



Coach Learning

Empowering Minds, Shaping Futures!

Coaching Culture Reflection

The Way We Lead, Learn, and Grow

Sustaining Team Culture

From values to daily behaviours

Core idea

A sustainable football culture is not built by slogans alone. It is built when identity, coach behaviour, player routines and accountability systems all point in the same direction.

Framework preview: vision → pillars → behaviours → rituals → leadership → measures

Psychological Shift

Old Spot	Opening the "Hidden Area" (Vulnerability)	Expanding (System)
Intensity was impacting back process. I realized it was "unreasonable" or "unreasonable" but I was blind to it.	The Issue: Previously, I felt the Head Coach had to be the "Expert" who never showed weakness. I kept my doubts in the Hidden Area. This created a culture where coaches were afraid to admit mistakes.	The Goal: The ultimate Observation is to maximize 10-15 coaches share method standards. This is
It's protocol (asking "Is it soliciting feedback allowed the staff to own compliance to	The Action: To demand "Character" from my players, I had to model it. I began sharing my own tactical errors during the weekly "Open Kitchen" reviews. By moving my own mistakes into the Open Area, I gave permission for my staff to do the same.	

The Mirror Test

From: To demand "Learned Champions," I had to become a "Learned

Conflict: Early in my tenure, I utilized a Commanding Style (Goleman). Intensity dropped, I got angry. It didn't work.

Reflection: I realized my goal (high standards) was right, but my process (high demands) was wrong.

Shift: I shifted to a Democratic/Coaching Style. I used Simulation, instead of just intensity. I designed a session where the rules forced intensity. Alignment Check: I asked the players, "Is your expectation the same as mine? This moment of vulnerability bridged the gap. It proved that culture is co-created, not imposed.



The "Open Kitchen"

The Challenge: In the past, coaches operated in "Silos of Autonomy." This fragmented the pipeline.

The Cultural Shift: We established a **Community of Practice**.

- Key Influencers:** The Head Coach is no longer the "Dictator," but the "Lead Learner."
- Mechanism:** "The Open Kitchen." Coaches are paired across age groups (e.g., U15 Coach observes U17 Coach). The feedback is strictly pedagogical: "Did you check for understanding effectively?"
- Communication:** We document "Best Practices" in a shared digital library. Knowledge belongs to the Club, not the individual coach.



1. Creating the culture

Clarify why the team needs a reset before announcing new values.

Symptoms of a weak culture

- Players experience different expectations across school, team and competition levels.
- Standards depend too much on the individual coach instead of a common model.
- Feedback is inconsistent: some areas are over-directed, others are never measured.
- Transitions become harder because the next environment feels like a different culture.

Implication

The first job is alignment: remove the “conflict of cultures” and create one daily standard that players can recognise everywhere.

The Ecosystem Challenge

Singapore, a football club/Academy's cannot function as an isolated silo. We operate in a landscape defined by dual pressures: High-Performance aspirations (National Team) and High-Stakes Education (School/National Service).

- **The Problem:** Historically, players faced a "Conflict of Cultures"—one set of values at school, another at the club. This created cognitive dissonance.
- **The Solution:** We moved from a "Football-Only" focus to a "Holistic Ecosystem" focus. We aligned our football culture directly with our school's educational mission.

The Vision: "Learned Champions with Character" This is not just a slogan; it is a **Unified Developmental Theory**. It ensures that the values of curiosity (Learned), excellence (Champions), and integrity (Character) remain consistent 24 hours a day. We do not just coach footballers; we educate future citizens.

Football Academy – Performance Model

VISION	Why – The overarching reasons for <u>Doing What We Do</u> .
MISSION	How – Defines the Culture, Values and Ethics guiding how we go about <u>Doing What We Do</u> .
TARGETED GROUP	Who – Identify the Key Stakeholders and Beneficiaries of <u>What We Do</u> .
PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES	What – Guides the way to achieve Desired Outcomes by providing details of <u>What to Do</u> .
QUALITY & DESIRED OUTCOMES	What – States the Desired Outcomes.
EXERCISE SELECTION	What – Outlines the demands expected of each targeted domain and the prescribed activities that will help to meet the demands.
FEEDBACK & ASSESSMENT	Test & Check – Assess the effectiveness and validity of training programme administered and provide timely feedback.

2. Architecture for culture

A framework staff and players can remember, teach and check.

CULTURE ARCHITECTURE

Vision

Learned Champions with Character

Pillars

Learned | Champions | Character

Behaviours

What players and staff must do repeatedly.

Rituals

The weekly routines that make the culture visible.

Measures

Scoreboards that tell the truth about the standard.



