

## Trust England to Underachieve

On 27th June, the England national football team prematurely bowed out of yet another international tournament. Over the last couple of decades, there has been a constant trend of underperformance within the national side, when it comes to major tournaments. Yet on this occasion, the defeat was all the more shocking, coming as it did against Iceland, a country with a population of 332,529, a size similar to that of the population of an average English city such as Wakefield. Despite the English team being outright favourites to win this fixture, due to England's far better individual talent, there was a clear lack of team togetherness, compared to our Nordic counterparts. So how did a team of individual superstars lose to a country which, as Garry Lineker puts it, has "more volcanoes than professional footballers"? If you are looking for a single word to explain England's failure, I would call it 'trust' - or the lack of it.

The importance of trust cannot be underestimated in any team environment. It is that inner feeling of confidence which is so significant when you rely on other people within a team. Admittedly, because trust is to a certain extent intuitive, it is difficult to snap one's finger and create it. However, focusing on helping a team slowly build that magic ingredient by becoming more transparent and honest with each other, will eventually make the team more cohesive and supportive. What is most alarming about England's recent failure is its repetitiveness; not reaching Euro 2008, coming last in their group in the 2014 World Cup and now the 2016 disaster. These cases of underachievement give the impression that lack of trust and cohesion are ingrained within the fabric of the national team. It makes you wonder why nobody has tried to sort it out.

Coming to think about it, how would you expect a group of mercenaries, who are rivals week in week out at club level, to suddenly come together and gel as a team, leaving aside all the resentment from the season before? Former manager Chris Waddle, after the defeat to Iceland, said "They don't communicate on the pitch, they don't communicate off the pitch". This breakdown in communication between the players is a clear sign of the lack of confidence and trust in each other, which is such an important ingredient within a functioning, high performing team.

Roy Hodgson, now the ex manager, is maybe another factor in England's recent struggles. Just like in business, the manager is looked up to for motivation and bringing the team together. Sadly, Roy Hodgson just doesn't appear to be that inspirational person that all the players can trust. We are talking here about the manager of England's national team, one whose managerial career has included teams such as Grasshoppers, Örebro SK and Viking - hardly the most illustrious managerial record. To gain the trust of the players, a manager must be relatable in order to generate confidence in his or her instructions. The lack of consistency in formation and starting line up has been a criticism of Hodgson's in the past. The players, must not only have trust in the manager, but also in the system and style of play he sets out. Because there is no trust in the system, the English team's confidence in the manager has also diminished, as the players became less and less confident of their role within the team.

During the tournament, pundit Danny Murphy said, "England needs to be bold and trust their ability". Trust, or the lack of it, doesn't just have to be between team mates, it can also be inward looking. Knowing what you are capable of and being confident enough to express your abilities also requires a certain level of self trust. It just seems that when all the England players come together, they don't seem to believe in each others' ability and therefore understandably they don't believe in their own.

We can't deny that England's failures are not a question of lack of talent. But if we can take one thing from the defeat with Iceland, it is the understanding of just what can be achieved when players trust each other and work together for a common goal. If players

manage to ignore their egos, forget their personal differences and use the International Team Trust Indicator (ITTI) maybe, just maybe, we can leave a tournament proud of our performance.

**Aside from the shameless product plug :-)** please feel free to share your thoughts and nuggets of wisdom with our young intern.