

MIND GAMES

With the help of a team of top sports psychologists, *Sport* investigates the murky, mysterious minds of the world's best athletes and coaches to discover their hidden secrets

HEAD COACH

Inter Milan's putting prince Jose Mourinho is the master of mind games. *Sport* asked sports psychologist Andy Barton and Mourinho's biographer and *Times*' chief football commentator Patrick Barclay to shine a light into the mind of 'The Special One'

CONTROL SYSTEM

Mourinho's mother Maria Julia revealed her son always trotted off to school with his crayons in neat order in his satchel. At FC Porto, he uploaded detailed training plans on to the club's website to impress his new fans, and he often bullishly names his team early. In 2005, he even named Barcelona's team for them. "Managers are control freaks," says Barclay. "They often say: 'They came at us in the first 20 minutes. We were expecting that.' They love to feel in control."

IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

Mourinho can pally with his players without losing their respect, unlike Steve McClaren. "He is the first and maybe the last of the '12th man' managers," notes Barclay. "He doesn't look different to the players and most of their wives would sleep with him. What impresses men? Bird-pulling, cars, money and style – not that he is a bird-puller, but he could be! His look gives him real credibility. When he jumps on a player's back, he doesn't look daft. If Ron Atkinson had done that he'd have broken the poor lad's back."

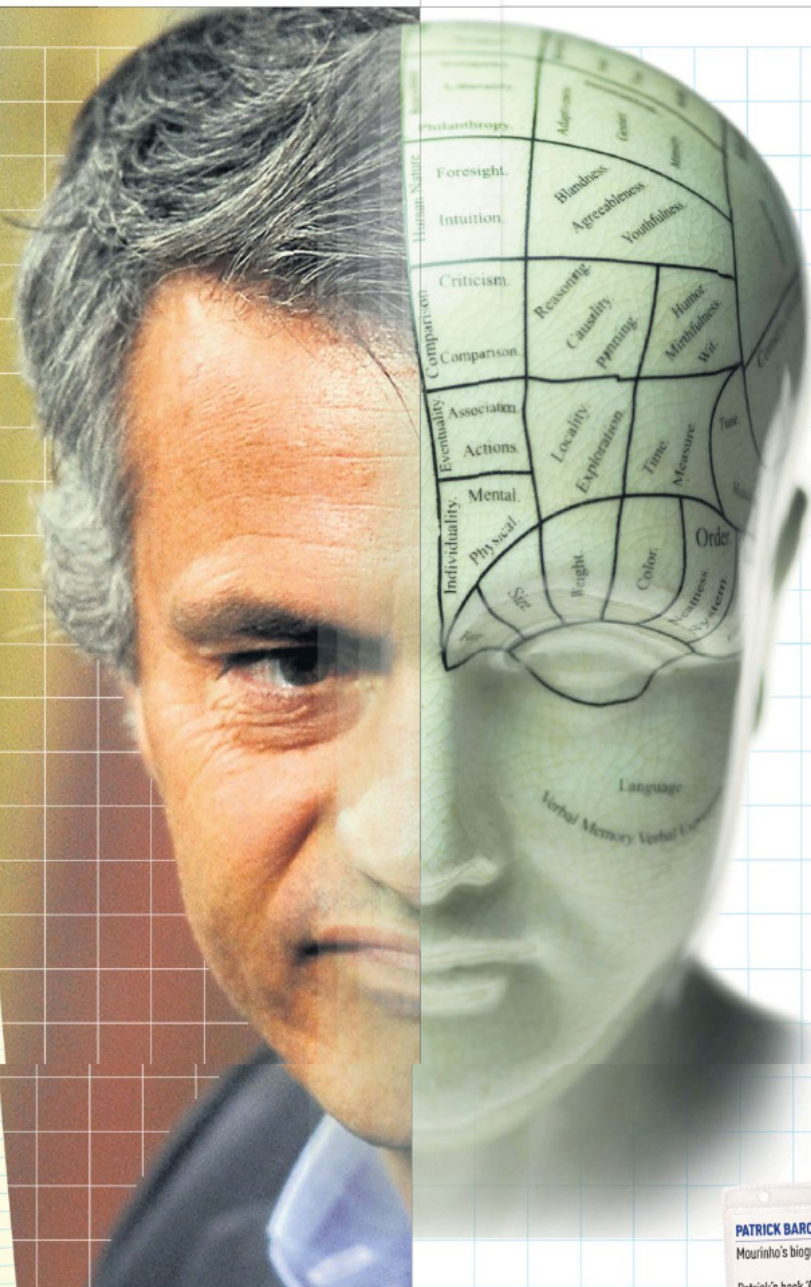


TARGET KEY PLAYERS

Mourinho regularly attacks key players from rival teams, once lampooning Cristiano Ronaldo for his lack of 'education' and Barcelona's Lionel Messi for cheating. "He tries to get them flustered and raise their arousal levels because arousal levels can affect performance," explains Barton. "It will make you more motivated, but sometimes in an ineffective way." Mourinho admits: "When I face the media before or after the game, I feel it as part of the game."