The "Learned" Pillar

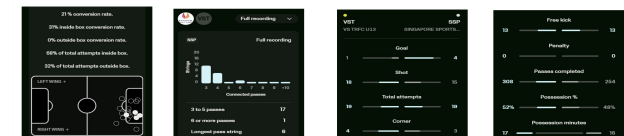
Value: The "Learned" Athlete (Cognitive Adaptability). Theory: Desirable Difficulties (Bjork & Bjork, 2011) & Constructivism (McLeod, 2013).
From Theory to Action: We reject the "Joystick Coaching" method (telling players exactly where to run). Instead, we implement a **Constraint-Led Approach**.
• **Behavior:** In training, we utilize the "Stop-Process-Go" method.
• **Mechanism:** When play breaks down, I do not give the answer. I use **Cold Calling** (Lemon, 2020): "Ridit, what cue did you miss before the interception?"
• **Outcome:** This mirrors the classroom environment. It treats the pitch as a learning lab, forcing the player to construct their own tactical knowledge.

The "Character" Pillar

The "Character" Foundation (Moral Robustness). Theory: Psychological Safety & Shared Accountability.
From Theory to Action: We prioritize the Human Being over the Football Player.
• **Behavior:** We redefined "Discipline." It is not about punishment; it is about restitution.
• **Mechanism:** The "Time Fine." If a player is late or disrespectful, they do not pay money. They pay **Time**. They must mentor a younger player or assist the kit manager.
• **Outcome:** This builds **Community**. It teaches the student-athlete that their actions affect the ecosystem, fostering empathy and servant leadership.

The "Champions" Pillar

The "Champion" Standard (Relentless Excellence). Theory: High-Performance Culture (Lombardi) - "Winning is a habit, unfortunately, so is losing."
From Theory to Action: We align the "Student" desire for an 'A' Grade with the "Athlete" desire for a Clean Sheet.
• **Behavior:** Radical Objectivity. We moved from subjective feedback ("You played well") to objective evidence.
• **Mechanism:** We display **Data Boards** in the dressing room tracking PPDA (Pressing Intensity) and Duel Win %.
• **Outcome:** This creates an environment of **Accountability**. Just as a report card tells the truth about academic effort, our data boards tell the truth about physical effort. There is no hiding place for mediocrity.



3. Pillar one: Learned

Build a team that thinks, adapts and owns the learning process.

Culture statement

We do not want joystick players. We want footballers who can read cues, solve problems and explain decisions under pressure.

Translate into daily behaviours

- Use questioning in sessions: stop, process, go.
- Ask players to identify missed cues before giving answers.
- Rotate player-led video review and post-session reflection.
- Reward explanation quality, not only execution quality.

Coach cue

“What did you see? What did you miss? What will you do next time?”

The "Learned" Pillar

Value: The "Learned" Athlete (Cognitive Adaptability). **Theory:** *Desirable Difficulties* (Bjork & Bjork, 2011) & *Constructivism* (McLeod, 2013).

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- **Behavior:** In training, we utilize the "Stop-Process-Go" method.
- **Mechanism:** When play breaks down, I do not give the answer. I use **Cold Calling** (Lemov, 2020): "*Rizal, what cue did you miss before the interception?*"
- **Outcome:** This mirrors the classroom environment. It treats the pitch as a learning lab, forcing the player to construct their own tactical knowledge.

4. Pillar two: Champions

Define excellence with evidence, not vague praise.

Culture statement

A champion culture makes standards visible. Players know exactly what intensity, quality and accountability look like.

Translate into daily behaviours

- Publish a small set of team metrics that matter.
- Use objective review after games and training blocks.
- Link standards to role clarity: each player knows their job.
- Challenge mediocrity quickly, calmly and consistently.

Coach cue

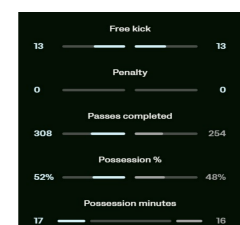
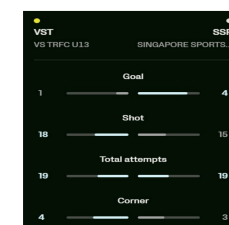
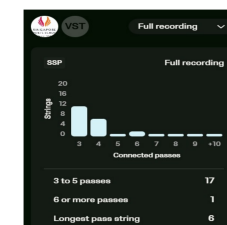
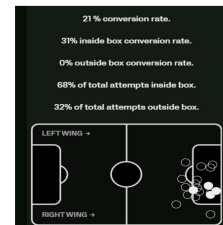
“What does the evidence say, and what does that require from us next?”

The "Champions" Pillar

The "Champion" Standard (Relentless Excellence). **Theory:** High-Performance Culture (Lombardi) – "Winning is a habit, unfortunately, so is losing."

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5. Pillar three: Character

Discipline should strengthen the group, not only punish the individual.

Culture statement

A strong team culture develops moral robustness: respect, empathy, service and shared accountability under pressure.

Translate into daily behaviours

- Set non-negotiables for punctuality, respect and follow-through.
- Use restitution: repair harm through contribution to the team.
- Give senior players mentoring responsibility for younger teammates.
- Recognise acts of service publicly, not just match performance.

Coach cue

“How did this action affect the group, and how will you restore the standard?”

The "Character" Pillar

The "Character" Foundation (Moral Robustness). **Theory:** *Psychological Safety & Shared Accountability.*

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6. Coaches must model the culture first

Culture strengthens when staff learn in public, not when they protect status.

