



Nottingham Trent
University

Developing Resilience in Youth Athletes: The Role of the Environment

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Session Outline

The session will focus on:

- Clarifying myths and misconceptions of resilience
- Understanding the role of the environment in developing resilience
- Discussing what a facilitative (high challenge-high support) environment might 'look like' in youth sport

Duty of Care in (UK) Sport

“Mental resilience is not something that all participants and coaches automatically have and this should be developed with the same consideration that physical resilience is built” (p.23)

Duty of Care in Sport Report by Baroness Grey-Thompson (2017)

Grey-Thompson, B. (2017). Duty of Care in Sport: Independent report to Government. pp. 1-38.



A screenshot of the GOV.UK website. At the top, there is a black navigation bar with the GOV.UK logo on the left and a search bar. To the right of the search bar are links for 'Departments', 'Worldwide', 'How government works', and 'Get involved'. Below this is a blue banner with the text 'Tell us what you think of GOV.UK' and a 'Close' link. Underneath the banner is a 'Home' link. The main content area features the heading 'Independent report' followed by 'Duty of Care in Sport Review'. Below this is a paragraph: 'An independent report by Baroness Grey-Thompson into the Duty of Care sport has towards its participants.' Further down, it says 'Published 21 April 2017' and 'From: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport'. On the right side, there is a 'Document' section with a thumbnail of the report cover and the title 'Duty of Care in Sport' with a link. Below the title, it says 'PDF, 685KB, 38 pages' and 'This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. Request an'. To the right of the document section is a 'Related content' section with links for 'Policy', 'Elite sports performance', and 'Sports participation'.

Language around Resilience

“...as recently as summer 2020, when British Gymnastics was aware of the crisis engulfing the sport, it was still using curriculum materials circulated to individuals associated with the Performance Pathway referring to resilience as the 'ability to suffer'. This use of language does little to move the culture on” (p. 124).

Whyte, A. (2022). The Whyte Review. Independent investigation commissioned by Sport England and UK Sport. pp. 1-309.



An independent investigation commissioned by Sport England and UK Sport following allegations of mistreatment within the sport of gymnastics

The Whyte Review

June 2022

Anne Whyte QC

Ensure Clarity of What Resilience Is and Is Not

Resilience = ability to maintain functioning when under pressure

1. Resilience is a dynamic process, not a fixed trait
2. Resilience is cultivated by design, not by default
3. Resilience is about how you recharge, not how you endure
4. Resilience is about emotional awareness, not absence/suppression
5. **Resilience is relational and environmental, not solely individual**

Kegelaers, J., & Sarkar, M. (2021). Psychological resilience in high-performance athletes: Elucidating some common myths and misconceptions. In A. E. Whitehead & J. Coady (Eds.), *Myths of Sports Coaching* (pp. 234-246). Sequoia Books.

Sarkar, M., & Page, A. E. (2022). Developing individual and team resilience in elite sport: Research and practice. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 13, 40-53.

Reflection: Ensuring Clarity about Resilience

Questions/Reflection (to be discussed during break-out session)

Has this changed your views and understanding about what resilience is? If so, how?

How would you ensure clarity about what resilience is (and is not) in youth sport?

