

## W. H. Y.

On Sunday we will witness the culmination of the All Ireland Senior Football Championship final between the five in a row chasing Dublin and their oldest adversaries the Kingdom of Kerry. To the victors will go the spoils. If Dublin win, they will be etched into the annals of history as the first and only team to ever win five All-Ireland titles in a row. For Kerry, the last team to vie for five in a row in 1982, the prize will be the same as that famous Offaly team that defied all the odds to dethrone and derail the mighty Kingdom's 'drive for five' and be forever remembered as the team that stopped Dublin's merciless bid for immortality.

This provides us with three very clear reasons why players commit their lives to playing this beautiful game. The first being that Celtic Cross, the All-Ireland medal afforded to every annual winner. The second reason is the chance to be a member of the greatest team ever to have played the game and the third is to be part of the team that ended that dream. Three great reasons that any player playing Gaelic football would certainly love to be playing for this Sunday.

As a goalkeeper it is necessary to have a solid set of reasons as to why you play the position. With the levels of skill and abilities a goalkeeper needs to hold ever-increasing and the weight of expectation to reproduce those skills to the highest of standards on a consistent basis, having a strong set of reasons for playing the game is pivotal and as always it is important that these be recorded into your training diary for reference - 'Ink It Don't Think It!'

For me, WHY goalkeepers play can be broken down further into three words. Now written as the anacronym, W.H.Y., stands for Will, Hope and Yearn. It is these three words that surmise the reasons why we continue as goalkeepers. Using this acronym for the past five years has really helped me perform to the best of my ability as well as assisting me through some of my darkest hours both personally and as a goalkeeper. Knowing WHY you play any sport is very important especially whenever you begin to have doubts or negative thoughts about continuing to play. Essentially, having strong reasons for why you play gives you the purpose needed to continue playing.

Breaking W.H.Y. into the three words, WILL HOPE YEARN, allows us to encompass all of our potential reasons into one easily remembered word.

**WILL** is having the ability to control one's thoughts and actions for a chosen purpose. Having purpose is one of the most basic reasons that human beings, as a species, complete any task no matter how trivial. Without a purpose tasks have no meaning and thus have no reason to be performed. When we control our thoughts and actions into a chosen purpose (All-Ireland, FA Cup, Superbowl) it creates a disciplined routine which over time manifests as a habit that ultimately becomes autonomous in nature.

**HOPE** is believing something that you want to happen, will happen. It is this belief that keeps us moving forward and pushes us to be the best that we can be. Your hope should be coupled with your goals that should be both realistic and attainable. By believing that something you want to happen will happen allows you the goalkeeper to focus fully on your goals and the plans you have created to make your goals a reality.

**YEARN** is to want something so much that it makes you physically ill not to have it. When you create your realistic and attainable goals, it is with the purpose of concluding with your end goal being achieved. Setting yourself an end goal and wanting to do something is what gives you drive. This is your ambition, it's what keeps you going whenever you feel like giving up and without this drive your goals will only remain unfulfilled.

It is our innate human nature giving us a need to have some sense of purpose. There must always be some form of reason as to why we complete the tasks that we decide to undertake. It is for this reason it is important to create your own set of beliefs and principles in regard to why you became a goalkeeper. Having these, in writing, will provide you with a strong foundation to build yourself a strong mental attitude allowing you to be mentally tough when things aren't going as you had planned.

Humans are also naturally competitive and as such they will always feel the need to better themselves or at the very least, better than the person next to them. When thinking of reasons for being a goalkeeper it is this competitiveness, especially with oneself, that will drive you most when you are trying to reach the pinnacle of your goalkeeping abilities. This is also where your attainable goals come into play. By ensuring that your goals can be achieved in a timely fashion it will feed your insatiable thirst for challenging yourself to be the very best that you can be.

I'm sure the players on both the Dublin and Kerry teams have set themselves realistic and attainable goals so as to reach Sunday's finale. Their end goal is obvious. What may not be as obvious is the personal goals each player has set to break their end goal down into smaller parts that supplies them with a pathway to their final target. It is these goals, these aspirations and these challenges that drives these players in their ultimate quests. They know it is important to know why they are pushing themselves to their absolute limits. They will have the WILL, the HOPE and the YEARN so they will definitely know their reasons '**W.H.Y.**'