

A few weeks before the biggest game in their 79-year history, Tamworth Football Club were on a losing streak. So manager Marcus Law decided to bring in Warwickshire motivational sports performance coach, Bernie de Souza, to see if he could turn around the team's fortunes. The 48-year-old tells feature writer CATHERINE VONLEDEBUR the secrets of his personality profiling technique, which aims to get the best from each individual player

TAMWORTH Football Club's manager Marcus Law left Merseyside with his "pride intact and reputation enhanced" after playing Everton FC in the FA Cup.

The team was taking on a Premiership giant 96 places above them in the league – a huge challenge, particularly since they had not won any of their six previous matches.

Yet, on January 7, at the biggest game in the club's 79-year history, The Lambs made their illustrious opponents sweat for a 2-0 victory.

Marcus praised the input of Warwickshire sports performance coach Bernie de Souza for helping his team's performance.

"It was a fantastic experience and I'm proud of the club and the town," he says.

"We are always looking to develop our players and the squad dynamic, and Bernie's expertise in the 'chemistry of communication' gave us that opportunity.

"He started looking at the different personality types that make up our squad, and gave coaching staff and players valuable feedback as to how to maximise the strengths of the different personalities.

"Optimising performance in all environments is Bernie's speciality. We are confident he had an enormous impact on our players."

A former RAF physical training instructor, Bernie, who has an office in Leamington Spa, uses personality profiling to identify the strengths and weaknesses of players. His motto? 'Success is a team game'.

Bernie explains: "When Marcus approached me, he said they had a big game coming up and they were on a losing streak at that time. He said, 'I don't know what you do, but it gets results' and he knew I'd done a lot of sports psychology work.

"I told him, 'I can help get your message across to the players'. I emailed each of the players a questionnaire devised at Harvard University and set up a profile of the team. When I met the players I knew all about them. It's like an X-ray.

"In this way, I could help them optimise their relationships and eliminate any potential conflicts, enabling them to be a more cohesive unit, working as champions both on and off the pitch.

"I spoke to Marcus and the players after they had just lost 5-2 against Alfreton and, when the two clubs met again five days later, it was a 2-2 draw – an enormous improvement.

"I had four sessions with them before the Everton game, coaching them on visualisation and belief. I

The coach who gave team the power of self-belief



WINNERS: Bernie de Souza with his sons Luke and Josh, and (right) with England Women's Cricket captain Charlotte Edwards



also gave Marcus the right words to use for each player."

The professional speaker, businessman and author said many ex-footballers brought in to manage clubs were excellent on the field, but lacked vital people skills.

He says: "Using the right words is a skill. You can get more out of each individual player.

"All teams would benefit if a manager knew the exact words to use for each player. What I do gives immediate impact."

One of Bernie's proudest sporting achievements was working with the England Women's Cricket Team during their 2009 record-breaking season.

Not only did the team win the World Cup, they became the first-ever World Twenty20 champions and retained The Ashes.

The 48-year-old dad-of-four says: "It's nice to be part of a winning team."

He was also credited by cricketing legends Brian Lara and Mushtaq Mohammed for playing an impor-

tant role in the respective West Indies and Pakistan triumphs.

"My love is sport," Bernie adds.

He is a playing member of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) – as are his talented teenage sons Luke, 19, a PE student at Bedfordshire University and Josh, 17, who is studying A-levels at Myton School, Warwick.

At 16, Luke played for Worcestershire Cricket Club, while Josh, then 14, played for Warwickshire. The pair are currently the youngest players representing a West Midlands cricket academy in India.

Josh is also a budding actor – he successfully auditioned for a role in a Royal Shakespeare Company production of Macbeth.

Bernie recalls: "Although he did not know the script off-by-heart, they told Josh they picked him for his confidence.