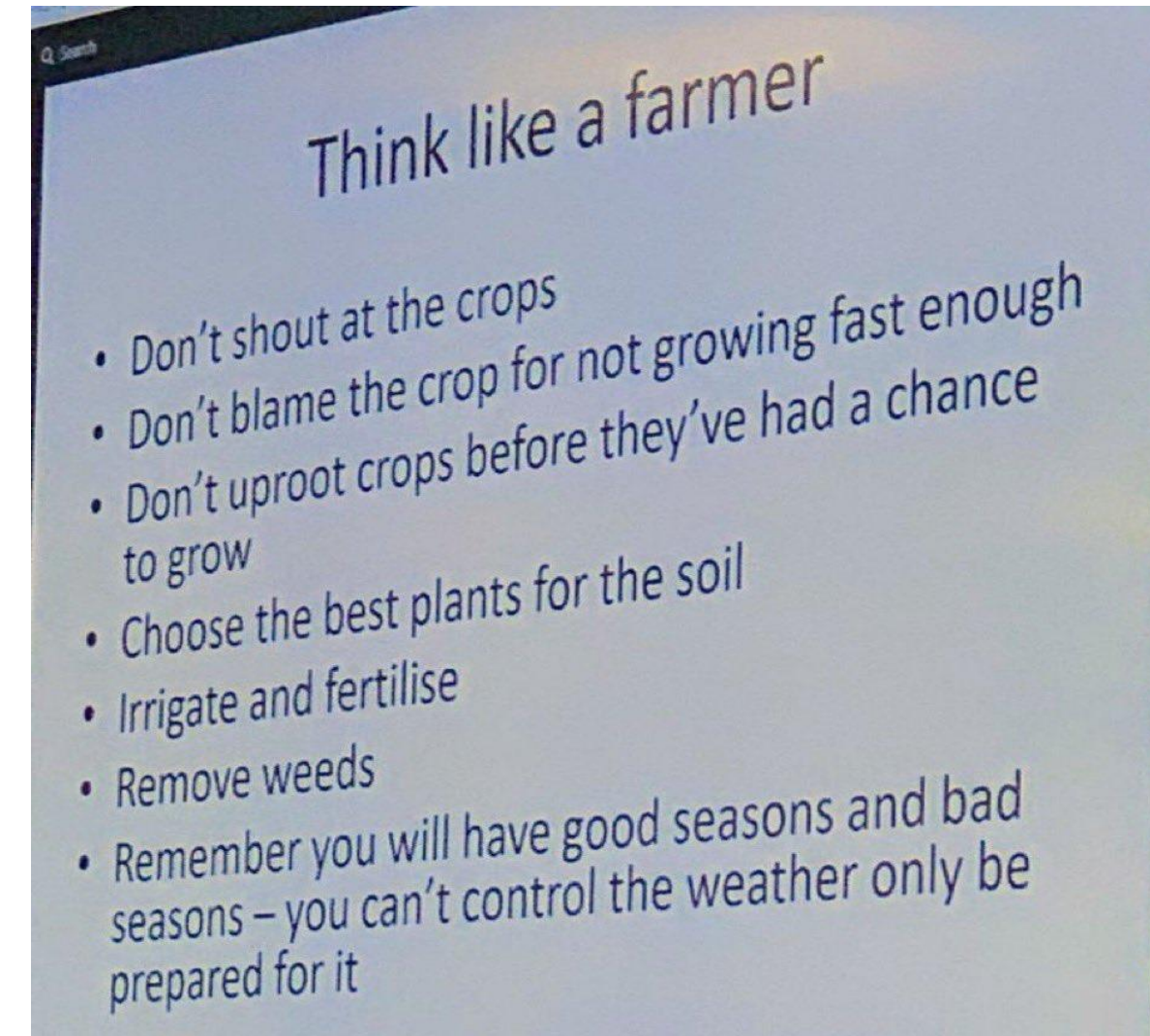
An Evidence-Based Resilience Training Program



Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2016). Mental fortitude training: An evidence-based approach to developing psychological resilience for sustained success. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 7, 135-157.

