

ASICS & SPORT SCIENTISTS DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF THE MIND IN ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

[25th June – London, England] – Does the mind trump muscle when it comes to athletic performance? Today, ASICS is revealing the results of a unique experiment which offer illuminating new findings on the debate...

In a controlled environment, with 10 athletes from around the world, it was shown that endurance running performance can be significantly affected by manipulating psychological conditions.

By making conditions tougher (running without any performance indicators, no clear finish line, or positive encouragement such as cheering) even experienced athletes saw a decline in their 5k times by an average of 60 seconds - the difference between winning a medal or not in competitive endurance sports.

The 4.5% difference in average 5K performance was bigger than ASICS anticipated. In some cases, the difference was as much as two minutes. To put this in context, a 5% difference would equate to running 9 minutes faster or slower for a 3-hour marathon runner.

Sports scientist Professor Samuele Marcora, Director of Research at the University of Kent's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, helped to devise the experiment to show that training the mind is as important as training the body.

"We wanted to show the critical role the mind plays in athletic performance. The difference we saw between the experiment conditions in just one day is similar to the difference you would see after a four-week high intensity training programme, so the mind shouldn't be underestimated," said Professor Marcora.

The experiment was part of a four-day series of tests on the ASICS Blackout Track, the world's first running track to train the mind, which was developed in collaboration with Professor Marcora, Dr Jo Corbett, leader of the Human Performance and Health Research Group at The University of Portsmouth, and top coaches.

Anima Sana In Corpore Sano, meaning "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body," is an old Latin phrase from which ASICS is derived and the fundamental platform on which the brand still stands. The company was founded more than 60 years ago by Kihachiro Onitsuka and is now a leading designer and manufacturer of running shoes, as well as, other athletic footwear, apparel and accessories. For more information, visit www.asics.com.



The stripe design featured on the sides of the ASICS® shoes is a registered trademark of ASICS Corporation.

The track was inspired by a technique practiced by long distance runners who train the mind by running on loops of a mile or two without any technology. With regular practice, running in these more challenging conditions is said to have a counter-intuitive effect by helping to focus the mind, training runners not to rely as much on props such as music, and assisting with pace judgement.

The Experiment

10 runners with a range of abilities – from one of the fastest marathon runners in Great Britain, Dewi Griffiths, to fitness influencer Emily Abbate (USA) – ran 5K in ‘lights on’ race conditions – lights on, music playing, crowds cheering and access to feedback about distance covered and lap times – then 5K again in ‘blackout’ conditions with all distractions removed – dim lighting, with ‘white noise’ muffling sound, no motivation or encouragement, and no feedback from technology.

“It was the same 10 runners in the same physical environment, the same 150m track, the same running surface, and the same apparel and footwear, but by manipulating the runners’ perception and experience of the environment, every runners’ performance was affected”, said Dr Jo Corbett.

“Despite the challenging conditions on the track, almost every runner said they felt a kind of euphoria at some point, which they referred to as ‘pure running’. It shows the power of getting more in-tune with ourselves by occasionally shutting out distractions,” said ASICS ambassador and Human Performance Coach Chevy Rough, who coached each participant following their run.

QUOTES FROM THE PARTICIPATING TALENT

“I was 13 seconds slower in the ‘blackout’ conditions but it felt considerably easier. I felt much calmer, in control and evenly paced, which was not what I was expecting”, said endurance runner Susie Chan (GB).

“It reminded me how powerful the mind is, to push your body using your mental strength. No matter your ability, you can go further than you think, and the mind is probably your most powerful tool,” said former European and Commonwealth Games champion Iwan Thomas (GB).

American athlete Deena Kastor pre-tested the track. She added: “For me, the track was a reminder of the simple joy that running offers; a rush of endorphins, or a quiet place to find ourselves in. Whether you’re a pro athlete or an everyday runner, mental restraints can limit us, but we all have the power to think our way to success.”

Additional findings:

Anima Sana In Corpore Sano, meaning “A Sound Mind in a Sound Body,” is an old Latin phrase from which ASICS is derived and the fundamental platform on which the brand still stands. The company was founded more than 60 years ago by Kihachiro Onitsuka and is now a leading designer and manufacturer of running shoes, as well as, other athletic footwear, apparel and accessories. For more information, visit www.asics.com.



The stripe design featured on the sides of the ASICS® shoes is a registered trademark of ASICS Corporation.

Each participant had their lap times and heart rates monitored, and completed the NASA Task Load Index, a tool that helps assess the perceived physical and mental workload of a task.

Additional findings:

- Difference in 5K performance was caused by a slower pace in the first nine laps and the absence of an end-spurt during the last three laps in the 'blackout' condition
- Ratings of perceived exertion during the last lap were significantly lower in 'blackout' conditions (likely due to slower pace and no clear finish line)
- Heart rates during the last lap were significantly lower in 'blackout' conditions (as above)

Mind Training Tools

ASICS has already put the findings into practice by providing runners with the tools to train their mind. Over [174,000] people have already taken part in a Runkeeper Move Your Mind challenge and ASICS running communities – FrontRunners and SMSB – will be hosting 'Blackout' running groups which will replicate the experience of the track.

The scientific experiment is part of ASICS belief that harmonizing mind and body is crucial to enable optimal performance. To give runners everywhere a taste of the track, tips on getting the most out of running performance are available on the ASICS website.

To find out more visit: asics.com/kayano25

Join the conversation: #ASICSBlackout

View the film: [here](#)

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The Experiment

A scientific report authored by Professor Marcora and Dr Jo Corbett is available on request.

The Experiment was held on Wednesday 6th June in London's Printworks venue on the ASICS Blackout Track. Participants included:

1. Iwan Thomas (GB) - former European and Commonwealth Games champion
2. Dewi Griffiths (GB) - 5,000m and 10,000m runner
3. Susie Chan (GB) - endurance runner and ASICS ambassador
4. Emily Abbate (USA) - fitness influencer
5. Daniela Dihmaier (Germany) – ASICS FrontRunner
6. Pongsakorn Mettarikanon (Thailand) – actor and keen runner
7. Zong Zijie (Singapore) – actor, runner and martial arts practitioner
8. Chase Tan (Singapore) - basketball player
9. Aishah Sinclair (Malaysia) – actress and presenter
10. Richard Ford (GB) - ProDirect

Anima Sana In Corpore Sano, meaning "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body," is an old Latin phrase from which ASICS is derived and the fundamental platform on which the brand still stands. The company was founded more than 60 years ago by Kihachiro Onitsuka and is now a leading designer and manufacturer of running shoes, as well as, other athletic footwear, apparel and accessories. For more information, visit www.asics.com.



The stripe design featured on the sides of the ASICS® shoes is a registered trademark of ASICS Corporation.

A similar difference in 5 km run performance has been shown with four weeks of sprint interval training (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25647646>).

The ASICS Blackout Track

Over 30 runners from around the world ran the track from 5-8 June to help look at the role of the mind in performance under varying conditions. The only support provided in the 'blackout' condition was ASICS industry-benchmark running shoe, GEL-KAYANO™ 25, which provides the ultimate comfort and stability to go the distance.

Anima Sana In Corpore Sano, meaning "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body," is an old Latin phrase from which ASICS is derived and the fundamental platform on which the brand still stands. The company was founded more than 60 years ago by Kihachiro Onitsuka and is now a leading designer and manufacturer of running shoes, as well as, other athletic footwear, apparel and accessories. For more information, visit www.asics.com.



The stripe design featured on the sides of the ASICS® shoes is a registered trademark of ASICS Corporation.