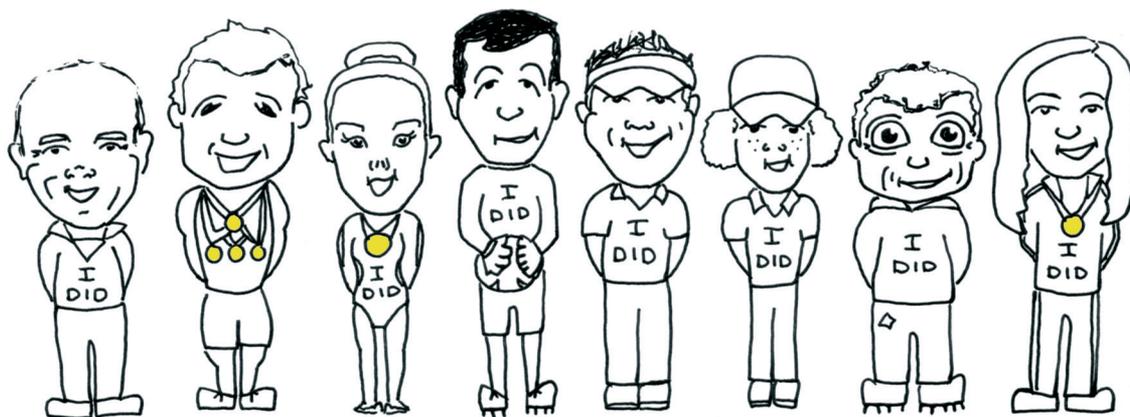


With Mike's help, in 2011 I proved all my critics wrong and, in this book,  
you will find out exactly how we did it, so then you can too!

**Darren Clarke — 2011 Open Champion**

# THEY DID YOU CAN



**How to achieve whatever you want in life  
with the help of your sporting heroes**

**Michael Finnigan**

**Foreword by Ian Gilbert**

# Praise for *They Did You Can*

In my work with UK Sport and the Youth Sport Trust I know the vital importance for everyone, whether elite performer or young person at school, is to have self-belief in order to achieve their goals. Sport has the power to change lives and can be a great motivator. Using these strategies from leading sports stars can really make a difference – whoever we are!

**Baroness Sue Campbell CBE** — Chief Executive, Youth Sport Trust

A positive and engaging book which enables the reader to be interactive and involved with the ideas and activities presented.

It is fantastic to get the views of the sports men and women, and the coaches that they have worked with, to get a clear view of what can (and usually does) lead to success.

These exercises and ideas draw from ancient and current thinking, and include effective coaching strategies from NLP and a number of other areas.

Most of all they help the reader to raise their awareness of their current strengths, recognise areas for development and give clear and simple tasks to do, which if followed will support the development of the focus required to achieve your goals.

Attitude comes up time and again with the professionals points of view and supports the research that it is not the talented that necessarily succeed, but those with the drive, attitude and confidence to pursue the dreams and goals, “you don’t have to be the best to get where you want to go but you do have to be mentally strong and remind yourself why you have committed yourself to great goals and dreams” p 91.

Attitude is everything – and My Reminder questions will help students and adults alike to gain clarity and focus on what they want and most importantly *why* they want it.

Emotional intelligence is key – whatever field you choose to go into – this book will enable those who read it and apply it to achieve in every area of their life – not just sport.

I really enjoyed this text.

**Jenny Palmer** — Deputy Head, Mark Rutherford School

Being a young sport loving person I enjoyed this book a lot and would recommend it to anyone who like me lives a life of sport and dreams of getting to the top one day. It gives an insight into what the pro's and the legends did to get where they are and what hurdles you will come up against in the journey to the top.

*They Did You Can*, is an inspiration for young people who dream about being like their heroes. Anyone who wants to be world champion or to stand alongside their heroes should really read this book to find out what it takes to get there. It's a brilliant way to find out how the stars got to where they are and what attitude you need to be the best. For young people who love their sport whether it be Football, Rugby, Athletics or anything else this book is the perfect word in the ear you need to succeed! If you want to stand on the podium at the Olympics one day or run out in the world cup final for your country then *They Did You Can* is the perfect read for you and may even help you get there and lift that trophy or wear that winner's medal!

