

Is wellbeing more important than tactics? Why football coaches need mental health training

Kevin George, author and creator of Soccology, believes football has work to do to understand mental health



"What a footballer can do in and out of possession is easy to establish, but the deeper layers - who they are, what they believe in, how they've reached this point, what drives them, what awaits them when they depart training - are the real details."

In this age of record transfer fees, open chequebooks and infinite statistics, it is easy to forget the real reasons some footballers perform better than others. It's easy to forget where football's unpredictability, that trait we all love, comes from.

The Heads Up campaign, taking place again this weekend (February 15/16) across football, was born to encourage the nation that mental health is just as important as physical health.

In fact, the two work hand-in-hand: good mental health should equal good performance, but is football fully aware yet?

It's something Kevin George, an ex-professional footballer with Charlton and West Ham and now an expert in mental health in football, sees as the pivotal area for growth in the game today.



George with Gus Poyet discussing mental health in football

"Is it man management first and tactics second? 100 per cent," George, author and founder of [Soccology](#), tells *Sky Sports*. "Man management in football is a manager who speaks to you. Sir Alex Ferguson was seen as one of the greatest managers ever, but nobody talks much about his tactics. We enjoyed watching Manchester United, of course, but we talk about how he gave attention to players, and how he invested in the culture of the club.

"Everything was about inter-personal skills. I noticed a difference in Robin van Persie's interviews when he left Arsenal for Manchester United; he spoke as if he was part of something bigger than just football.

"When you go into any line of work, you know your performance depends on how you feel. Yes, technically you need to know things, but if you feel positive, it will open you up to learning more, make you more productive. It's exactly the same in football.