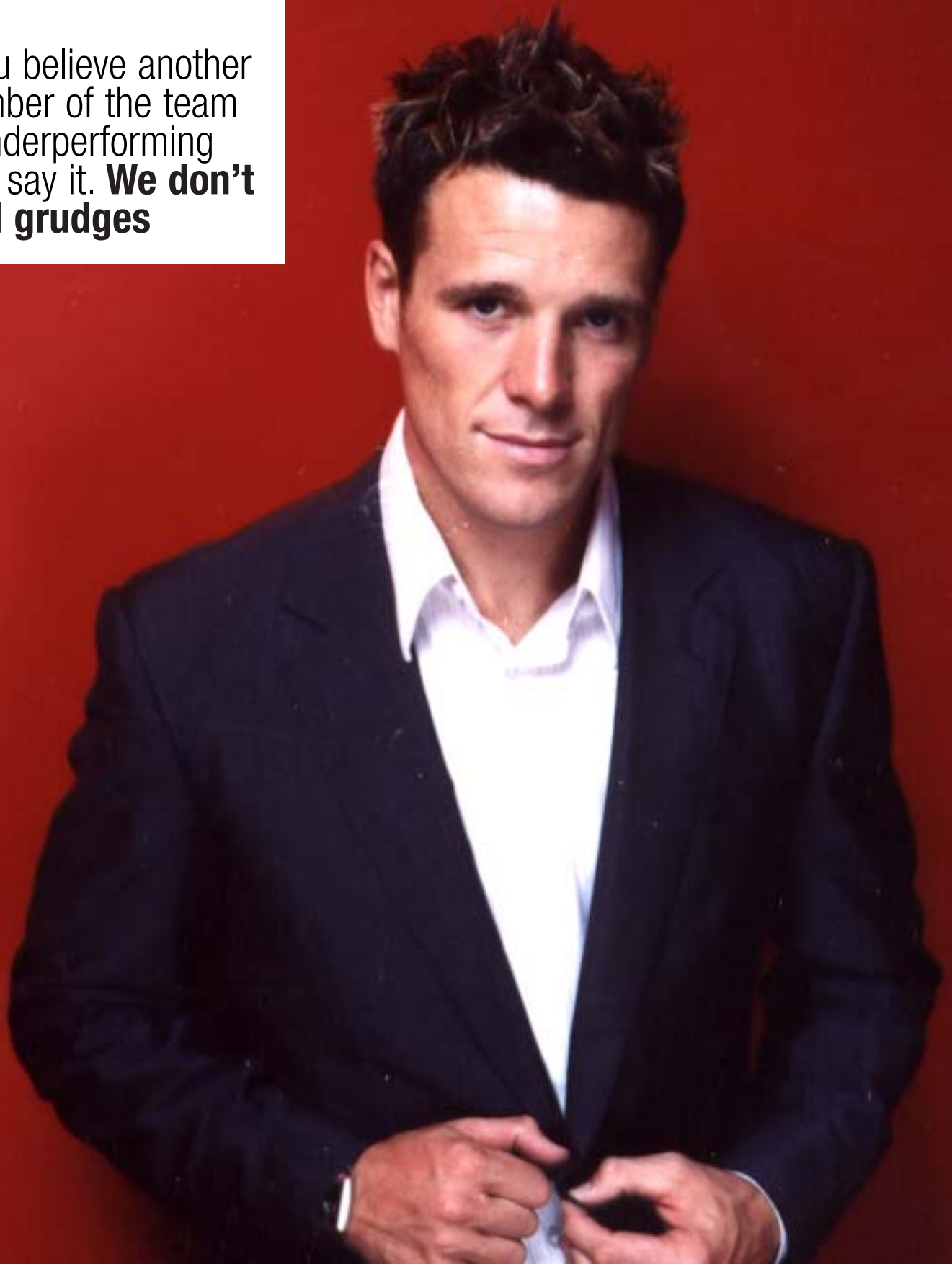


If you believe another member of the team is underperforming then say it. **We don't hold grudges**



In the business of winning

He was a world-record holder and gold medal winner before Athens, and now he's a double gold medal winner. Olympic rower **James Cracknell** considers what it takes to beat the competition

What does sport have to teach those of us in business?