**Alex Lambert** — age 16

What a good idea! This is an inspiring resource for young people – and a few oldies too! The real life quotations make it realistic and the exercises are proven cognitive behaviour changers. A must read!

**Susan Moss** — Teenage Coach

I am a teacher at comprehensive school in Staffordshire. I am in the process of setting up a coaching scheme for year 10 students to raise their self-esteem, aspirations and hopefully improve behaviour and ultimately their results! This book is superb! I have already put into practice some of the strategies even on myself! A wonderful book.

**Mark Goodwin**

— John Taylor High School, Barton-under-Needwood, Staffs

The current buzz target in education and business is raising aspirations of pupils and students at all levels. Professionals in their areas are aware of the positive impact that realistic and relevant role models can have on individuals and groups. I will certainly use this book with students to enable them to gain the intrinsic motivation and desire to say, “I Can” and as Jonathan Davies underlines, “I Can Do It”. This book has essential ideas for developing individual inspiration to improve motivation and attitude. A key book for use in schools, colleges, sport and business.

**John T Morris** — Director, JTM Educational Consultants

Full of stories, quotes, worksheets and tips this book is intended to appeal to – and thus to motivate – teenagers, but also includes material directed at their coaches, mentors, teachers or parents. This book deserves a place in every football academy and every football club where there are talented young players, needing the right kind of advice, support and inspiration to realise their potential.

**Welsh Football Magazine**

It doesn't matter where you live, what your family background is or how talented you are academically – never say 'IF only'. IF is a BIG word, but IF you believe in your ability, like all of the sporting heroes in this book, take up the challenge. YOU can make a difference!

**Jonathan Davies MBE**

Mike has been an inspiration for me since we first met on that incredible tour of England in 2003. I love the book and am proud to be in it.

**Eric Simons** — Bowling Coach to the Indian Cricket Team, 2011 World Champions, former Coach of the South African Cricket Team

Mike and his team have helped me so much since we first met in 1999. He's always brilliant, like this book!

**Andrew Flintoff**

Success for me at the highest level in sport is about having the mental strength to make sure you play to one hundred percent of your potential, and *They Did You Can* will help you to do that.

**David Moyes** — Manager, Everton Football Club

The great thing about this book is that it will help you whatever your level of interest. If you put into action the ideas in this book, you will find that ‘winning’ is well within your reach.

**Sir Clive Woodward** — England Rugby Union World Cup winning coach,  
Director of Elite Performance British Olympic Association

Mike Finnigan is to be congratulated for what he has achieved with this book. Through some of the great sportsmen and women of our lifetime, he introduces us to ordinary people who, through dedication and hard work, have lived extraordinary lives. This book is about encouragement.

**Don Mullan** — author of *Gordon Banks: A Hero Who Could Fly*

Michael and the team are simply inspirational. If you want to be a champion in any walk of life, read the book and apply its teachings.

**Ed Smethurst** — Prosperity Sports Management,  
represent professional footballers and world champion  
Olympians Danielle Brown and Sarah Stevenson

## **Praise for Michael Finnigan**

Finn, as I call him, is just such tremendous value and brilliant in front of your people. We go back to 1999 and had fun ‘creating history together’ for Bolton Wanderers with a period of success the fans who witnessed it will remember forever.

**Sam Allardyce**

We have been so impressed with Mike's work that in 2011 we asked him to join the International Sports Management team as our Performance Director.

**Chubby Chandler** — Managing Director of ISM, the management team behind so many talented sports people, including Andrew Flintoff, Lee Westwood, Rory McIlroy and Darren Clarke

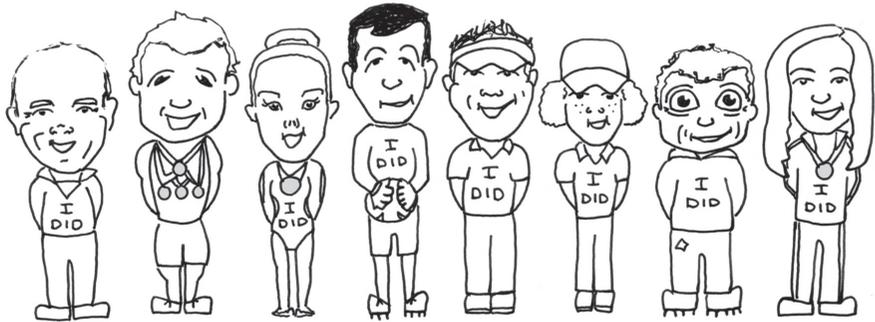
Michael and his 'impossible to inevitable' team have been working wonders with Premier League footballers and stars of the future on the Players Programme since 2009.