US AGAINST THEM

From conjuring up conspiracy theories to stewing in rage (notably after Liverpool's 'ghost goal' against Chelsea in 2005), Mourinho likes to create phantom enemies. In January 2010, he accused Italian officials of doing "everything to stop us winning" the Milan derby. "It fosters this 'us against the world' mentality," says Barclay. "He creates a purpose," adds Barton. "For example, when Scotland play against England they're always up for it. Mourinho can create that sense of purpose for any game." When Mourinho arrived at Chelsea he wrote to each player: "I need all of you. You need each other. We are a team. Motivation + Ambition + Team + Spirit = Success." Unlike David Brent's aphorisms, this one worked.



ATTACK THE MEN IN BLACK

When Mourinho was coach of FC Porto, he was known to order his players to harass mentally fragile officials to ensure they got the 50/50 decisions – and he is continually questioning the neutrality of officials. "Mourinho plays the next game before it starts," says Barclay. "He puts doubts in the minds of the refereeing body that his team have been dealt a bad hand in the hope that they will get favours next time."

BODY LANGUAGE

Whether he's pouting grumpily in the dugout or strutting peacock-like on the sidelines, Mourinho's body language has a purpose. "Mourinho is always communicating his confidence or sense of injustice," says Barton. "His players are constantly reading all the unconscious stuff, like his body



language and his expressions. If there is any think, the players will pick up on it. So he will strut on the sidelines to indicate his confidence, or wrap his arms around the back of a chair to show he's not flustered."

FATHER FIGURE

As coach of FC Porto, Mourinho used to march out into away stadiums first, to soak up the abuse before his players. "Mourinho and Alex Ferguson are very paternalistic," notes Barton. "They protect their children. Fergie had his spat with David Beckham, but have you heard Beckham say a bad word about him?" Mourinho's 'egotistical' pursuit of headlines is also a way of deflecting attention away from his players and on to him. "Mourinho is quotable and the press swallow it," explains Barclay. "Desmond Morris drew the comparison with Brian Clough – he doesn't talk in clichés and that's why he has us all on the edge of our seats."

REPORT BY

PATRICK BARCLAY
Mourinho's biographer

Patrick's book *'Football – Bloody Hell!': The Story of Alex Ferguson*, is out this autumn



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THE BIZARRE WORLD OF SPORTING RITUALS

"Rituals aren't critical to success," says sports psychologist Martin Perry. "But they can be effective as concentration aids to help an athlete focus. Athletes are finely tuned machines and don't like to disrupt their sense of security." Here are six of the oddest:

1 Ex-England captain **John Terry** always pees in the same urinal at Stamford Bridge before a Chelsea game. If only he was as faithful to his wife as he is to that stinking lump of porcelain...



2 Former New York Yankees slugger **Jason Giambi** slips into a golden tiger-stripe thong to help him out of a bad run in form. He even, unhygienically, lends it to teammates. "All of them wore it and got hits," says Giambi.

3 Nutty South Africa cricketer **Neil McKenzie** used to sellotape his bat to the changing room ceiling before each innings and wouldn't let his wife leave her seat while he was batting.



4 After every game, Spanish tennis ace **Rafael Nadal** lines up his water bottles with their labels facing the baseline he is playing from. "I'm not superstitious," he says.

5 Former Huddersfield footballer **Malvin Kamara** used to watch *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* before each match. He's seen it 150 times – the original, that is. "The Depp one just offends me," he tuts.



6 Orlando Magic center **Dwight Howard** sits on, ahem, 'the throne of grace' and 'releases all of the bad stuff' from his body so only 'the good stuff' can come out on court. You can't argue with the theory...



TOP: ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN WILSON; MOURINHO: ANDY BARTON; TERRY: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES; GIAMBI: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES; MCKENZIE: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES; WONKA: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES; HOWARD: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES