

# Relaxation exercises sharpens shooting in biathlon

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Biathletes who have learned to apply a relaxation technique can improve their results in the rifle-shooting range. This is shown in a study carried out at the Swedish Winter Sports Research Centre at Mid Sweden University.

The method is called Applied tension release (ATR) (or TASP, an acronym based on its name in Swedish) and was developed by Jan Lisspers, a professor of psychology at Mid Sweden University. Thus far it has primarily been used to reduce symptoms of stress and pain in health-care patients. A new study has investigated whether it can help improve the performance of elite-level biathletes.

Half of the test group integrated the relaxation exercise in their rifle-shooting practice for ten weeks. The control group practiced as usual. The results evinced a clear difference. The group that used the relaxation technique learned to shoot better. They held their rifle barrels steadier and placed their shots within a narrower area. The control group made no progress whatsoever.

The study can be of great importance to the sport, according to Marko Laaksonen, director of the Mid Sweden University Sports Science Program.

"This training method can have an impact on the biathlon, where the margins are very small at the elite level," he says.

Source: Swedish Research Council

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