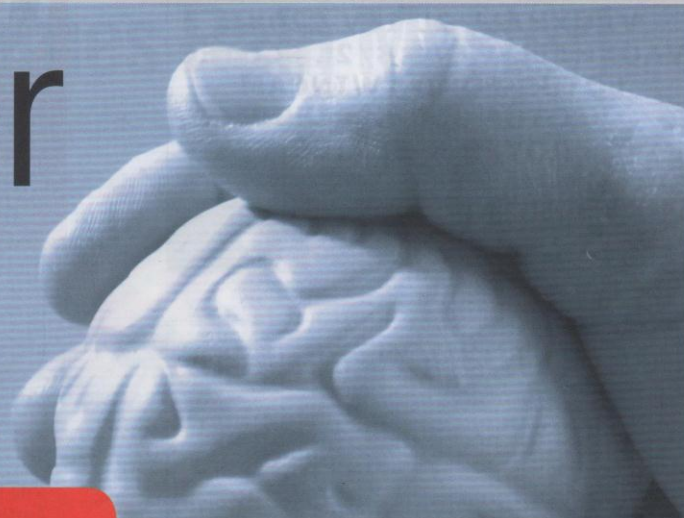


# Power of the Mind



*Success in rallying takes a lot more than just driving talent. Believe it or not, it is also about the power of the mind, and your head must be in the right 'place' to be competitive. It is no coincidence that World Champions like Marcus Gronholm had head coaches during their winning seasons...*

**Focusing the mind** is therefore a key to success, but unlike other sports such as golf, football and tennis, there seems to be little help available in this direction for rally drivers.

However, Linda Keen, who lives in Ashbourne, Co. Meath, is a qualified psychotherapist, and with a strong motorsport background, she understands the needs of rally crews.

Daniel Barry, the 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evo Challenge winner, and his co-driver Martin Brady were two people who visited Linda to take her unique coaching.

"Towards the end of 2008, we were having a bad time with a couple of crashes and the confidence had taken a knock," Barry told Pacenotes. "It was Rory Galligan who told Martin (Brady) about Linda. Rallying is more a mental sport than anything else, so if your head isn't right, you're wasting your time."

Having establishing herself as a prominent motorsport co-ordinator in England, Linda Keen moved to Ireland in 1993. She had started racing at the age of 17 in Hot Rods, while her journalistic skills saw her as Sporting Scene editor for Motoring News during the early '80s, before running the Brands Hatch press office.

When Linda moved to Ireland, she became involved with many

up and coming racing drivers. She also handled PR work for Austin MacHale in the Castro Celica/Corolla days, and started to study psychotherapy and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. She eventually graduated as a psychotherapist and became an NLP Master Practitioner.

"The good thing about Linda was that unlike other people qualified in this area, she knew all about motorsport," said Martin Brady.

Andrew Nesbitt, Keith Cronin and Rory Galligan are among the rally drivers who have benefited from Linda's course, but what exactly does it focus on?

Much of the course is based on how your mind is programmed, and Linda bases a lot of her work on the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) model. The way we act as adults is programmed into us from an early age, particularly from birth until we are seven years old.

Our experiences from those years are stored away and often make up how we react to situations. These experiences and memories are stored in the unconscious mind, which deals with beliefs, life memories, learned habits, phobias, emotions, energy and essentially controls imagination and feelings.

Our 'surface' mind contains



**"It's a bit like a tape playing, you imagine the tape playing inside your head in the background. If your unconscious state is full of negative memories and expectations, then there becomes no release to achieve your goals."**

the pieces of information which we are consciously aware, such as our senses, thinking, reasoning and decision making. But if the messages sent from the unconscious mind are negative or limiting, it is unlikely that we will achieve our goals.

Visualisation was another mind exercise that Linda focused on. Often we see racing drivers such as Sebastian Vettel focusing before the race, driving the race in their

"It's not just about the driver," says Linda. "It may sound like a cliché but successful people surround themselves with positive people, so it was good to have Daniel Barry and Martin Brady as they are both in the car. The entire team must be positive, particularly when times are difficult."

For Daniel Barry, he turned a somewhat fraught 2008 into a championship win in 2009.

"In 2008, we were often on the pace," Barry said, "but I was making the odd mistake and going off the road. Certainly the time with Linda was one of the building blocks that helped us in 2009. It helped me block everything else out on an event, and also to move on from difficulties on the event."

Linda also explains the use of "anchoring" which can be useful to motivate yourself. Martin Brady admitted that his 'anchor' is when he starts his watch, while Daniel Barry scrunches his hands and bangs his legs "to get the blood going and get myself into gear."

When Steve Collins defeated Chris Eubank, Collins had employed these techniques and totally understood the importance and power of the mind. Even the late Colin McRae would recommend a short run up and down before a stage to try and motivate himself.

Car preparation, pace note making, organisation and physical fitness are all crucial aspects in preparing for a rally. These require a lot of mental focus, so it must be important to look after the mind and surround yourself with positive people. If the champions do it, then you should too!