

FREE DOWNLOAD:

MAKING THE TEAM.

Who are we, and why are we qualified to write this handbook?

Jim Lister is a qualified NLP Master Practitioner trainer and coach who has worked for 15 years as a management coach and motivator in a range of private businesses and public services. He set up the CChange Partnership in 2001 and has recently worked in the field of sports psychology with Huddersfield Town FC, and a local U16 team in Holmfirth, winners last year of the Huddersfield and District League and Cup Tournaments. 2 years ago he jointly wrote a book called ['NLP and Coaching for Healthcare Professionals'](#).

Rob Lister is a qualified teacher who for 20 years combined academic work with sports coaching in a variety of schools and colleges. Since leaving full-time teaching to commit himself to a career in sports, Rob has worked as a supply teacher and gym instructor whilst studying for a range of health and fitness qualifications. He is a qualified YMCA Level 3 Sports Nutritionist, and having recently completed the Advanced Fitness Instructor course with Northern Fitness, Rob has now established his own health and conditioning company. He is keen to extend the key principles of one-to-one training to a team and competitive sports context.

Together we have pooled our experiences to write this unique insight into the varied ways that when used together, can ensure maximum performance on the pitch both in training and match situations. We think it is a powerful mix of strategies written in a way that can be used immediately.

Here is a sample for you to read which we hope will compel you to buy the full handbook.

- **Rob Edwards: Introduction and Recommendation**
- **Section A: Your questions answered**
- **Section B: Mind Building**
- **Section C: Nutrition**
- **Section D: Conditioning**

Rob Edwards Introduction.

I first started working with Jim towards the end of my spell at Huddersfield Town. I was already at the ‘veteran’ stage by then, and like all pro footballers, I obviously wanted my playing career to go on for as long as possible, especially as I was Captain of the Club. Jim had already produced really good results from using his techniques with a couple of my team-mates, and they recommended that I should go and do a couple of sessions with him.

The first time we met I remember saying to Jim, ‘Can you make me faster?!’ His reply was instant – ‘No, but I can help you think that you are, and help you gain an extra yard by becoming a clearer reader of the game’. I thought right, this sounds interesting, and we started from there.

At the time, I was out of the first team, and I feared my career might be drawing to a disappointing close. The sessions with Jim had an immediate impact, and I was back in the first team within weeks. From then on, we met regularly, using all the mental preparation techniques described in this book, pretty much as they stand here. The methods were clear, practical and easy to apply, and I used them consistently, both in matches and in training. They undoubtedly had a direct, totally positive effect on my performances on the pitch.

During my final season at Huddersfield Town, I worked with Jim on the Friday before matches. The strategies we used gradually became more varied and detailed. We worked on the Reframing and Internal Dialogue ideas, as well as techniques such as Goal Setting and Objective Thinking. Every time I used a new technique, I felt its positive influence on the pitch. As my powers of concentration and confidence grew, every dimension of my game improved. Even at that late stage of my career, my game was developing, and I held onto my first team place for the rest of the season until I picked up an injury.

Looking back, I really feel in all honesty that I could have played to a consistently even higher standard if I’d had access to these preparation strategies when I was younger. I had an enjoyable, fulfilling career, but I can’t help wondering what I could have achieved if I’d been able to use Jim’s methods of psychological training from the early days. I honestly believe these ideas can hold the answer to one of the most difficult areas in football – how to remain self-confident in all situations.

Here in the *Making the Team* manual, you’ll find clear guidance about nutrition and physical training as well as mental preparation strategies. Again, these are areas we used to get little advice about, even at pretty high levels of the professional ladder. It was obvious from looking around the football world that a programme linking these things together could help bring success, but the specific expertise didn’t always seem to be there.

You, the current generation of players and coaches, are more fortunate. Sports science has now given us proven, tested information to help us

play to our highest potential. The teams smart enough to make use of this information will gain a vital advantage. This manual pinpoints the key conditioning strategies and, crucially, helps you build the mental strength to put them effectively into practice. Jim has taken the time and the trouble to write his techniques down, just as he used them with me and my team mates, and I urge you to read them and get using them straight away. I recommend these methods without hesitation, because I saw first-hand how they worked for me. If you apply them long-term, who knows where your career will take you? The very best of luck with it!

Rob Edwards

SECTION A: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Who will the strategies described in this manual help?

