Chris Kennedy

Synoptic Assignment – Steven Gerrard

Introduction

I have chosen to evaluate Steven Gerrard's performance during the England versus Germany game that took place in the Olympic Stadium, Munich, Germany on September 2nd 2001. England won the match 5-1.

Steven Gerrard had a particularly good game. He scored with a great, twenty-five yard strike on the forty third minute and assisted one goal. The opta stats revealed he worked the hardest out of every single player on the pitch that night. Also, his passing was exceptional, with the stats showing 79% success rate. However, he did receive a yellow card in the second half, which marred an otherwise excellent performance. I believe that Steven received a booking when he did because his arousal increased gradually as the game progressed. He picked up a slight back injury during the game. This was not a real cause for concern however he missed subsequent training sessions due to this injury. Although not a particularly serious injury, the manager (Sven Goran Eriksson) decided to rest him. He therefore missed vital training sessions leading up to England's second World Cup qualifier against Albania.

After evaluating the game fully, I notice that the opposing player which Gerrard had to mark, Michael Ballack, seemed to lose Gerrard on a few occasions, which could well have been a contributing factor to the overall score line.
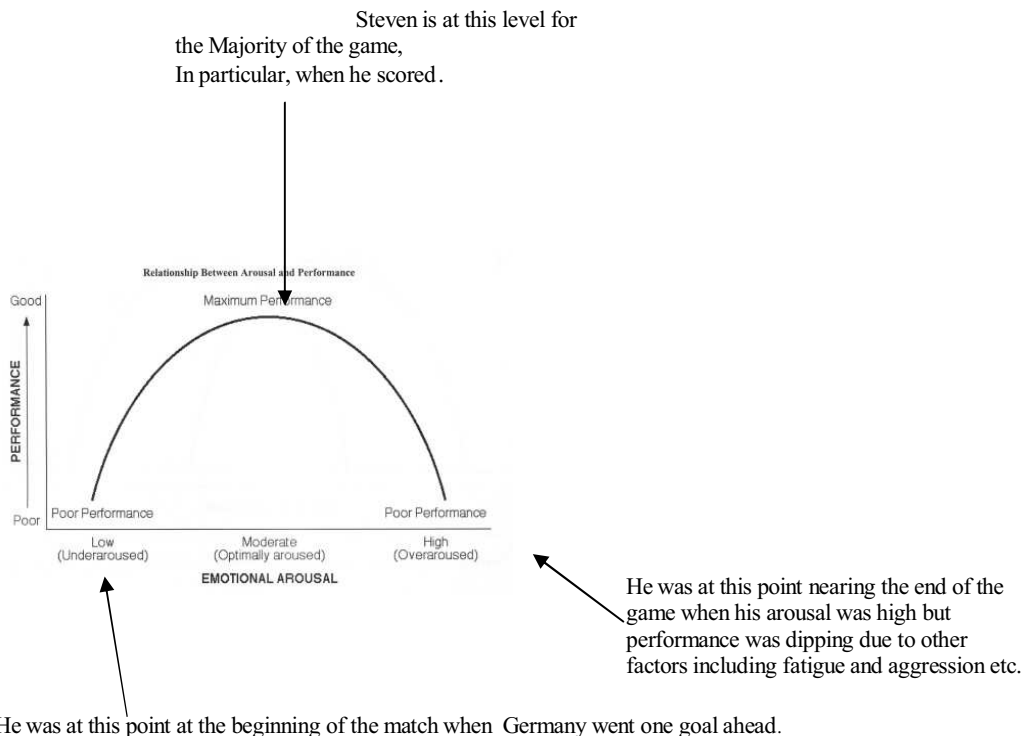
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Synoptic Assignment – Arousal

I believe arousal is an appropriate topic to talk about because, like many elite performers, Gerrard needs optimum arousal to perform at his best.

Whilst evaluating England versus Germany, on several occasions, I noted each time Gerrard's arousal peaked and when his arousal dipped. In this game, in order to perform well, he needed to be highly aroused. After conceding a goal early on, the team need to improve on their performance, in order to do this, their arousal needed increasing. This happened almost automatically resulting in Michael Owen scoring a goal to equalise.

