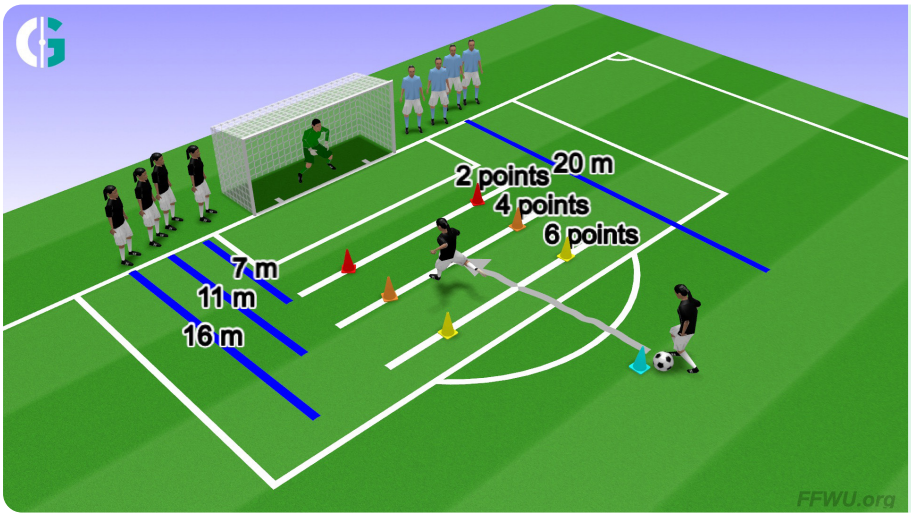
1. Keep asking for the ball and playing even after a visible mistake.
2. Call for the ball during tough game phases, not just when winning.
3. Act on feedback and keep playing at the same level afterwards.

3.4.3. Coach insight

Expect confidence to fall here, and expect it not to be your fault. Self-esteem typically declines during adolescence before recovering later (Orth & Robins, 2014), and this stage sits in the middle of that dip. The risk is misreading it: a player who has gone quiet, stopped asking for the ball and stopped taking on opponents is often not less committed but less certain. Public criticism at this stage does disproportionate damage. Say the hard things privately and separate the performance from the person every time.

EXERCISE

KICK IT SMART



Players	12+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	half field
Equipment	1 ball, 7 cones, 6 bibs
Duration	total: 23 min play: 20 min breaks: -
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- Set up 3 different shooting lines: 7 meters (2 points), 11 meters (4 points), 16 meters (6 points)
- One player starts to dribble onto the goal from the 20 meters mark
- Players can decide from which distance they want to shoot
- Each player has 5 attempts and can gather a maximum of 30 points
- During each players' turn, the rest of the players will be divided into two teams standing behind/next to the goal
- One team distracts the player (shouting, wave arms/hands, make funny faces)
- The other team supports the player (shout out compliments, motivational phrases, encouragements)
- After each player's second attempt the coach gives one correction. The player takes their three attempts with that correction in mind.
- Variations:
  - Set up a challenge between the two teams

Coaching Tips

1. Demonstrate the activity, and **show players** what **they may** and **may not do** to distract the shooter.
2. Set the activity up on **two goals** to **increase effectiveness**.
3. Repeat this activity **every two weeks** so that **confidence builds** over time.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Keep choosing a shooting distance after missing in front of the group.	○ *How did successfully scoring affect your next attempt?* ○ *How did not scoring affect your next attempt?* ○ *Did you move closer after a miss?*
2	Keep offering to shoot when the other players are distracting you.	○ *How did it feel to be distracted/supported by other players?* ○ *Did you keep taking your turn when it was harder?* ○ *What made it easier to step up again?*
3	Act on the coach's correction and keep taking the same distance.	○ *What did the coach ask you to change after your second try?* ○ *What did you do differently in the attempts that followed?* ○ *Did the correction change which line you chose?*

Training

15-16 years



3.5. Stage 5 (15-16 years)

3.5.1. Stage characteristics

Between the ages of 15 and 16, teenagers undergo a significant phase of self-exploration. They transition from seeking approval from others to embarking on a journey of self-discovery. During this period, they often feel that nobody can truly understand them because they are still grappling with understanding themselves. Teenagers become preoccupied with matters of courtship and seeking validation from those they find attractive. They also navigate concerns related to sexual activity and performance. Simultaneously, they feel the weight of planning for their educational future, resulting in a multitude of internal and external stressors. This stage of adolescence is ripe with challenges and pressures. These factors contribute to this age group being particularly more likely to experience depression or depressive symptoms. Adolescents are in the process of defining their identities, which involves struggles in identifying their strengths and passions. They question whether they want to continue pursuing certain activities or areas of interest. Their belief in their own abilities is tested as they make realistic assessments of their skills, capabilities, and how they feel about their own competences.