The strategies we lay out here will help players of all standards, from fun recreational, to youth and academy tiers, all the way through to the semi-professional and full professional strata. The starting point is personal motivation, taking the sport seriously, and wanting to achieve the highest standards possible. Whatever the level of competition, we encourage these techniques to be used as soon as possible. We believe that there will be immediate benefits, both in terms of enjoyment of the game and the quality of personal performance and self-motivation.

There's lots of information out there already – how is this manual any different?

We are not claiming that there is anything strikingly new about the strategies themselves. They have been in common use in a variety of sports for a number of years, and are the product of decades of detailed research and practical experimentation. **However, we have found no other resource which applies them clearly and directly to football.**

This manual is different because *everything* in it is immediately usable, and is expressed as precisely and systematically as possible. We feel strongly that the benefits of research often carried out with elite athletes should be available to footballers competing at all levels. However, it has been our experience that football has been relatively late in assimilating some of the proven performance-enhancing strategies that we present in this handbook. Therefore, we have ensured throughout this guide that our advice is targeted directly at the specific demands of our complex and demanding sport.

How can we trust that these methods are reliable and effective?

It is not our intention to engage in a process of 'dumbing down', and we are wary of the dangers of over-simplifying areas of knowledge and research that can be detailed and complex. However, our prime objective is to ensure that the tools and techniques we offer are approachable and immediately

applicable. This means that we have not made a high priority of going into detail about background theory. Players and teams stand to gain a great deal by adopting fresh approaches to their preparation for training and matches. We want to make sure that this process is not impeded by the fear of becoming bogged down in masses of theoretical justification.

The supporting theories behind our programmes are all out there, should you have the time and appetite to hunt them down. We can assure you that the strategies we describe are supported by detailed research. They are all, with adaptations, as applicable to footballers as they are to participants in any other sport. Fundamentally, we have simply found that these approaches do actually work in practice – players have told us that they have found them valuable, and that they have significantly improved their game as a result of using our methods.

So, how can I get the most out of the guide?

The best way to use the guide is to read it through once in its entirety, to get a sense of the progression and connections between the mental, nutritional and physical elements of the programme. From there, you can go back to the sections that you think will be of particular use in your specific situation, and employ the strategies at will. As you will discover, everything is interconnected: enjoy the exploration and the discovery!

SECTION B: MIND BUILDING

It seems logical to seek to ensure that the mind is as well prepared as possible, able to meet the challenges and uncertainties of any football match, in order to keep the body on track. To quote a Championship footballer that I worked with for over 2 seasons, experienced in over 10 seasons of playing professional football, **“this game is 95% about the mind, nothing more, nothing less”**. He backed this up by saying that most players at his level were mainly of an equal standard with only small degrees of difference in terms of fitness, physique, speed and skill. The greatest area of difference was, in his words, **“confidence and belief in yourself”**. He knew from direct experience that any player who could get their mind functioning to its best potential, at its most advanced level, would then have a clear advantage over his opponents.

HOW WELL ARE YOUR TEAM OF PLAYERS MENTALLY PREPARED?

Have a go at filling in this simple grid for each of your players. It might indicate to you how far advanced you and your players are in using the 'Mind Build' element within the **Making the Team** programme.

PLAYERS NAME	MIND BUILDING TECHNIQUES	SCORE HIGH ABOVE 8 - 10	SCORE AVERAGE BETWEEN 7 - 5	SCORE LOW BELOW 5
	Individual Process Goals defined and regularly reviewed			
	Self-confidence enhanced through an understanding of and practice of positive self-talk			
	A series of mental 'anchors' created to reflect key moments in a game			
	Reviews 'Rebuilding' strategies to address past mistakes and correct the mindset ready for the next game			
	Objective thinking strategy used to assess personal strengths over an individual (difficult) opponent			
	A disciplined programme of mental rehearsal regularly used involving visual, sound and feeling senses.			

In terms of the value of the score that you have registered, consider for yourself if this is satisfactory, or whether there is room for improvement. **You decide!**

The Mind Building section in the **Making The Team** handbook explains how to maximise your scores for best effect for each individual player and the team.

SECTION C: NUTRITION

How does football nutrition differ from 'normal' eating?

When footballers eat and drink in the same way as other ambitious and successful sports people, they take a significant step towards achieving their desired performance targets. Nutrition for footballers is no different to nutrition for any athletes aiming for the highest standards they are capable of. Equally, sports nutrition is simply a more disciplined and structured version of the dietary guidelines for lifelong health and fitness offered to the general population by health education agencies.

