

Mental Toughness Conference 2026

Budapest | May 13-14, 2026

Meet Our Speaker

Professor John Perry

University of Limerick

The How of Mental Toughness:

Understanding the mechanisms that shape how individuals internalise stress and challenge



Session Description

We know that higher Mental Toughness is associated with lower perceived stress and anxiety, greater consistency under pressure, and better performance across domains. But how does this actually work inside the person?

This session goes beneath behaviour to explore the internal mechanisms that explain why the same stressor can be energising for one individual and overwhelming for another. Rather than focusing on “acting tough,” the presentation examines how challenge, uncertainty, and pressure are processed, interpreted, and regulated differently across Mental Toughness profiles.

Drawing on the MTQPlus framework, the session introduces a multi-level model spanning cognitive, emotional, neuropsychophysiological, learning, and dispositional mechanisms. For practitioners who want to move beyond surface techniques and truly understand what they are seeing in clients, athletes, or leaders, this session offers a deeper explanatory lens—clarifying why Mental Toughness protects wellbeing and performance, and where to intervene more intelligently.

About John

Professor John Perry is Head of the Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at the University of Limerick. With over 20 years’ experience in academia, he has held senior leadership roles including Head of Department and Dean of Faculty, and has published extensively in the fields of mental toughness, stress, performance, and psychological assessment.

He is widely recognised as one of the leading researchers in Mental Toughness, contributing to the conceptual refinement of the model and the development of the MTQPlus framework. A specialist in research methods and psychometrics, his work focuses on understanding the mechanisms that underpin performance, wellbeing, and resilience.

Alongside his academic work, he is an applied psychologist who has worked with elite performers, particularly in sport, helping individuals and teams translate psychological insight into consistent performance under pressure. He is co-author of the third edition of *Developing Mental Toughness*.