

Champions!

Create a
winning
team
in **three**
easy
steps



Turn losers into winners

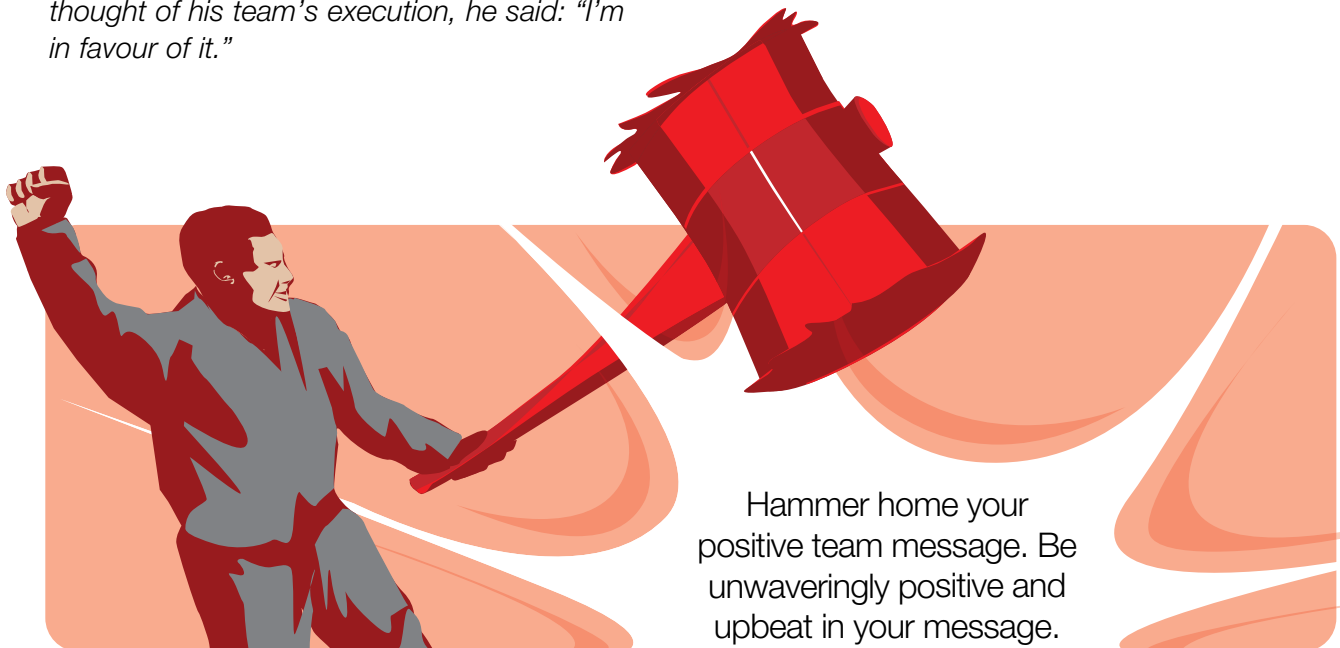
Any competitive coach hates losing – it's not fun for you or your team. So how can you turn a losing side into a winning side? Follow three simple steps and reverse a losing streak and give your team renewed confidence.

1 Keep it upbeat

A 'losing streak' is a negative and destructive term. In professional sport, the media could destroy a team's confidence by reminding managers and players of their poor form. The best managers and coaches will shield their players from such attacks by creating a "bubble" around their team.

At Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson fiercely protects his team by consistently sending out a positive message to them. Your task is to be unwaveringly positive and upbeat in your message, however bad things are.

What not to say! American football team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, suffered one of their worst seasons in 1976 (won 0 lost 14). When reporters asked coach John McKay what he thought of his team's execution, he said: "I'm in favour of it."



2 Shift the focus

Winning does not always equal success. The manner in which you win can sometimes be as frustrating as how you lose. Success breeds success, so change the targets, and set short-term objectives which are achievable. Shift the focus away from losing and concentrate on being positive.

3 Set targets

- Do not concede any goals in the first five minutes (and then the next and so on).
- Count the number of shots attempted by players, not the number missed.
- Focus on winning the first half. If you lose the first half, tell your players to forget the score and that you just want them to win the second half.

Coach Bill Parcells' 3 rules for success

Why not reverse the fortunes of a losing team with these three rules from Bill Parcells, one of American football's most successful coaches? You've got nothing to lose.

Rule 1 – Make it clear from day one that you're in charge

Parcells found that holding frank one-on-one conversations with every member of the team is essential to success. Leaders can do everything right with their teams and still fail if they aren't able to reach each member on an individual basis.

Rule 2 – Prepare yourself to be able to confront your players

Parcells relishes confrontation because it provides an opportunity to clear the air. Confrontation does not mean putting someone down. When criticising members of the team, he puts it in a positive context. Once he sets that context, he's not afraid to be blunt about players' failings.

Rule 3 – Identify small goals and then make sure you hit them

Parcells believes that success breeds success. Once a team gets in the habit of losing, confidence dips and success seems unreachable. To break the habit of losing, Parcells focuses on achieving goals within immediate reach.

He is convinced that if your players share the same goals and the same passion, and if you push them to achieve at the highest level, they are going to hit the winning trail.

Playing to win?

Most coaches think players turn up simply because they want to win. In reality, players want to play more often regardless of the result. For less able players, if this means playing in a losing side, then many would rather do that than not play at all.

Research shows the focus should not be on whether you lose, but on positives. In a study of Dutch male rugby players, a range of pleasant emotional outcomes and reductions in stress were evident when they won matches, while losing produced strong unpleasant emotional changes and no reduction in stress.

Introducing a coping procedure that reduces the emphasis on losing and focuses on activities to create more wins is essential.

Team strategy

Digging a team out of a losing streak is not just your responsibility as coach, but of all involved. Involvement is key. Everyone must play a part in formulating the way out.

Split players up into small groups and ask them what they think the problems are. Ask them to come up with ideas on how to solve those problems. You might be surprised at how much thought they've given this and at the solutions they come up with.

Your job is to then shape the answers into sessions and therefore improve your team. Even if you do not win the next game, the improvements can be fantastic.

By securing buy-in from players and requesting their input you have a bigger chance of creating a team of champions who believe they can win.