Therefore it is helpful to reconsider the belief that sports nutrition is somehow different to 'normal' eating habits. The last thing we want to encourage is the idea of 'going on a diet' in the frequently (mis)understood sense, as some kind of temporary fad from which we can return (to normal) once it has 'worked'. We have to replace the perception of sports nutrition as some kind of 'healthy eating' trend, a slightly eccentric 'phase' in someone's behaviour that will inevitably be succeeded by a return to an intake comfortingly rich in fats and sugars – often seen as the norm.

Instead, we would simply encourage footballers to commit to the routines of eating and drinking which have been proven to help all sports practitioners to perform to their highest standard. This commitment becomes easier when we accept that wanting to provide ourselves with the best fuel to achieve our goals is not some kind of deviation from normality. In fact, what could be more normal than providing ourselves with the right nourishment to fulfil our potential?

How can I motivate myself to follow this nutritional programme?

A straightforward comparison of the benefits and sacrifices involved in following the programme will provide ample motivation for learning about it and committing to it. In any activity where the benefits outweigh the sacrifices, it becomes gradually easier to minimise and eventually ignore any negative elements. In the case of football nutrition, we feel that the positives so comprehensively outweigh the negatives that maintaining motivation should not be a huge obstacle.

It is a good idea to confront some of the sacrifices, if only to confirm that they are no barrier to adopting a nutritional regime that will help promote success. We are not underestimating the challenges involved in adopting these strategies, and we accept that there will be some element of vigilance and self-control needed. Food can be a very emotive and complicated issue. The extent to which any individual, sporting or otherwise, might wish to follow these nutritional guidelines will depend on a complex variety of factors. We do, after all, use food

as a reward, and the security that comes from feeling ‘well-fed’ is a pretty basic primal instinct. However, the motivation levels for making any necessary changes ought to be pretty high for footballers for whom match day performance has a high priority, whether for recreational, social, personal or professional reasons.

So, we feel strongly that the rewards of following the programme are so significant that they reduce any doubts or inconveniences to irrelevance. We are not advocating some fashionable experiment: the summary of nutritional practices offered here is based on the soundest scientific research, backed up by clear and unequivocal observational evidence. The biggest payoff of all will be in the quality of your performance, in consistently having the edge over players who have not prepared as thoroughly or smartly. Whatever you feed to your body, it will usually adapt, and perform to some level or other. The crucial thing to remember with the nutrition programme is that it will ensure that you perform to *the highest level possible*. If you have not followed this programme before, you will not have achieved that level. That is still to come – and you will enjoy it when it happens, I guarantee!

Admittedly, the alterations to dietary practices suggested here might seem fairly stark and even intimidating, at first. However, the adaptations to existing routines soon become second nature, and can quickly be seen as a stimulating and intriguing challenge, especially when the substantial performance and fitness benefits start to kick in. Furthermore, eating and drinking in the ways we suggest will actually make you feel better all the time – you avoid the fluctuations of energy supply, you never need feel hungry or thirsty, and you will never need to eat anything you don’t like.

And always remember the crucial point that these guidelines do not constitute a *diet* in the accepted sense of the word. We are not aiming at some temporary experiment, a short-term deviation from the ‘norm’ which will conveniently solve any perceived weight, body composition or sports performance issues. Instead, we are presenting here a pattern of food and fluid intake accepted by nutritionists as the best way to guarantee lifelong health and wellbeing. This ought to be a quest well worth following for any members of the population – but if it can also bring substantially improved sports performance, then surely the motivation for committed footballers should be irresistible.

Okay, I’ll give it a go then – so exactly what do I need to do?

Basically, you need to follow some straightforward, commonsense routines! To ensure that our explanation of key guidelines is methodical and easy to follow, we have condensed the wealth of information on the subject into 6 crucial rules for effective football nutrition. There is obviously a great deal more to learn, and to put

into practice, than these 6 rules alone, but if these principles are followed – starting as soon as possible! – then there will be guaranteed rapid, substantial improvements in all areas of training and match day performance. Rules 1 and 2 are especially crucial, and if these 2 suggestions alone are put into practice, you will see significant returns.

We have worked hard to present these pointers and guidelines in a concise and approachable form, allowing you to make any necessary alterations to your approach with immediate effect. So, enjoy finding out how best to fuel your footballing energy needs – go to it!