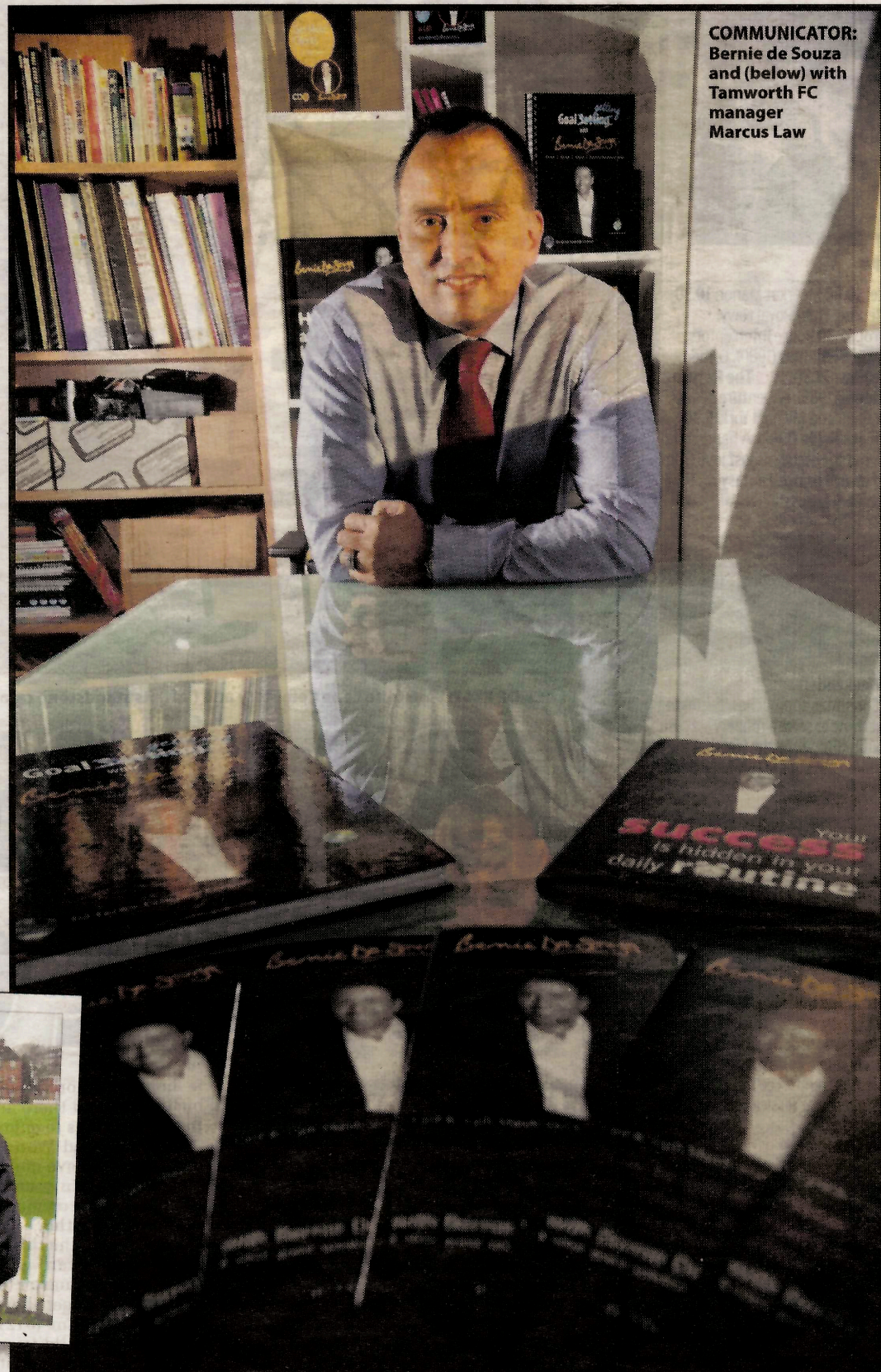
"When they were 16 and 14, the boys took part in a public speaking course in America while I was working over there – they had to talk in front of 200 people. It was

sandwiched between three days at Orlando."

In his book, *Your Success Is Hidden In Your Daily Routine*, Bernie writes: "My children have been a constant reminder of what is possible and what can be obtained with successful thinking."

Bernie's expertise in communication skills have made him very popular with his teenage son's friends.

He adds: "At a barbecue at our house last summer, about 20 of my sons' friends came round. They spent around six hours asking me the best ways to ask a girl out on a date, what to say in an interview and how to get a pay rise!"



COMMUNICATOR: Bernie de Souza and (below) with Tamworth FC manager Marcus Law

How profiling helps in sport

BERNIE de Souza first became interested in sports personality profiling after meeting Olympic athletes Daley Thompson (below left) and Linford Christie (below right).

He was 22 and working at RAF Cosford, Britain's only indoor athletic track, as a physical training instructor. He has since worked with international sports stars, global companies and even the SAS.

Bernie recalls: "Daley was in-your-face and self-confident, Linford was very laid-back, polite and a little shy.

Both were gold medalists, but complete opposites. If I was coaching Daley, I would talk differently to how I'd talk to Linford." Bernie discovered the DISC method of personality assessment in 1994, while speaking at a conference in America with Dr Robert Rohm, the founder of Personality Insights Inc.

Bernie says: "He did my profile and I was quite amazed at how accurate it was. Knowledge of our personality style is so important for relationships and communication."

There are four different behaviour types: "D for the dominant, outgoing type; I for the inspiring, outgoing type; S for supportive, reserved type; and C for the cautious, reserved type," explains Bernie.

"Our personalities are a blend of all four. The assessment is not judgemental; it does not say our answers are right or wrong."

Bernie's success is not confined to sport, for he helps business and individuals with keynote speaking, presenting and executive coaching.

They include Earnie Shavers, a former US professional boxer who was working as a bouncer at a Wetherspoon pub in Liverpool when he met Bernie. He is now living in Las Vegas and now works as a speaker.

Bernie adds: "Earnie said if he had met me when he was younger, he would have beaten Muhammed Ali at Madison Gardens in 1977."

Although they lost, the home fans respected the non-league side's effort and applauded them off the pitch. Everton Manager David Moyes shook hands with every Tamworth player.

He said: "It was a bit of struggle and Tamworth did really well. They were always in with a chance at 1-0 and they kept going."

Bernie said: "I've had phone calls from some of the players – it's really changed their lives. Since the Everton match, Tamworth FC beat Cambridge 1-0 and had a brilliant 2-2 draw against the league leaders Fleetwood Town – even though they played for 25 minutes with only ten men!

"I've been doing this work voluntarily because I have bought into the guys. They are a great bunch.

"I want to help them get to the Wembley play-offs."

'It's really changed their lives'



LAST month, 6,000 Tamworth fans descended upon Goodison Park for the biggest game in the club's history. Everton kicked off as overwhelming favourites to dispatch their non-league opposition and scored an early goal in the first five minutes.

Bernie de Souza recalls: "At half-time, I advised Marcus on what to say to the team. He gave a brilliant talk.

"There were 96 places between the two sides and they were playing before a crowd of nearly 30,000. Yet the belief was so high. Sadly they lost 2-0 after a terrible penalty."

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