**Simon Andrews** — CEO, English Premier League's Players Programme

Being at the head of professional sporting organisations can be a lonely and stressful experience. Building teams to perform both on and off the field, generating a collective and positive mentality requires expert assistance. Once I'd introduced Mike and his team to Lancashire CCC, there was an immediate shift in attitude. Everyone understood their role in the organisation, we all became players and a winning ethos emerged. This approach works, and even when administrators were hovering at the doors of Turf Moor, imparting the belief that we would survive became a reality and Burnley did become a premier club and did play Premiership football. That mantra united the Club from 2003 and it all started for me with Mike Finnigan in 1998 at Old Trafford.

**Dave Edmundson OBE**

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# Contents

Foreword by Ian Gilbert .....	3
Introduction .....	5
Wise Words: Sir Tom Finney .....	9
Wise Words: Sir Clive Woodward .....	11
Wise Words: David Moyes .....	13
Wise Words: Martin Johnson .....	17
Chapter 1 The Powerful Three .....	19
Chapter 2 The Best Friend .....	39
Chapter 3 The Snap Out .....	55
Chapter 4 The Why Words .....	69
Chapter 5 The Reminder .....	81
Chapter 6 Part 1: The Moments of Magic .....	93
Part 2: The Power of GDB .....	96
Chapter 7 The Right Track .....	111
Chapter 8 The Dreamer .....	123
Chapter 9 Go Get It .....	135
Chapter 10 Secrets of Great Teams and Individuals .....	141
Chapter 11 What it Takes to Succeed at Anything .....	149
Chapter 12 A Message for the Coach, Teacher, Mentor or Parent ...	155
And Finally ... ..	165
Bibliography .....	167
Index .....	175

# Foreword

Despite being full of interviews and anecdotes from some of the world's leading sports men and women, this book is as much about sport as *Baywatch* was about lifeguard techniques and *Britain's Got Talent* is about British people having talent.

It is, first and foremost, a book about what human beings can do if they put their mind to it. And when I say human beings, I mean you.

This is a book about what it takes to achieve something, anything, in any walk of life and how, when you scratch the surface of any high achiever you find the same rag tail collection of anxieties, fears, insecurities and self-doubt that the rest of us experience too on a daily basis.

The difference is that high achievers don't let the negative thoughts win.

It didn't have to about sport, this book. It could have been about film directors and shown you how George Lucas hand-wrote the original *Star Wars* scripts despite struggling with his spelling and was also turned down by nearly every Hollywood movie company. Or it could have been about engineers and James Dyson failing 5,127 times to invent a better vacuum cleaner. It could have been about clothes designers and Sir Paul Smith who left school with no qualifications and still is haunted by not being clever enough. It could even have been about insurance salesmen and one I used to know who fared badly at school, ended up as a bricklayer but then set out not to be any old insurance salesman but to be the best insurance salesman. In the world. Last time I saw him he had just won a place at the Million Dollar Round Table, 'an exclusive forum for the world's most successful life insurance and financial services professionals' according to their website. Not bad for an under-qualified bricklayer who went to the same school as Martin Johnson (as did I, but that's another story).

The book could also be about a film cameramen called Mike. Mike is a friend and colleague whose life has included highlights such as being in a rock band, flying light airplanes, crashing racing cars at high speed and almost swimming in the Olympics. Whenever I go out long-distance

## **They Did You Can**

running, something I have taken up in my forties, and it starts to hurt, I think of Mike. Mike has MS. Mike is in pain a great deal of the time and his brain gets fuddled quite easily. Mike doesn't give up. 'The pain's in the brain', he says with the slightest of grimaces that he thinks he has concealed. If Mike can get up and look into the eyes of his family on a daily basis and go out the door to make a difference despite everything, then I can run up a hill in the rain. In fact, it's the least I can do.