The 6 Golden Rules of Football Nutrition

- RULE 1** **60-70% of food intake must be complex carbohydrates.**

- RULE 2** **Drink 3 litres of fluid per day, 6 on match days.**

- RULE 3** **Follow the food pyramid portions.**

- RULE 4** **Divide daily consumption evenly across 6 meals.**

- RULE 5** **Get every nutrient you need from food alone, not supplements.**

- RULE 6** **What you eat on match days matters BUT only if you eat right for the rest of the week.**

HOW WELL ARE YOU DOING AGAINST THESE 6 RULES? Measure yourself out of 10 on each and decide for yourself!

In the **Making The Team handbook, we expand on each of these 6 Rules, and add detail like a specially devised match-day nutritional routine, planned by the minute for both a 3pm and 7.30pm KO.**

Here is a sample of what we mean.....

NIGHT MATCH AND EVENING TRAINING SCHEDULE

MEAL	Contents
Breakfast 7/7.30pm	Cereal portion with milk 2 bread portions 1fruit juice portion PLUS Half-litre of water
Mid-morning snack 10.00am	Slice of malt loaf/ bagel with jam Nuts or dates/ dried fruit Apple/pear/nectarine Isotonic sports drink
Lunch 1.00pm	Substantial pasta portion with some protein Portion of peas with carrots Banana Cup cakes or fruit cake PLUS Half-litre of water
Mid-afternoon snack 3.30pm	Rice or noodle based snack/jacket potato Veg or salad portion PLUS Half-litre of water
5.30pm	Bread/ toast Crackers with light cream cheese Banana PLUS Half-litre of water PLUS Half a cup of water every 15 minutes up to kick off
DURING GAME/TRAINING	Drink 3 bottles of sports drink/ water mix during course of game and half time.
AFTER MATCH/TRAINING Within half hour	Eat high GI foods White bread jam sandwiches/ dates/ cornflake/ baguettes Eat a salty snack e.g. pretzels to aid re-hydration REHYDRATE FOR 3 Hours (every 15 mins 250ml)
Supper	Carb based snacks e.g. beans on toast until bedtime Crackers/ Golden Grahams/ Oatmeal

On days when you neither train nor play, follow the schedule in the overall food plan that we provide in the handbook. Drink 2 litres of water, spread evenly over the course of the day, plus the sports drinks in the menu plan. This will add up to a total of 3 litres of fluid.

NUTRITION SUMMARY:

The range of response to these guidelines will vary dramatically. Some people will think that they can't eat that much, others might think the suggested intake will not be nearly enough to fuel their energy needs. Some people might believe that the schedules are too difficult to integrate into everyday life, while others will enjoy the planning and preparation strategies involved.

However, whatever the subjective responses, the bald truth is that organising your food and drink in this way will ensure that your muscle cells are filled with the right amounts of the right fuel for matches. If you follow these guidelines until they become second nature, you will have taken a big step towards conditioning your body to use fuel as efficiently and effectively as possible. This will bring about a crucial benefit – it will sustain your energy levels throughout the full 90 minutes of a competitive game. It is one area of your athletic performance that you can bring under your own control: the extent to which you choose to do this will in the final analysis be determined by your own inner levels of ambition and motivation.

SECTION D: CONDITIONING

How important is fitness and conditioning in the context of all the other elements that contribute to effective football performance?

We made the point during Section B that a relaxed, focused mind helps a player's confidence and composure, leaving the feet free to work in the way they have been trained. The same is true of physical conditioning. A well trained player, not having to worry about struggling to cover the pitch or running out of energy, will be free to focus fully on strategy, positional play, skill input, and contributing to the team's overall cause. A fit, energetic, athletic player with limited natural talent will on most occasions contribute much more to a team than a gifted player with low fitness levels. Eleven highly fit players, and a bench of primed substitutes, will give you a massive advantage over any opposition team less well prepared. Every step should be taken to ensure that you have a squad in top-notch physical condition!

So it is surely the case that fitness and conditioning is hugely important in football, as it is in all sports. However, in our experience,

we have found that it can tend to be treated as one of the lower priorities. Like mental preparation and nutrition, it can be relegated to a 'background' or peripheral role, losing out to more prominent or urgent demands on coaches and players. We feel, though, that the time is now right to bring physical fitness work, like mental and nutritional conditioning, fully into the foreground. If footballers want to play to the best standard they can, all the time, they must surely aim to do all within their power to attain the best physical condition possible.