There are three arousal theories – The inverted U theory, Hulls drive theory and the catastrophe theory. In this instance, the inverted U theory is better related to Gerrard. This theory suggests Motivation (arousal) increasing to an optimum point, at which performance is at its best, past which control and quality of performance decreases through trying too hard. After just six minutes, Germany went one goal ahead due to a goal by Carsten Janker. His arousal obviously dipped due to this. After conceding a goal early on, the team need to improve on their performance, in order to do this, their arousal needed increasing. This happened almost automatically resulting in Michael Owen scoring a goal to equalise.

As his arousal increases, so therefore does his performance, until however, he reaches his optimal. After reaching this point, his arousal continues to increase however his performance cannot, so it then begins to decline. Due to his increased level of arousal, following England's first goal scored by Michael Owen, Gerrards performance has also increased. This results in Steven Gerrard scoring a great goal from twenty-five yards out. His arousal was now most probably at its peak until three minutes later when the half time whistle was blown. The fifteen-minute interval made his arousal decline until he went back out on to the pitch. Below is a diagram of the inverted U theory, which can relate well to Gerrard's performance.

Steven is at this level for the Majority of the game, In particular, when he scored.

Relationship Between Arousal and Performance

Good — Maximum Performance

PERFORMANCE

Poor — Poor Performance / Poor Performance

Low (Underaroused) / Moderate (Optimally aroused) / High (Overaroused)

EMOTIONAL AROUSAL

He was at this point nearing the end of the game when his arousal was high but performance was dipping due to other factors including fatigue and aggression etc.

He was at this point at the beginning of the match when Germany went one goal ahead.

High arousal could lead to frustration, aggression, anxiety and often stress. During the match, Steven controlled these feelings well. He looked relaxed and his temperament was kept under control. The German supporters were trying to affect England's game by shouting abuse and booing the England national anthem and individual players. This could have easily leaded Steven to frustration and aggression, but Steven and the team controlled their emotions and most importantly their actions. This was important in order to get a result out of the game, which they did so convincingly. To overcome arousal, which could lead to these negative factors, Steven Gerrard could use a variety of methods including somatic and cognitive techniques such as mental rehearsal, imagery (cognitive), and deep breathes (Somatic). Steven may have possibly used some cognitive techniques during the game to keep him focused on winning the game. Deep breathes common too, especially for a midfielder. Gerrard was able to do this when there was a break in play.

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<u>Synoptic Assignment – Information Processing</u>

It is relevant for me to talk about information processing because the decisions Steven needs to make during a match could determine the overall result. Decisions such as passing, shooting, heading, dribbling, and tackling all need to be made quickly and efficiently throughout a game of football, due to the spontaneity of the sport.

Decision making at professional level is much more crucial and could ultimately lead to success or failure. During the England versus Germany game, Gerrard was faced with many possible decisions. One in particular was crucial in preventing a possible goal for Germany. German striker, Carsten Janker, was running free on goal and Steven Gerrard was jockeying him. He had to make a quick decision in order to stop him continuing in to the penalty area. He made a slide tackle early rather than continuing to jockey him. Steven could have easily have fouled Janker however he took the risk and fortunately for him and the team, he caught the ball and not the man.
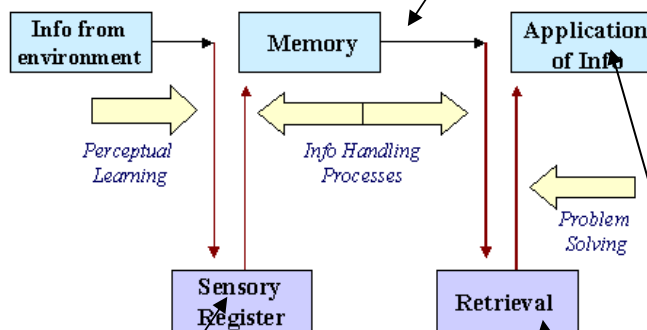
Another crucial decision Steven was faced with was when he scored his goal. He ultimately decided to take one touch and shoot through a crowd of players from twenty-five yards out. He had many other possible decisions including, passing the ball, heading the ball, shooting first time, or dribbling it in towards the area. He made the decision to shoot because he was feeling confident.