3.5.2. Specific learning objectives

Players move from seeking approval towards self-discovery at this stage and can discuss confidence directly, as something with sources that can be rebuilt.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

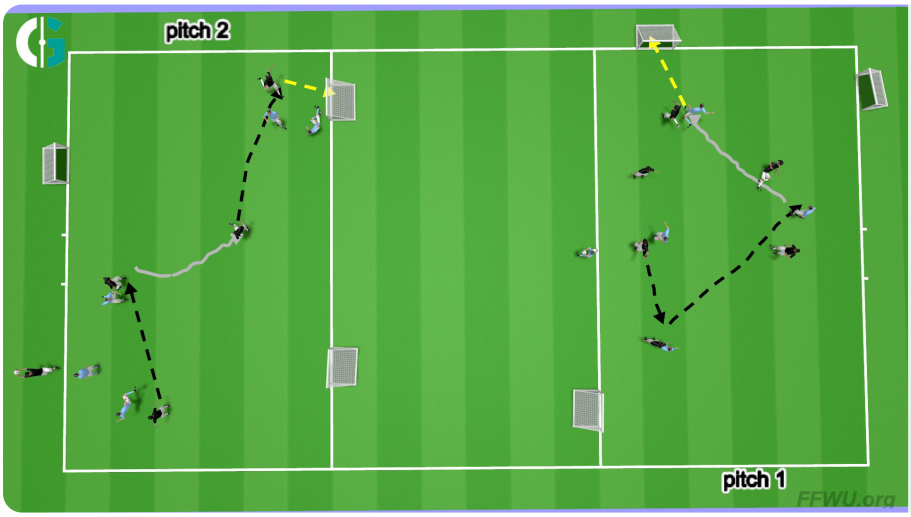
1. Use a consistent pre-action routine for high-stakes moments.
2. Acknowledge your nerves before a tense situation, then take action anyway.
3. Set your own personal performance standard and review that, not the result.

3.5.3. Coach insight

At this stage you can start talking about confidence directly, as a thing that has sources and can be rebuilt – and most players have never been offered that vocabulary. The useful question is not “are you confident?” but “what is your confidence resting on?”. A player whose belief rests mainly on being picked, praised or on a good run of results is holding something fragile (Vealey et al., 1998). Your task is to help them move weight onto preparation and accumulated evidence, which travel with them.

EXERCISE

ROLE CHANGE



Players	18+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	full field
Equipment	2 balls, 6 small goals, 10 bibs
Duration	total: 31 min play: 5 x 4 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- Set up 5v5 games and three goals randomly placed in each playing area without goalkeepers
- Rules: Each team has 3 different types of players:
  - One dribbler (has to do 3 touches minmum)
  - Two passers (1 touch only)
  - Two finishers (only those players are allowed to shoot into the goal)
  - Goals can only be scored after a each type of player has touched the ball
- Change roles of players after each round
  - Each round is decided by a penalty or free kick, taken by that round's finisher.
  - Before each round, every player sets one standard for the role they are about to play, and reviews it in the break.

Coaching Tips

1. Place the goals **randomly** on the pitch.
2. Make sure players **change role** after each game so that **everyone gets to explore each role**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Use your own routine before the deciding action in each round.	○ *What did you do in the seconds before you took it?* ○ *Was it the same as the last time you took one?* ○ *Which part of your routine mattered most?*
2	Describe the nerves you feel in the finisher role and take the shot anyway.	○ *What can you do if you have negative thoughts?* ○ *What did you feel just before shooting?* ○ *Did naming it change what you did next?*
3	Set a standard for the role you are about to play and review it in the break.	○ *Did you meet your performance standard for your role?* ○ *Did each round's result change your answer?* ○ *How did it feel playing different roles on the pitch?*

Training

17-18 years



3.6. Stage 6 (17-18 years)

3.6.1. Stage characteristics

Late adolescence, also known as young adulthood, represents a significant turning point in development. During this phase, individuals move away from the uncertainties and concerns surrounding their self-image and identity and begin to view themselves in a more nuanced and complex manner, understanding that they possess a range of qualities and personality traits as they embrace the understanding that they can occupy any position on the spectrum of human attributes.

With this growth their reliance on the reactions of others to shape their self-confidence diminishes considerably. They gain a deeper understanding of how their self-confidence is formed and recognise the value of investing time and effort in improving their skills, whether in sports or any other area of life.

