

ADIDAS GUIDANCE ON OVERCOMING PRESSURE IN BASKETBALL



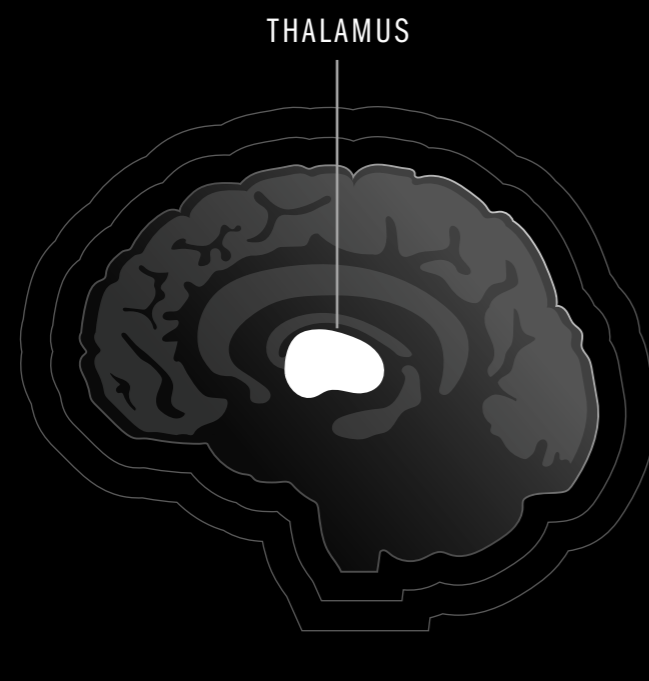
With the ambition to disarm pressure in sport – a feeling experienced by athletes of all levels – adidas has teamed up with leading sport neuroscientists, neuro11, to understand the impact it has within a game of basketball – in particular free throws.

Working with **Nneka Ogwumike**, as well as an amateur in the game, adidas and neuro11 delved into their minds to identify and analyse where pressure peaks.

From this data, a toolbox of techniques has been developed to help enable athletes to overcome this and access the optimal zone – the brain state in which athletes perform at their best.

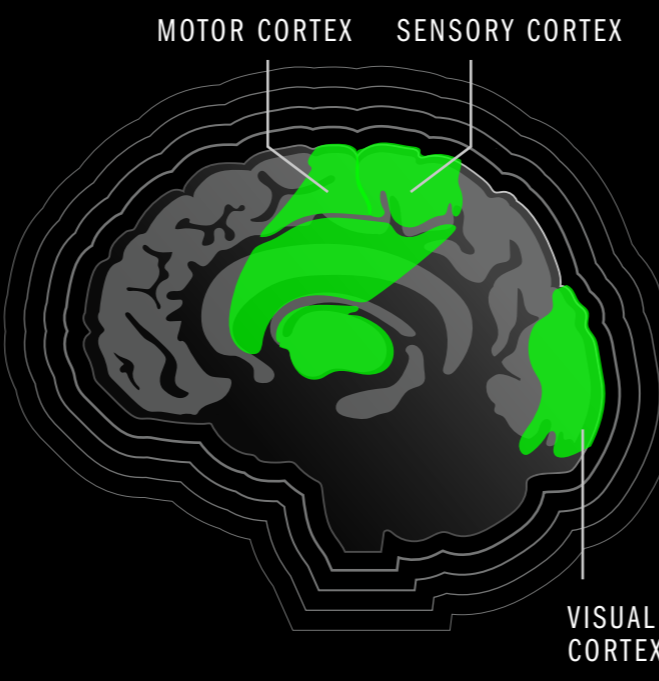


NEURO11'S STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY, WHEN CONNECTED TO AN ATHLETE IS ABLE TO IDENTIFY WHEN THE BRAIN IS...