Below is Whiting's model of information processing (1969); Steven Gerrard would have gone through this process leading to his goal.

This is the weather, pitch conditions
As well as supporters and other
Players telling him what he should do.

He has stored in his memory
His previous goals and he knows
he has the ability to score from that range.

AN INFORMATION PROCESSING MODEL

| Info from environment | Memory | Application of Info |

Perceptual Learning

Info Handling Processes

Problem Solving

| Sensory Register | Retrieval |

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This is where he applies all this
Information he has stored into
the action, which is shooting.

This is where his senses register the information
In his brain about what decision to make.

This is where the information is retrieved
Following the event.

The model shows three processes. Stimulus identification, response selection, and response programming. In Gerrards goal scenario, he chose the decision to take a touch then hit the ball. Using this model, he would have begun making his decision by considering his surroundings, for example, team mates, should he pass, what's he being told to do by supporters, team mates etc? Also the physical surroundings such as the pitch, weather conditions, (is it going to slide on the surface) how far away the target is (the goal). Following Stevens's effort, he would have received feedback (kinaesthetic) where he acknowledges if he has done it successfully i.e. did he score.

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<u>Synoptic Assignment – Commercialisation</u>

It is relevant for me to talk about commercialisation because football has been affected so much by commercialisation, Steven Gerrard (being an elite performer) has obviously been affected too. At the international level few major football events take place these days without major commercial interests being involved. Coca Cola and Adidas have had a long-standing arrangement with FIFA and the World Cup, for example. Usually a 'family' of maybe eight or 12 sponsors producing different types of products (chocolate to cars and cameras) will pay for the right to advertise and 'connect' their products exclusively to the event in question. This applies to the Champions League as well as to the World Cup and the Euro Finals. Of course, other, rival companies may try to 'spoil' this investment by placing their own TV advertising or advertising near match sites. During this game, Adidas and Coca Cola were advertised frequently on surrounding boards and adverts during the 'commercial break'. This is because, the game being played was a World Cup qualifier, and these companies sponsor the World Cup. Steven Gerrard is sponsored by Adidas; this means he <u>has</u> to wear Adidas branded sports wear. The financial rewards he receives for doing this are massive.

Nowadays, footballers of the top divisions receive thousands of pounds in their wages each week and the elite performers of the leagues assume automatic celebrity status. This is due to their financial status, the women they are seen with e.g. "Posh and Becks" (Almost a 'brand' themselves), the clothes they wear, and the cars they drive. People forget why they are in the public eye in the first place. Commercialisation in football has exploded since the introduction of the Premiership. Indeed, the Premiership was a breakaway league designed expressly to maximise the revenue from television rights.

With the rise of football as a money sport, football clubs have had more money at their disposal. This has led to the wages and transfer fees of players rising to astronomical heights, as bidders use their financial power to get what they want. A case in point: merely 7 years ago, the great Eric Cantona, the catalyst for Manchester United's domination of the Premier League for the 90s, was bought from Leeds for £1.2 million. This is a paltry sum when you contrast it with the fee that Real Madrid paid for David Beckham, Cantona's successor at United: a cool £26 million. Both great players in their own right, but in less than a decade, transfer fees have inflated to beyond imagination**!**

The increasing commercialisation of football has been a worrying development. Oftentimes, football has been sold to the highest bidder among media companies, and the governing bodies have not served out their responsibilities effectively.

Steven Gerrard is constantly in the media spotlight. It is the media who make him into the celebrity footballer he is today. As well as doing this, the media feel it is their right to criticise him when he is not doing so well, on and off the pitch. His freedom and privacy was lost as soon as he developed into this Footballing superstar. Steven was brought up in a rough council estate in Whiston, Liverpool. Without the commercialisation in football, Steven may not be in the fortunate situation he is now.

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