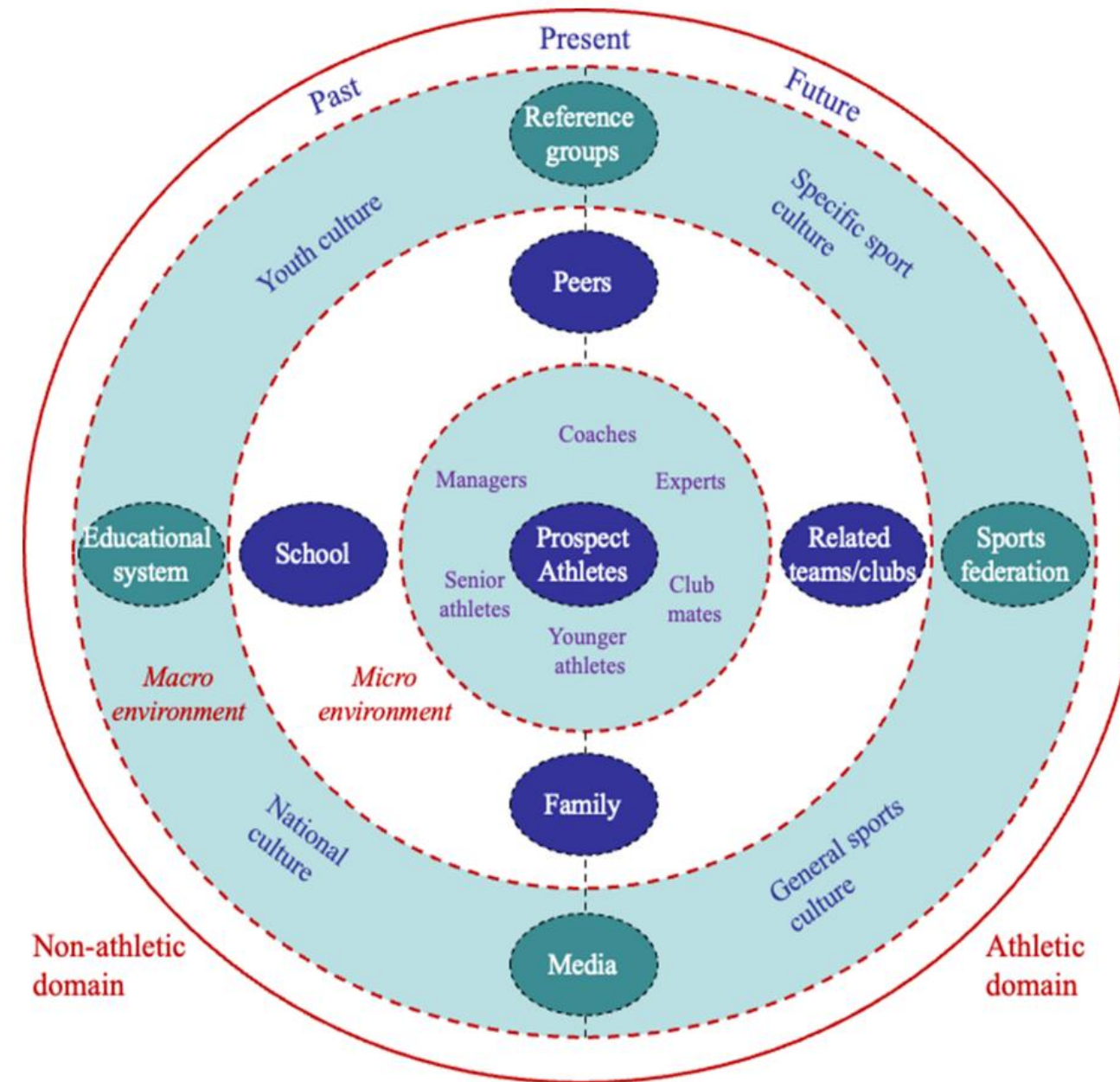


Resilience: The Role of the Environment



Sarkar, M. (2018). Developing resilience in elite sport: The role of the environment. *The Sport and Exercise Scientist*, 20-21.

The Development of Resilience is *Everyone's* Business!



Henriksen, K., & Stambulova, N. (2023). The social environment of talent development in youth sport. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 5, 1127151.

Resilience: The Role of the Environment

“Absorbing negative conditions makes resilience a dirty word. It shifts the blame and responsibility for doctors’ struggles away from what are often over-politicised, understaffed, underfunded, badly organised systems and onto individuals”

(p. 358)

Oliver, D. (2017). David Oliver: When “resilience” becomes a dirty word. *British Medical Journal*, 358.