So, fitness conditioning can tend to be neglected in football – is this because football fitness is different to - or perhaps more difficult than - other sports?

Football is certainly a complex game in terms of the intense physical demands it places on its participants. It is acknowledged by sports academics and researchers as being one of the most challenging of competitive physical activities. The extensive range of athletic attributes required of players perhaps accounts in part for the semi-religious status that football enjoys across many parts of the globe. Top-level performers need to demonstrate remarkable levels of every facet of sporting prowess - speed, stamina, agility, strength, explosive power, balance, skill, co-ordination. Players need to display these attributes at a consistently high level of intensity, in unpredictable combinations, with a minimum of equipment to assist them.

In addition to the athletic attributes of the players, a bewildering range of external factors can influence the outcome of matches. The state of the pitch, the weather, the influence of the spectators, the away team's travel arrangements, refereeing decisions, a coach's tactical decisions, substitutions – these are just a few of the elements of a football match that might contribute to its outcome. It is hardly surprising that coaches, spectators and commentators are often confused about how a certain result came about, even after hours of analysis and debate!

In the midst of all of these myriad factors surrounding football, there is this equally complex matter of basic fitness levels. The stamina levels of players, the stresses, fatigue and injuries they pick up over the course of a game, and over a season, can crucially affect the success or failure of a team. This confirms our belief that the physical conditioning of the players in the squad must be given a very high priority – it is, after all, one of the factors that can be totally under the control of managers, coaches and the players themselves. There are not too many controllable factors in football, so when you find one, the onus is on you to control it!

These observations lead inevitably to the conclusion that football conditioning is, like the sport itself, uniquely complex and demanding. It obviously shares much in common with general sports conditioning, but it is unique in terms of the range of conditioning strategies needed. Every facet of athletic preparation needs to be covered and catered for, carefully, scientifically and comprehensively.

So, football differs from other sports in the *sheer scale* of the challenge of conditioning its players adequately for the demands of competitive matches! In order to design a comprehensive, football specific fitness programme – even for one particular player, let alone for a whole squad - every element of sports conditioning needs to be taken into account. As the eminent fitness coach Dr Raymond Verheijen observed, “The physical demands of football are complex.” And that is a distinct understatement...

These considerations might lie at the heart of why physical conditioning can come to be neglected, or be done in an improvised way; put simply, it is a really difficult task to undertake effectively, even compared to other high-profile, demanding sports!

So how do you plan to cover this complex subject matter in one small handbook?

Well, in the previous two sections of the manual, we have been able to provide thorough but succinct summaries of proven methods to help you prepare for competitive matches both psychologically and nutritionally. Physical conditioning is a much wider and more contentious area altogether. There are numerous textbooks available which summarise and put into practice the wealth of research that has been carried out on the subject of player conditioning. These textbooks suggest numerous ways in which fitness drills can be integrated into squad training sessions.

So we certainly don't intend reproducing the ideas and information on specific conditioning strategies that are already out there. Offering a comprehensive programme of fitness routines, exercises and timetables is not a central objective of this guide. What we will provide instead is an appraisal of the problems to be overcome in providing effective physical conditioning for footballers. These problems are not always fully accounted for in the existing guides and textbooks. Having looked squarely at these problems – and they are substantial – we will then offer our own slant on the issue. We will suggest what we feel would be the most practical and effective way of overcoming the numerous obstacles in the way of full, effective player conditioning, over the course of a season, a year, and even a full career.

Tell it to me straight then – what are these problems we have to overcome with player conditioning in the football world?

We'd be letting on if we gave you all of the answers here...so buy our e-book and read in depth the answer to this and many more questions!

[Click here to buy the e-book now](#)

If you have any queries or would like to give us your thoughts on any of the ideas covered in this 'MAKING THE TEAM' download then we would be happy to hear from you and will do our best to respond as soon as we can.

For anything linked to nutrition, fitness and conditioning then please contact Rob Lister.

Email: rob@makingtheteam.co.uk

Tel: 07743 536534

For anything regarding the Mindbuilding chapter and any other general enquiries then please contact Jim Lister.

Email: jim@makingtheteam.co.uk

Tel: 07989 478323

Best of luck and we'd like to hear your thoughts

Jim and Rob Lister