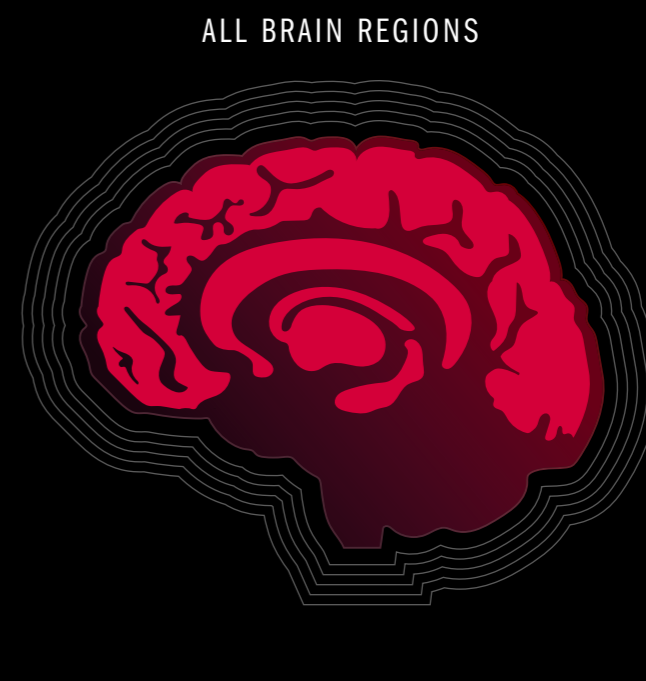
TOO LOW

Brain frequency is in the state associated with **relaxation and/or tiredness** – this is deemed as too low for optimal performance



OPTIMAL ZONE

Brain frequency is in the state where it is **mentally focussed and psychologically efficient** – this is deemed **ideal** for optimal performance and is often referred to as being 'in the zone'



TOO HIGH

Brain frequency is in an **over analysis state** – this is deemed as **too high for optimal performance/pressure is having a negative impact** – your brain is falling out of the optimal zone and losing focus

NEURO11 SAY

"The 'OPTIMAL ZONE' is the sweet spot between relaxation and over thinking. This is where the athlete's brain is in a state which is physically relaxed but mentally focussed, leading to optimal movement and performance.

Training with pressure (e.g. onrushing defender or fulfilling accuracy-related target scores) can help athletes learn how to stay in the optimal zone for the big moments."

KEY TERMS



BRAIN FOCUS INDEX

Individually calculated value which indicates **how deeply the athletes brain is in the optimal frequency zone** during performance and moments of pressure



BASELINE

Athlete's brain focus index pre training – **serves as a reference value.** The brain is not doing exercise and is under no pressure, so it allows for comparisons to be made when training and moments of pressure occurs



'ADDING' PRESSURE

Implementing a tactic to the athlete's training session which **intentionally puts pressure** on them – i.e. requirement for them to run after a missed shot



IN THE ZONE

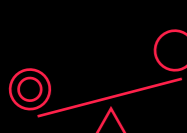
Brain focus index shows **athlete is in the optimal zone for performance** – a perfect balance of being mentally focused and yet physically relaxed

PRESSURE IN BASKETBALL

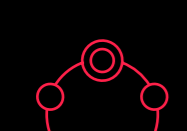
Whilst **pressure** looks and feels different for each athlete some of the **contributing factors** can be:



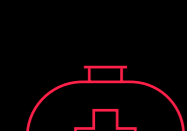
Time constraints in-game



Self-expectation



Social pressure: desire to not let your team down



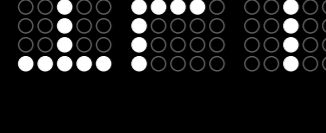
Wanting to avoid injury



NNEKA OGWUMIKE

FREE THROW PRESSURE

DOWN POINTS



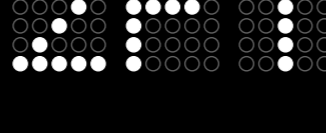
SECONDS LEFT

00:00:15

ACCURACY DROPS

8.8%

DOWN POINTS



SECONDS LEFT

00:00:15

ACCURACY DROPS

6.3%

SECONDS LEFT

00:00:03

ACCURACY DROPS

5-10%

"Something that I struggle with is finding a moment to relax, especially in those moments right before I shoot. There's a game recently that I remember where I didn't take my time, and it kinda made me disappointed in myself."