VIEWS AND REVIEWS



ACUTE PERSPECTIVE

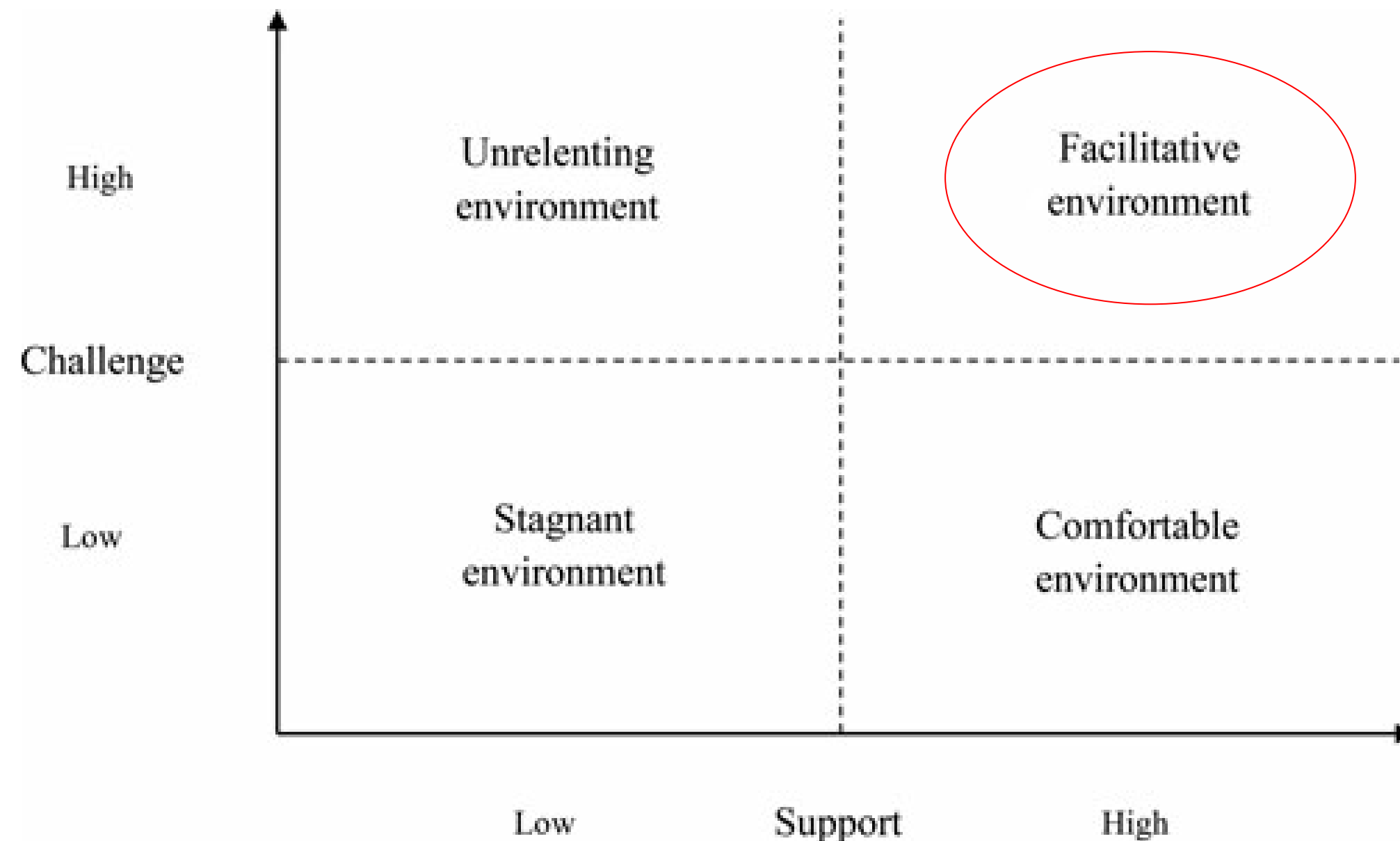
David Oliver: When “resilience” becomes a dirty word

David Oliver *consultant in geriatrics and acute general medicine*

Berkshire

**Resilience and surgeons:
train the individual or
change the system?**

Resilience and the Environment: Challenge and Support



Sarkar, M. (2018). Developing resilience in elite sport: The role of the environment. *The Sport and Exercise Scientist*, 20-21.