So this book isn't about sport even though it is very much about sport. It's about the very least you can do. If a tiny boy with a severe glandular problem that has him going to hospital twice a week can go on to score thirty goals for England then what's the least you can do? If a boy who never really wanted to be a goalkeeper and let in fifteen goals on his first trial can go on to make the greatest save in the history of football, and from Pelé to boot, if you'll pardon the pun, then what's the least you can do?

This is a book about ordinary people like me and you who contemplated what the least they could do was and then went and did the opposite.

And if they did, you can.

Ian Gilbert  
Santiago  
November 2011

# Introduction

Let me tell you why I have written this book. Let me tell you about a time when I was a lot younger and in my final year at school and on track to get what I had always dreamed of, a contract to become an Apprentice Professional Footballer with Blackburn Rovers.

I had been ‘spotted’ when I was fourteen, and invited for a trial. I felt it was long overdue. I was an outstanding natural talent. A centre forward in the mould of Teddy Sheringham, Kenny Dalglish or Eric Cantona, not quick, but a great finisher and player of the killer two yard pass that splits defences. I averaged one goal and one assist per game and everyone knew I was going to make it. Everyone that is, except me.

The confidence I had when I was fourteen was fading fast. At Rovers, they picked you up on your faults and nobody reminded you how good you were, they just killed you when you made an error. I stopped enjoying it.

At school, John Allsopp and I (John was in my year and a terrific midfield player; just like Xabi Alonso or the great David Beckham, he scored regularly with shots from our half!), left early every Tuesday and Thursday to train and even that became a chore. I would rather have stayed in Henshaw’s History class than gone to play football. How bad is that?

A fear of failure slowly took hold of me. Instead of thinking ‘won’t it be great when ...’ I was thinking ‘what if I don’t make it?’ or ‘what if I’m not good enough?’ I used to imagine the feelings of rejection and embarrassment so much that eventually they totally replaced the feelings of pride and excitement that I once had.

At the end of the season, I quit. I never told them. I just didn’t go back and I never played football properly again, ever. I became a hero, in fact an antihero. “That’s Finni; he could have been a footballer but he didn’t want to,” people would say. Wrong. “That’s Finni; he could have been a footballer but he didn’t have the bottle.” That is what they should have been saying. That was the truth.

## **They Did You Can**

So what did I need? I needed inspiration. I needed to know that what I was feeling, everyone feels. I needed to be reminded that I was a fantastically gifted young man who took apart every defence he ever played against. I needed help with my focus and with my goals. It wasn't there, or if it was, I couldn't own up to anyone about how I was feeling anyway. Not even John Allsopp, who just went from strength to strength. Only a terrible knee injury stopped him; no human being ever could, certainly not himself! I needed my heroes to tell me that they felt just like I did. I know now that George Best did. He ran away from Manchester United the first time, all the way home to Belfast, but they brought him back. I know now, but I needed to know then.

This book was what I needed then; words of inspiration and advice from people who had been there and done it. I have written it so that you don't have to go through what I went through. I have written it so that you can reach your goal. I've written it so that you don't have to wait to discover the secrets of mental strength until you are thirty-two, like I did.

Let me tell you right now that you have enough talent to succeed in whatever you have set your heart on. Talent is never the real reason why people succeed. Too much talent is usually a curse. So don't go thinking you're not good enough. You are.

What will stop you is a loss of focus or self-belief and this book will make sure that it cannot and does not happen.

Look, I can't do it all for you. You have to take these lessons from these great people and put them to use in your own life but *They Did You Can* will be there for you and so will the people who believe in you, to help you along the way.

Nothing great is achieved easily, nothing. Everyone struggles. Each one of us is fighting demons. We just have to beat them and our talent will then take care of the rest.

Share this book with your teachers, coaches, friends and your parents or guardians. Make sure that they know how to help you on your magnificent journey, whatever your dreams are.