- NNEKA OGWUMIKE

NNEKA OGWUMIKE VS GRASSROOTS ATHLETE PRESSURE

REDUCING PRESSURE

"Nneka's brain state can move into the **too high zone when under pressure** – i.e. if an opponent is closing in on her – this could be linked to a fear of injury." - NEURO11

"For the grassroots athlete, their brain entering the too high zone was associated more to social pressure and the absence of a set routine." - NEURO11

INCREASE

28%

'TOO HIGH' ZONE

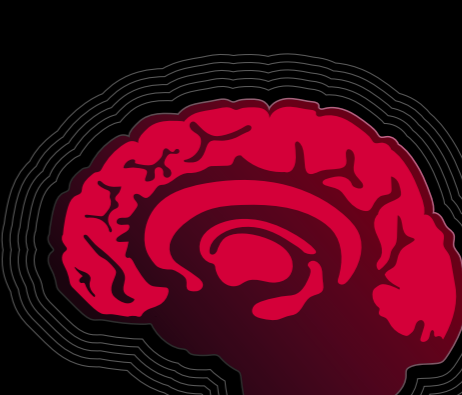


ELITE ATHLETE

INCREASE

44%

'TOO HIGH' ZONE



GRASSROOTS ATHLETE

HARNESSING PRESSURE

"When put **under time pressure, Nneka can lose focus,** but has the world-class ability of getting back to the zone very quickly by simply following her routines." - NEURO11

"Nneka's elite mindset and ability to inhibit **task-irrelevant thoughts allows her to focus by 40% more on what matters most in the moment.**"

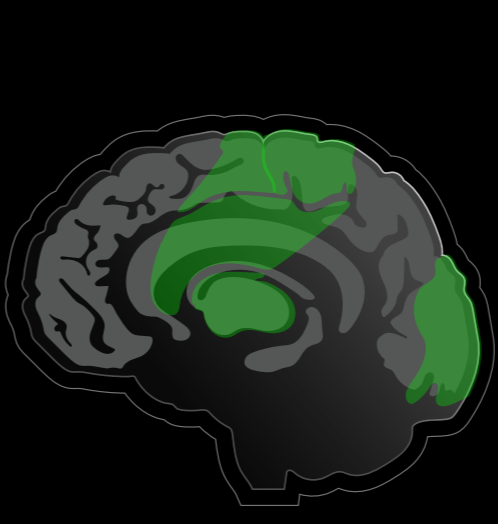
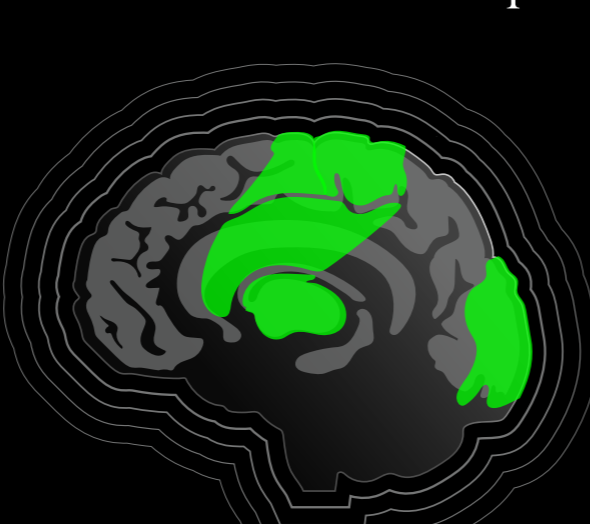
When time pressure was added:

INCREASE

BRAIN FOCUS INDEX

52%

ELITE ATHLETE



INCREASE

BRAIN FOCUS INDEX

12%

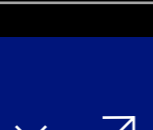
GRASSROOTS ATHLETE

NEURO11'S TIPS FOR TACKLING PRESSURE



USE TIME TACTICALLY

Take your time to **clear your mind** before executing your pre-shot routine for a free-throw. Use these moments to **focus and feel comfortable** – i.e. by adjusting your clothing, bouncing the ball or pulling up your socks



TRUST THE PROCESS

Focus only on your next step and try to avoid anticipating if your shot won't go to plan – this will transition you into over analysing. Trust your training process and stick to your usual plan.



MOVE ON FROM MISTAKES

If you have a bad shooting day switch your focus on finding other ways to help your team perform at their best. **If you miss a shot, don't bow your head and instead direct concentration on your defensive game.**



PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Understand your personal stats as much as possible as this will allow you to gain a realistic perspective on your strongest skills in addition to your potential improvement areas.

INSIDE NNEKA'S FREE THROW ROUTINE:

- 1 Once at the top of the key, I get my feet set
- 2 The 'nail' is in between my two feet – my left foot is a little bit back
- 3 I look at the ref this allows me some time to refocus
- 4 The ref passes me the ball
- 5 I look at the rim, dribble twice, get set... and then shoot