Unrelenting Environment Characteristics

- Unhealthy competition
- Leader exposes and ridicules under performers
- Blame culture when high standards are not met
- Avoidance mentality due to consequences of making mistakes
- Little care for well-being
- People feel isolated
- Potential conflict
- Performance unsustainable
- Stress and potential burnout
- “Sink or swim”

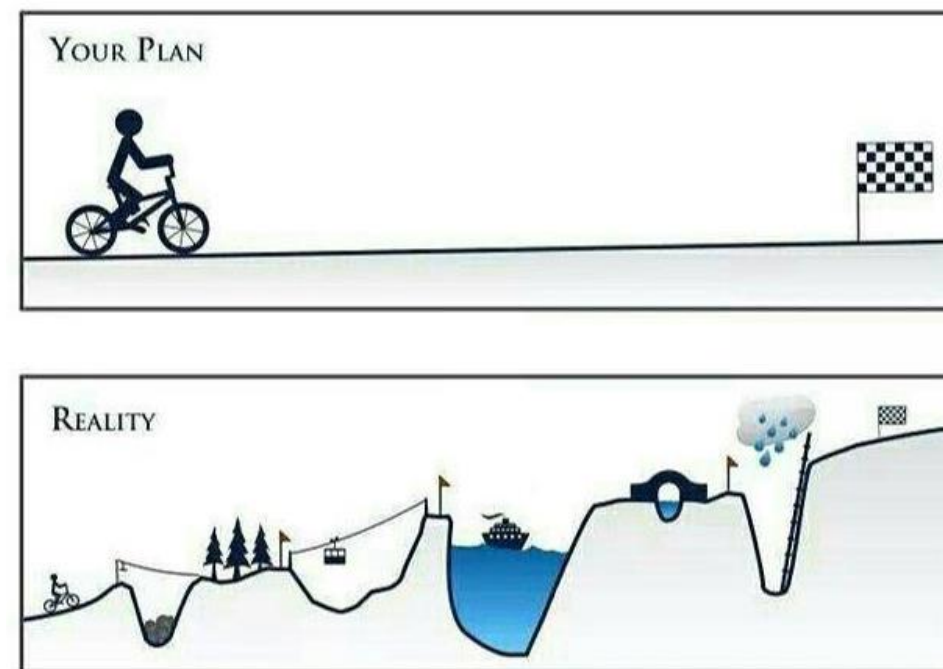
Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2016). Mental fortitude training: An evidence-based approach to developing psychological resilience for sustained success. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 7, 135-157.

Reflection: Creating a Facilitative Environment

Questions/Reflection (to be discussed during break-out session)

What does a facilitative environment 'look like' in youth sport?

How can you periodise challenge and support for athletes and staff?



Facilitative Environment Characteristics

- Supportive challenge towards a goal
- People thrive in a challenging but supportive environment
- Individuals have input into and take ownership of goals
- Individuals seek out challenges to develop
- Individuals crave constructive feedback
- Good relationships between performers and leaders or coaches
- Psychologically safe environment that encourages sensible risk-taking
- Healthy competition
- Everyone supports one another
- Learn from mistakes and failure
- Success is recognized and celebrated
- “We’re in this together”