I think a lot of the qualities needed to be successful in sport are also required in business. Teamwork is essential in rowing. Unlike football, if one person has a bad day you'll lose, so you have to trust in each other. We have a couple of simple ways of working that are vital to making the team function, but there are no rules. It's down to the individual, if you go out drinking you make sure you train just as well the next day so you aren't letting anybody down. Total honesty with each other – if you believe another member of the team is underperforming then say it. We're all after the same goal and we don't hold grudges.

How determined do you have to be to achieve the kind of success that you have?

I think you have a dream of what you want to achieve and go after it. The important thing is to get to the goal in steps, rather than aiming for it in one big

leap – otherwise your dream can seem too far away and that's when your determination can suffer.

When will you know that it's time to retire?

When I can watch the Olympics and realise I'm not good enough to be there!

How do you keep in touch with your family when you're away?

By mobile phone of course! This year has been hard as I've been away so much and had a little boy last autumn. Luckily my mobile phone has a video on it and I saw him crawl for the first time whilst training up a mountain. Without that technology I would have missed it.

How do you get over those mornings when you wake up and would give anything just to go back to sleep?

I know that there are three other guys waiting for me at the boat club. Maybe if we rang round then we could all agree to have a lie in...



'In sport, **goals** and **vision** are enormously motivational

Have you ever made a career-threatening error of judgement?

In 1992 I was selected as reserve for the Olympic team. Although I was only 19 I believed I should have been in the team so I refused to go at all. They said if I didn't then I would lose all my funding and never row for Britain again. Well, I lost my funding but they all got sacked afterwards and I fought my way back in, luckily.

What's the most important thing that keeps you motivated and successful?

Music is inspirational to train through, without that some sessions would be impossible. But the fear of losing normally keeps me motivated enough.

Our expert comments

Angus McLeod is a sports

psychologist and performance coach. He co-founded The Coaching Foundation, a UK national group for executive and life coaches, and has held numerous directorships, following academic and business careers to senior level.

'In sport, goals and vision are enormously motivational – they have to be, since the sacrifices at the top are huge,' explains Angus. 'In business, our goals also need to be motivational, yet realistic. And we need to be explicit about how we get there. When James was in the winning four at Athens, not a single crew member seemed to be aware of which boat was alongside them. That's because in sport, as in business, the one golden rule is to stay focused.'

Know yourself

Few people are solely motivated by team goals. Make mental links between your own goals and the team's objectives.

Know what you want – and what you don't

James is motivated not just by his goals and the team's collective vision, but by not 'letting anybody down'. We all have two key drivers: the things we want and the things we want to avoid. We need to be constantly aware of both to be fully motivated.

Never assume anything

James says: 'we don't hold grudges'. Negative thoughts about colleagues weaken the team. The emotional processes of our brains work much faster than the logical ones, so it's easy to get angry if you haven't looked at your own behaviour first. Communicate positively – people often match your expectations!

No stalemates

Always be prepared to take the initiative to heal bad communication straight away. The less you invest yourself, the less you will get back. My fifty-one per cent rule is that in any given interaction, I am 51 per cent responsible for the results.

To sum up:

- Be supportive
- Give accurate, useful feedback
- Take feedback as information, not criticism
- Be prepared to make friends of your colleagues
- Keep people who expect to know, informed
- Allow yourself to be the best in the team without arrogance.

The Coaching Foundation is at www.coachingfoundation.org.uk. Find Angus at www.angusmcleod.com. Email him at sue@angusmcleod.com or phone 01905 757 587. His books, *Performance Coaching* and *Me, Myself, My Team*, are available now.