You can make it. You will make it. Then you can appear in one of our future editions and inspire the next generation with a story or two of your own.

Come on!



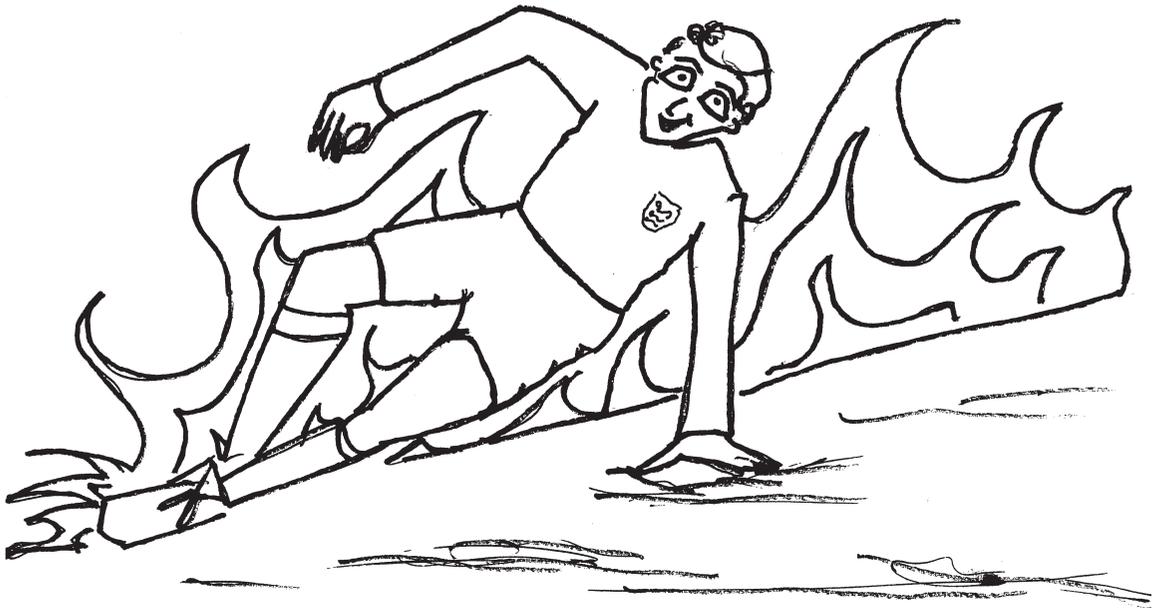
Michael Finnigan

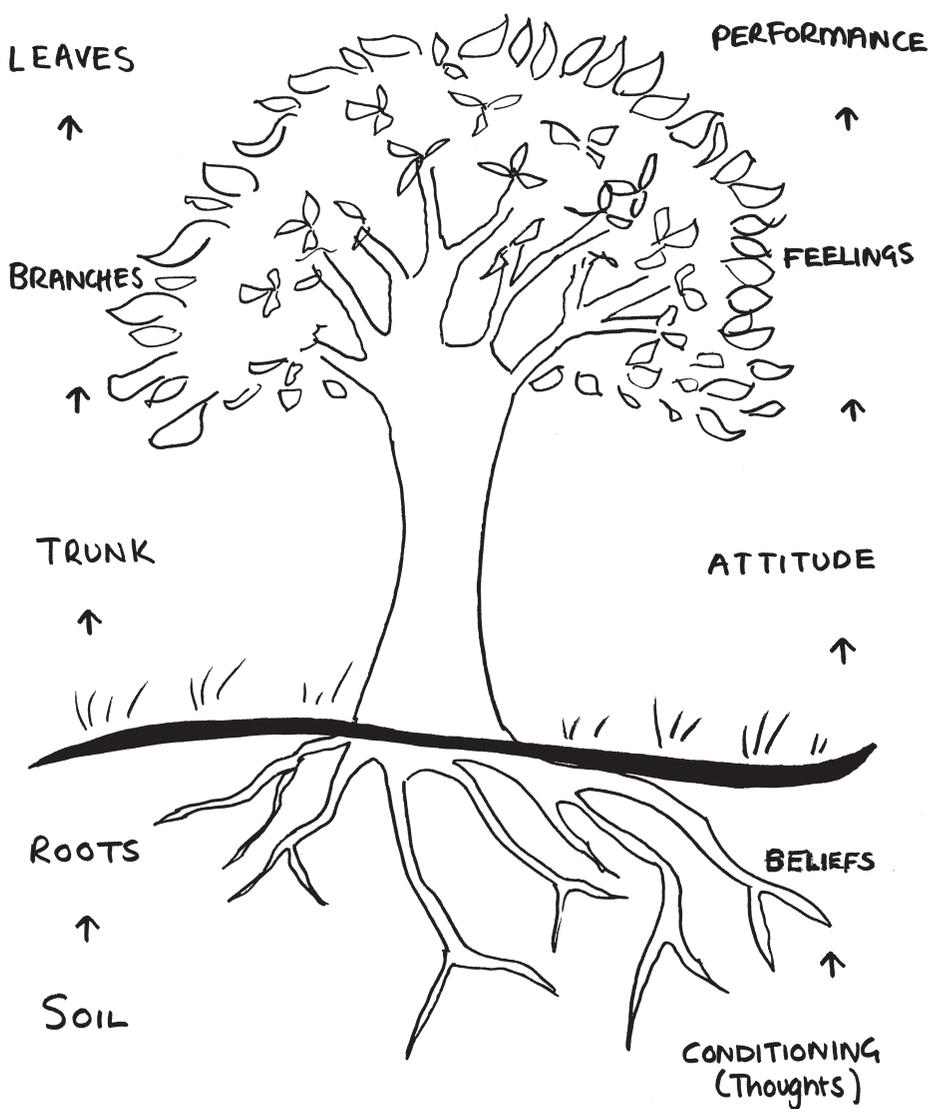
Sir Tom Finney. Made 433 league appearances.  
Scored a club record of 187 goals.

Nicknamed 'The Preston Plumber' after his  
part time job.

He has 76 caps and scored 30 goals for  
England.

Not bad for a plumber eh?

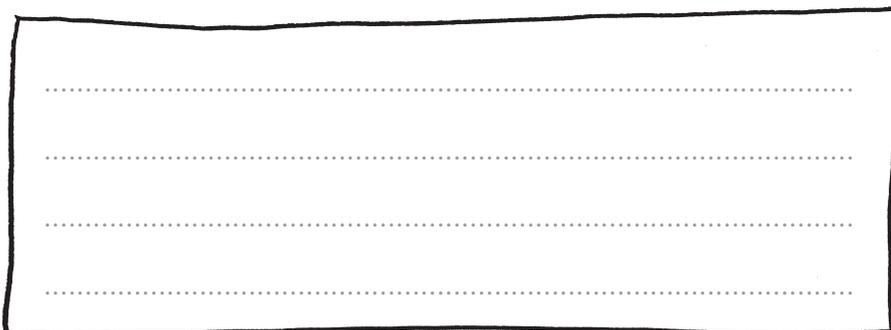




The Tree of Greatness

## They Did You Can

Now, let's go to the second level, the **Branches**. These are your **Feelings**. Write down how you feel when you are performing really well.



Now you can start to connect good feelings to good performance. Feeling awful and performing well do not go together at all. Again, let's be more aware of this so we can change it.

**Recognising that you are not in The Zone is the biggest step you have to take to get back in there!**

**Equally, let's recognise when we are in The Zone, so that we get used to what it's like, then we can more easily re-create it.**

The third level of a tree is the **Trunk** which, in human terms, is our **Attitude**.

This means our Attitude to everything. It is our Attitude towards things that makes us feel a certain way and those Feelings will dictate our Performance.

That is why our Attitude is so important. Look at what South African cricketer Eric Simons has to say about attitude in Chapter 3. This means not letting things get us down or put us off. It means not making excuses but instead, accepting responsibility for where we are or what we have done when things don't go our way; not putting our heads in the sand, pretending things are fine when they are not.

