

Athletes perform better when exposed to subliminal visual cues

December 1 2014, by Katie Newton



Credit: Recon Jet

New research has found that athletes who are exposed to subliminal visual cues during endurance exercise will perform significantly better.

Subliminal [visual cues](#) are words, pictures or symbols which are unidentifiable in someone's conscious.

Conducted by Professor Samuele Marcora in collaboration with colleagues at Bangor University, the research discovered that athletes undergoing [endurance exercise](#) who were presented with positive subliminal cues, such as action-related words, including 'go' and 'energy', or were shown [happy faces](#), were able to exercise significantly longer compared to those who were shown sad faces or inaction words.

The words and faces appeared on a digital screen - placed in front of the athlete - for less than 0.02 seconds and were masked by other visuals, meaning they were unidentifiable to the participant's conscious.

This research is the first to demonstrate that subliminal visual cues can directly affect performance during exercise. Additionally, it confirms that the perception of how much effort someone thinks they are using can be altered during [exercise](#). This can then have a knock-on effect on their overall endurance capacity.

Professor Marcora is currently exploring ways in which this research could open up new possibilities for athletes to improve their performance during competitions by using technology, such as 'smart glasses', to provide positive subliminal cues.

'Non-conscious visual cues related to affect and action alter perception of effort and [endurance performance](#)' (Samuele M. Marcora, University of Kent, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences; Anthony W. Blanchfield and James Hardy, Bangor University) is published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* [here](#).

Provided by University of Kent

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