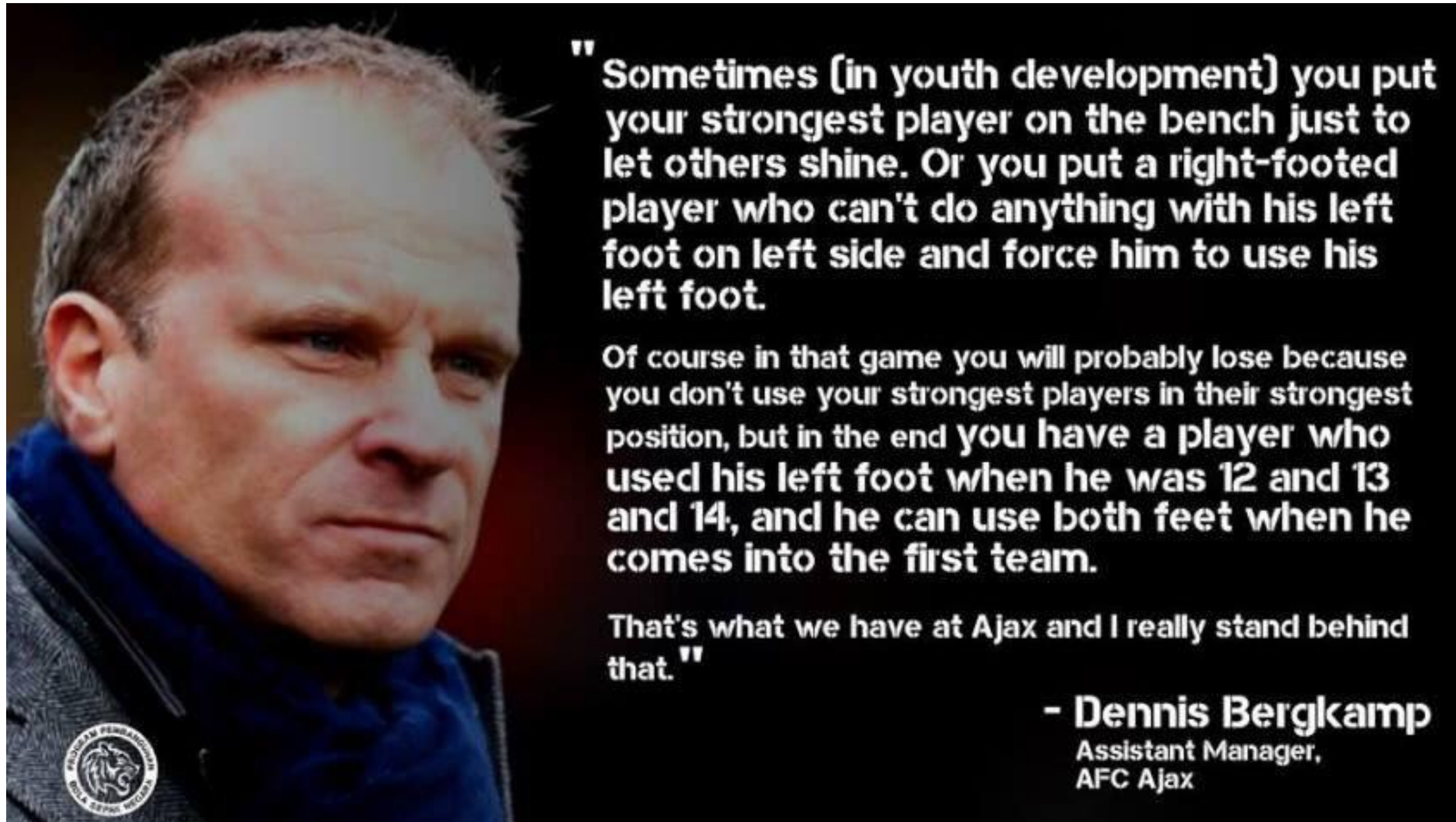
Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2016). Mental fortitude training: An evidence-based approach to developing psychological resilience for sustained success. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 7, 135-157.

Types of Challenge/Planned Disruptions: Sport

- Location (e.g., unpleasant location, long travel, deliberate bad organization)
- Competition simulation (e.g., competition conditions)
- Physical strain (e.g., fatigue)
- Stronger competition (e.g., seek out stronger opponents)
- Distractions (e.g., auditory distractions, physical distractions)
- Unfairness
- Restrictions (e.g., communication distractions, time restrictions)
- Outside the box (e.g., other sports, non-sport related)

Kegelaers, J., Wylleman, P., & Oudejans, R. R. D. (2020). A coach perspective on the use of planned disruptions in high-performance sports. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 9, 29-44.