Generally, during the stable inner self of late adolescence, self-confidence tends to be high and continues to grow and improve until the mid to late 20s.

Later in life, self-confidence experiences further growth during one's 50s and 60s, as individuals become more assured and certain of their abilities in specific areas of life, including sports, if they continue to practice. This later phase brings about a sense of increased confidence and certainty, as individuals gain expertise and experience in their chosen fields.

3.6.2. Specific learning objectives

Players are close to leaving the environment that has supported them. Confidence that depends on this coach will not survive the next one.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

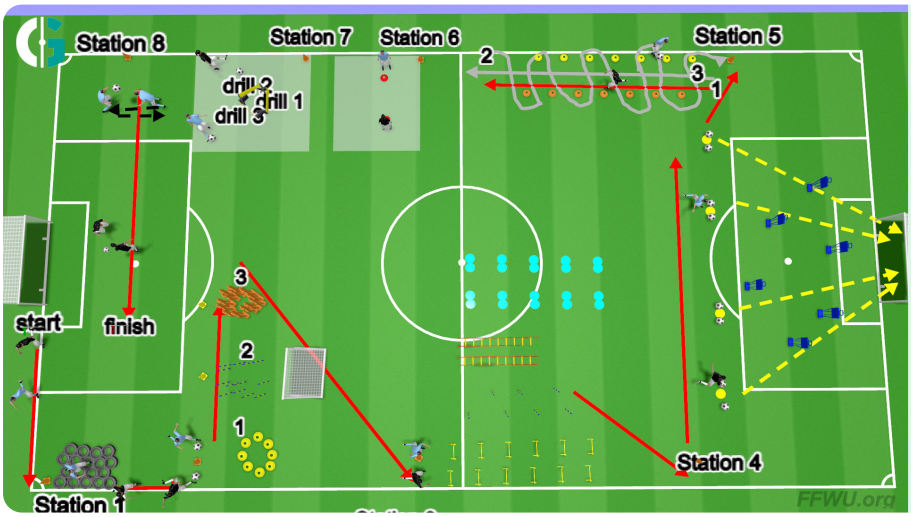
1. Plan and manage your own prepration without being directed.
2. Ask for the ball and accept responsibility in tough moments.
3. Strengthen a teammate's confidence with specific evidence of their successes.

3.6.3. Coach insight

The test of this competence is what happens after the player leaves you. A player whose confidence depends on your approval will lose it at the next club, with the next coach, in the first bad run. So the work at this stage is deliberately to make yourself less necessary: ask rather than tell, let them run their own preparation, and resist the urge to supply reassurance they could generate themselves. If a player can explain how they get themselves back after a bad game, without referring to you, the job is done.

EXERCISE

I AM GOOD AT...!



Players	20+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	full field
Equipment	14 balls, 38 cones (10 large, 28 small), 12 hurdles, 20 markers, 3 boxes, 2 ladders, 12 poles, 19 tyres
Duration	total: 48 min play: 40 min breaks: -
Author	Samia Khatib

Description

- Players strategize (5 min) on who to place at each station
- Two players start with relays trying to complete their station and hand to next player at the next station
  1. Coordination & Agility: Step through all tires
  2. Accuracy: shoot the ball with accuracy and exact power that it stops in the zone (3 zones)
  3. Speed & agility: run/jump through hurdles, poles, ladder and cones
  4. Shooting: score from each marker
  5. Endurance & dribbling: dribble through the corridor and go back zig-zag
  6. Strength & fitness: 15 push-ups, 15 squats, 20 lateral lunges, 20 scissor jumps, 40 seconds plank
  7. Passing & receiving: 15x kick against rebound box and receive it
  8. Heading: Two players head the ball to each other 10x and score

Coaching Tips

1. Demonstrate **each station** with **all players**.
2. Allow up to **five minutes to strategise**.
3. This is a **relay** — each player must **complete their station** before handing over; **repeat it** and ask teams to **improve their strategy**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Prepare yourself for your station without being told what to do.	○ *What did your team do to get ready, and who decided it?* ○ *What would you prepare differently next time?* ○ *Did anyone tell you what to practise?*
2	Volunteer for a station rather than waiting to be placed.	○ *Which station did you volunteer for, and why?* ○ *Who took the station nobody wanted?* ○ *How did you choose the best player for a particular station?*
3	Tell a teammate the specific evidence for why they suit their station.	○ *Was it easy to tell your teammates what you are best at? What evidence did you give for someone else's station?* ○ *How did they respond?*

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