

# BLUEPRINT

A new approach to maximizing performance for athletes—and businesspeople



A person wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt is shown from the side, reaching out with their right arm to cross a thick red ribbon. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The person's head is tilted back, and their mouth is open in a shout or cheer.

# FOR

# WINNING

Melissa Reid was only 18 in 2006, but already believed she would become one of the top female golfers not only in her native England, but in the world. Since taking up the sport at age 11, she'd racked up a slew of impressive amateur wins, including back-to-back English Girls' Championship titles in 2004 and 2005. Still, the blond-haired, blue-eyed phenom felt she needed more than athletic skill to achieve her lofty goal. "Talent isn't enough," Reid said at the time.


BY BOB WOODS

Little did she know that three other forces would ultimately converge to dramatically alter the course of her life. Across the Atlantic, in Mystic, Connecticut, Gary Russell was using decades of experience and research to develop the Winning Profile, a behavioral profiling system aimed at identifying and maximizing talent, athletic or otherwise. Coincidentally, in 2006, he'd been introduced to Sir Clive Woodward, a British rugby star turned innovative coach, whose startling success at producing world champions had earned him knighthood. Together, they agreed, they could recognize and nurture winning athletes.

The third element in this fluky junction was Reid's coach, Lawrence Farmer, who crossed paths with Wood-

ward, currently the director of elite performance for the British Olympic Association, in 2006. "He was talking about how he would like to find a golfer," Farmer recalls, referring to Woodward's knack for churning out champions. The secret to Woodward's success was to surround an athlete or team with a dedicated group of specialists who address an array of physical, mental, and emotional aspects of performance. "I suggested Mel to him," Farmer says—and thus began a grand experiment that not only would validate Woodward's methods and Russell's theories, but also catapult Reid to golf stardom.

Russell, 65, had been a middling student, but a talented athlete. Despite his lackluster grades, he credits his innately



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positive attitude with convincing him that he was destined for great things. He eventually graduated from Kutztown State College in Pennsylvania and became a private-school history teacher known for his offbeat methods, such as coming to class dressed as a historical figure his students were studying. “I started getting things from those kids that their parents couldn’t believe. They were doing their work, they liked me, they liked school, they excelled in athletics,” he says.

Ever since, Russell has been thinking outside the box about how people learn. Although he went back to school for a master’s in counseling and, later, a doctorate in education, he germinated his theories outside the academic



FREDERIC CROU/PHOTOLIBRARY



## SIGNS OF A WINNER

The Winning Profile uses 34 themes when interviewing athletes or salespeople to determine their performance potential. Ultimately, the profile identifies five top attributes or talents based on the individual’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. Knowing those, a coach or sales manager can “push those buttons” and elicit maximum results. Below are some key winning attributes in sports and sales:

### SPORTS

#### A winner:

- **is an achiever.** She has to accomplish something every day. “Make 100 foul shots in practice? No problem, coach.”
- **is self-assured.** He has utter confidence in his abilities. Some call it cockiness, but with one second on the clock, the self-assured kicker is absolutely certain he will nail the field goal to win the Super Bowl.
- **is positive.** He firmly believes, “This is going to work. I can make it happen.” Add self-assurance, and a 30-foot putt to win the Masters is a done deal.
- **is driven.** Her internal engine is always on. She shows up for every match as if shot out of a cannon.

### SALES

#### A winner:

- **is a wooer.** She has the innate ability to win people over. She relishes speaking to a group of 50 customers.
- **is a maximizer.** He constantly reviews his performance with the goal of doing better in the future. “Next time, boss, I’ll get him to buy two widgets.”
- **is an individualizer.** She is intrigued by the unique qualities of each person. “I know he likes chocolate, so I won’t try to sell him vanilla.”
- **is an includer.** He is very accepting of others. “In a presentation to eight people, six are nodding their heads, so I’ll zero in on the two who aren’t.”



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realm. Tapping into his athletic prowess, in 1969 he launched what would become a nationwide network of kids’ soccer camps. Instead of just running drills, however, Russell’s coaches also addressed his ideas about child development and learning styles to get the most out of each player and, in turn, boost their confidence. “Little did I realize then that coaching has little to do with sport,” he says. “It has everything to do with maximizing people’s abilities, which is what I’m doing now.”

Today, Russell is CEO and owner of several companies, including North American Soccer Camps and The Focus Group, a consulting firm that works with athletes and organizations. Over the years, he has identified a set of internal behavioral receptors by which people learn and perform. “I made the assumption that we have emotional, cognitive, and physiological receptors,” he explains. “Those receptors are related to how we think, feel, and act. If I can get people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions consistent, then I can get them to perform at a higher level.”

**T**o assess how a person thinks, identify his belief system, and predict how he will act in various situations, whether on the golf course or a sales call, Russell created the Winning Profile. In an interview, a person answers questions that measure internal attributes—such as competitiveness, harmony, strategy, positivity, and independence—that relate to performance and productivity. The results are then analyzed to produce a hierarchical profile of the individual. Using that blueprint to understand an athlete’s thinking process, a coach can push certain buttons to maximize his potential. Likewise, a business recruiter can use a job candidate’s profile, along with her résumé of past accomplishments, to predict how she will perform if hired.

Unwittingly, Woodward had employed similar tactics when coaching championship rugby teams. Combining his “seat of the pants” formula with Russell’s profiling system, he has now created a structured program that allows coaches and specialists to nurture, physically and mentally, individuals’ maximal performance. Before implementing

the program with British Olympians, however, Woodward, along with Russell and Farmer, would first test it on Melissa Reid.

“I wanted to improve, so I was pretty open to anything,” Reid says of undergoing the Winning Profile analysis. “I didn’t completely understand what it was, but once my parents and I saw the results, about how I learn and how best to communicate with me, and my strengths and weaknesses, it blew us all away because it was so accurate to my personality.”

From there, Woodward assembled a dream team of 13 experts to concentrate on areas including fitness, strength, nutrition, kinetics, visualization, performing under pressure and, of course, hitting golf balls.

“Before I went on the program, I was physically fit, but I wasn’t very strong,” Reid says, so her fitness coach designed a strength program. “With my nutrition, what’s the point of doing all this fitness work if you’re going to fuel it with rubbish food? I just started to respect my body as a temple, [that] kind of thing. Golf is an athletic sport, so I started treating myself as an athlete and training like an athlete.”

Farmer tweaked Reid’s practice routines, based on what her profile revealed. For instance, she needed to be more in charge of just how much time she spent driving balls or

working on her putting. “Even though he knew me well,” Reid comments, “the profile helped him understand why certain ways he was coaching didn’t work as well as others.”

The value of the program, naturally, would be measured by Reid’s performance. She easily won the 2007 British Amateur Strokeplay Championship and finished the season ranked Britain’s leading female amateur. That success prompted Reid to turn pro in 2008, and she earned three second-place and seven top-10 finishes that year. In 2009, despite missing the elusive first tournament win, Reid notched eight top-10 finishes. “To get all those top-10s in her first two years is quite exceptional,” Farmer says. “It was like she took a six-year leap in two years.”

Reid says her greatest improvement was her mental approach to the game. “I actually started to believe in myself and in what I was doing,” she says. It’s given her a greater sense of confidence, on and off the golf course: “I always knew where I wanted to go with my life. I just know now how to get there.”

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