Shift the coaching environment

- Create an “Open Kitchen”: coaches observe one another across age groups.
- Make feedback pedagogical and specific, not personal or political.
- Use alignment checks to reduce blind spots and assumptions.
- Normalise vulnerability: coaches share tactical errors and lessons learned.

Leadership principle

Do the mirror test first. If you want curiosity, accountability and character from players, the staff must display them openly.

The "Open Kitchen"



The Challenge: In an open kitchen, coaches are vulnerable. They share their mistakes, their successes, and their lessons learned. This is a powerful way to build trust and accountability.

- Any coach can be invited to share their story.
- The Open Kitchen is a safe space for coaches to share their experiences.
- The Open Kitchen is a place where coaches can learn from each other.
- The Open Kitchen is a place where coaches can build trust and accountability.

The Psychological Shift

Breaking the "Blind Spot" (Feedback)	Opening the "Hidden Area" (Vulnerability)	Examining the "Open Area" (Alignment Checks)
The Challenge: Coaches often have blind spots. They see their own mistakes but not those of others. This is a problem because it prevents them from learning and improving. The Solution: Coaches should be encouraged to share their mistakes and ask for feedback from others. This is a powerful way to break down the blind spot and learn from others.	The Challenge: Coaches often have hidden areas. They have secrets, fears, and insecurities that they don't share with others. This is a problem because it prevents them from being vulnerable and authentic. The Solution: Coaches should be encouraged to share their secrets, fears, and insecurities with others. This is a powerful way to open up the hidden area and build trust and accountability.	The Challenge: Coaches often have open areas. They have areas where they are vulnerable and authentic. This is a good thing because it allows them to be seen and heard. The Solution: Coaches should be encouraged to share their open areas with others. This is a powerful way to build trust and accountability.

The Mirror Test



The Challenge: Coaches often have a hard time seeing themselves. They see their own mistakes but not those of others. This is a problem because it prevents them from learning and improving.

The Solution: Coaches should be encouraged to share their mistakes and ask for feedback from others. This is a powerful way to break down the blind spot and learn from others.

7. Instilling the culture through checkpoint

Move from statement to routine, then from routine to evidence.

Days 1–30 | Define

- Agree on the one-sentence team identity.
- Choose three non-negotiable behaviours per pillar.
- Communicate the standard to players, staff and parents.

Days 31–60 | Embed

- Install weekly rituals: questioning, review, restitution, peer observation.
- Use a visible scoreboard for standards and habits.
- Coach the coaches: align language and expectations.

Days 61–90 | Prove

- Check player behaviour, not just match outcomes.
- Review whether transitions feel smoother and standards are more consistent.
- Refine what is tolerated, measured and reinforced.

Success measures

Look for systemic health: fewer mixed messages, better player ownership, consistent coach language, stronger transitions, and performance data that reflects the right behaviours over time.

Sustaining the Vision



Defining Success

Success is reinforced. It is not merely about fitting a template or the end of a season. It is about systemic health and Pipeline Integrity.



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8. Framework to present to your staff

Use one memorable model so the culture is easy to teach and repeat.

The 6C Team Culture Framework

Cause	Why we exist and who we are building.
Code	The 3 pillars: Learned, Champions, Character.
Conduct	The observable behaviours expected every day.
Customs	The routines and rituals that keep the culture alive.
Coaches	The leadership behaviours that model the standard.
Checkpoints	The evidence that shows the culture is working.

Use this as your presentation sequence: Cause → Code → Conduct → Customs → Coaches → Checkpoints

The Architect's Mindset



Conclusion

Final Thought: As a Head Coach, I am not just a tactician for the weekend; I am a **Custodian of the Pipeline**.

By harmonizing the educational vision of the Singapore Sports School with the high-performance demands of professional football, we have created a **Cognitive-Ecological Model** that serves the nation.

- We use the **Science of Teaching** to ensure our players are the smartest in the room (Learned).
- We use **Data-Driven Standards** to ensure they are the fittest in the fight (Champions).
- We use **Values-Based Leadership** to ensure they are the strongest in spirit (Character).

Our legacy is not just the games we win today, but the quality of the humans we hand over to the National Team tomorrow. We are building the future of Singapore football, one decision, one value, and one player at a time.



9. Implementation to strengthen team culture

A simple weekly routine you can start immediately.

Implement a weekly Alignment and Reflection Cycle

Why this works

It connects all three pillars at once: players think, speak honestly about standards, and take responsibility for the group.

- Before training: state one team behaviour focus for the week.
- During training: stop once or twice for player questioning and alignment checks.
- After training: one player unit shares what matched the standard and what did not.
- After match: review one clip, one metric and one character example as a group.

What to measure each week

1 behaviour focus achieved, 1 learning insight shared by players, 1 evidence point from data, 1 act of character recognised.

Weekly Team Culture Cycle

Monday

Set the behaviour focus

Midweek

Question and align

Friday

Reflect as a unit

Matchday

Review clip, metric, character

This gives you one visible habit loop that staff and players can repeat every week.

Thank you