Practical Example: Youth Football



Practical Example: Challenge Cards



<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2020/british-canoeing-challenge-cards>



Imposing Challenge: Considerations for Practice

- Relevant to the nature of the task
- Progressively adaptable
- Developmentally appropriate
- Athlete/staff buy-in
- Rationale/justification (before) and debrief (after)
- Psychologically safe environment

The Need for Reflection on Culture

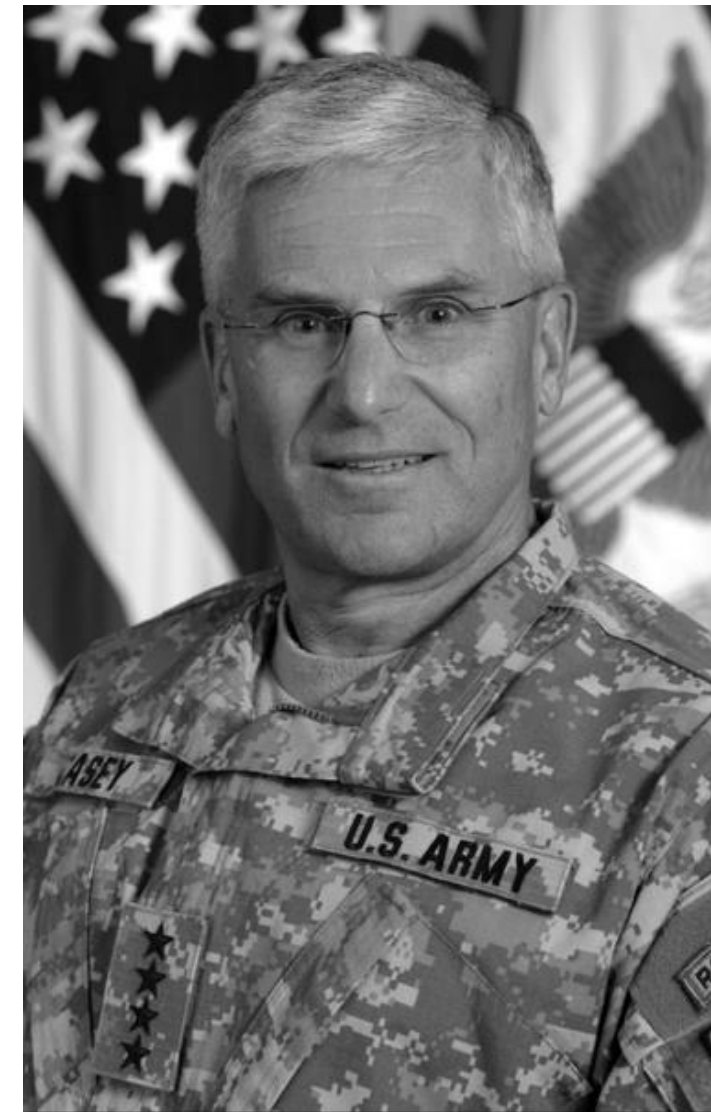
Possible questions to ask and address:

- Can individuals have open and honest discussions about their resilience?
- Is there a challenge culture where individuals view pressure as an opportunity to perform, or a threatening culture where pressure evokes a fear of failure?
- Is developing resilience seen as a bureaucratic “tick-box” exercise or a genuine initiative for sustained positive change?

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Resilience Development and Culture Change

“Like our physical fitness, I believe that psychological resilience development can become not just something we in the Army “do”, but rather a critical component of our culture that will be integrated throughout our community to develop better soldiers”. (p. 2)



Casey, G. W. (2011). Comprehensive soldier fitness: A vision for psychological resilience in the U.S. Army. *American Psychologist*, 66, 1-3.

Practical Resilience References/Reading

Kegelaers, J., & Sarkar, M. (2021). Psychological resilience in high-performance athletes: Elucidating some common myths and misconceptions. In A. E. Whitehead & J. Coady (Eds.), *Myths of Sports Coaching* (pp. 234-246). Sequoia Books.

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(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o08CF5p8ck4&t=1s>)

Thank you

Look forward to connecting and keep in touch



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