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Only Exhaustion Influences Climbers' Performance

The conclusion belongs to a new study

By Tudor Vieru, Science Editor

8th of January 2010, 13:55 GMT

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Experts at the University of Granada, in Spain, have recently broken the main line of thought concerning the top performances achievable by a climber. The team, which worked with 16 high-level climbers, says that no other factors influence the performance level of an athlete more than his or her own level of exhaustion, and its threshold. Factors such as the low body-fat percentage and grip strength, which have been touted to be very important until now, ranked way behind exhaustion, the team says.

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The goal of the new investigation was to allow trainers and athletes, professional and amateur alike, to design new training programs that would maximize a person's natural abilities to their fullest extent. Previous investigations had relied on assessing the differences between professional and amateur climbers, for determining the factors that influenced performance. But this research focused entirely on highly trained individuals. It was thus revealed that the time a climber took before coming to exhaustion was the only clear indicator of their performance.

Details of the new investigation appear in the latest issue of the European Journal of Applied Physiology, the UG team reveals. “These findings could help trainers or athletes in the design of sport climbing [training](#) programs so that Spain can continue to lead the way in this sporting activity throughout the world,” the main author of the new journal entry, UG scientist Vanesa Espana Romero, told SINC. She revealed that the physiological parameters that dictated performance in professional climbing were the main factors considered in obtaining the new response.

The researchers accounted for a wide variety of parameters. Among those, they mention weight, height, the body mass index, the body fat percentage, the bone mineral density, and the bone mineral content. Alongside those, the UG group also looked at the length of arms, hands and fingers, the bone mineral density and bone mineral content of the forearm, as well as at features such as flexibility, strength of the upper and lower body, and aerobic capacity measured at a climbing center.

“The maximum climbing time to exhaustion of an athlete is the sole determinant of performance,” the final results of the paper confirm, as per the team. Therefore, the only thing that athletes need to do is sustain their efforts and save their strength for as much as possible. Only so will they be able to make it to the top, and achieve their goals, [AlphaGalileo](#) reports.

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