

# Researchers scan cyclists' brains at race speed in S.Africa

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Cyclists speed by during a race. Researchers in South Africa said they have found a way to measure the brain activity of cyclists at racing speed, breaking new ground in the study of how the brain works during exercise.

Researchers in South Africa said Monday they have found a way to measure the brain activity of cyclists at racing speed, breaking new ground in the study of how the brain works during exercise.

The University of Cape Town study used a specially designed [magnetic resonance imaging](#) (MRI) scanner to hold athletes' heads still while they lay horizontally inside and "cycled" on a set of pedals attached to a performance monitor.

The Brazilian-South African research team is still crunching data from the project, but said it promises to unlock new information about which [brain areas](#) control exercise and the relation between sports performance

and the brain.

"Because of the difficulty of the project, technique, equipment and methodology, limited information is available in this area of exercise science research," said Elske Schabort, a postdoctoral fellow at the university's exercise science centre.

"The opportunity to be among the first to initiate such novel investigations will allow great progress in our work to try to understand and describe the involvement of brain and central nervous system during exercise and performance regulation."

A group of seven competitive cyclists were asked to lie inside the scanner and do a performance test.

The first results from the study should be out early next year, said Eduardo Fontes, a doctoral student at the University of Campinas in Brazil who designed the specially modified scanner.

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