Losers think that when something goes wrong, it is ninety percent related to a thing that has happened which is beyond their control, and only ten

percent down to their Attitude. The Losers will blame anything and anyone before looking at themselves. They spend all their time and energy looking for excuses and scapegoats. You will hear them saying things like:

**'It wasn't my fault'**  
**'It was my shoes'**      **'It was the referee'**  
**'It was the bad weather'**  
**'It's my hopeless teacher'**      **'We hit the post'**  
**'We didn't have enough money'**      **'I didn't get a chance to show what I can do'**  
**'We live in a rough area'**

Any old excuse will do! If you find yourself competing against people who say things like that, you are going to beat them! They have lost already.

However, Winners think that, when something goes wrong, it is only ten percent related to something which has happened, and ninety percent down to their Attitude. Winners accept responsibility and believe that they have the power to sort it out. Winners spend their time thinking how to get things right, whilst the Losers are still busy looking for their alibis!

**Let's commit now to NEVER letting anyone or anything get us down!**

Your Attitude will determine the way you feel and that, in turn, will deliver the Performance – good or bad. YOU decide!

Now, the **Roots** of the tree are equivalent to our **Beliefs**. So, what do you truly believe about the future and what it has in store for you? Do you really believe you are good enough to have what it is that you want? Do you really, deep down inside, believe that you deserve success and happiness? Or do you believe that your goals are only wishes and hopes, destined never to be realised?

Google Cliff Young for me, right now.

You will find that this guy ran 875 kilometres in less than seven and a half days. Everyone thought you ran this long-distance race by averaging 125

## **They Did You Can**

kilometres each day, sleeping in a van driven by your team mates, then running the same distance the next day. Running 125 kilometres a day is roughly like running three marathons. However, Cliff was a farmer and he was entering this type of race for the first time. Nobody told him you needed a van and nobody told him you were supposed to sleep! He just didn't know. So guess what he did? Well, just like good old Forrest Gump in the movie – he ran! He ran all day, every day, stopping every so often for cat naps. He ran the whole way, not in seven and a half days but in FIVE days, fifteen hours and four minutes – TWO days faster than anyone else!

Now, what did Cliff's PERFORMANCE do to the BELIEFS of the other runners, not for the same race but the year after? Do you think they all brought vans? Of course not. Remember, they had never run the distance without sleeping. They had only seen someone else do it and so changed what they believed was possible. Of course, the next year hardly anyone slept and running the race in five days became the norm.

**When you change what you BELIEVE, you can change the way you PERFORM.**

By the way, when Cliff Young ran that race, he was sixty-one years old! What about that!

Finally, we come to the **Soil** or, in human terms, our **Conditioning**. Who conditions us as we grow?

Parents? yes

Brothers and sisters? yes

Teachers? yes

People on television? yes

And many others besides.

**One guy in America, a Dr Helmsetter, reckons that in the first sixteen years of our lives, people say 'No' to us 148,000 times. Get out a calculator and divide 148,000 by 16 and then by 365; it comes to 25.**

Despite being full of interviews and anecdotes from some of the world's leading sports men and women, this book is as much about sport as *Baywatch* was about lifeguard techniques and *Britain's Got Talent* is about British people having talent.

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The difference is that high achievers don't let the negative thoughts win.

And don't kid yourself that the people in this book just 'got lucky'!

Being lucky isn't a question of luck at all. If you want to rely on luck to succeed then try bullfighting with your eyes closed. Or do the Lottery. There are amazing sporting stories in this life-changing book about people who got to raise a World Cup or represent their country or break a record (and some did all three). But they didn't get there through luck. They achieved all they achieved by using two things – a raw gift and a great attitude. The same two things that you have. So that's lucky.

**Contributions by Sir Clive Woodward, David Moyes,  
Sir Tom Finney, Martin Johnson CBE**

**Philip Neville, Gordon Banks OBE, Jonathan Davies MBE, Gary Kirsten, Karen Barber,  
Dame Mary Peters, Eric Simons, Beth Tweddle and Darren Clarke**

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Mike and his team have helped me so much since we first met in 1999.  
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**David Moyes — Manager, Everton Football Club**



**Mike Finnigan** has been working in performance psychology since 1991 and he has also worked in the elite sports arena in golf, cricket, rugby and football. His latest success is with Darren Clarke, who recently won golf's Open Championship.

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