

**ADIDAS UNVEILS ITS AMBITION TO HELP ATHLETES OVERCOME**

**HIGH PRESSURE MOMENTS IN SPORT**

* adidas sets out to tackle the negative impact of pressure in sport as it reveals that grassroot athletes can experience up to the same amount of pressure as those at elite level, but are less equipped to handle it
* To understand the physiological effect pressure has, adidas partnered with leading sport neuroscientists, neuro11, studying sporting icons Emiliano Martínez, Ludvig Åberg, Nneka Ogwumike, Rose Zhang, and Stina Blackstenius
* From tactically using time to regain focus in basketball, revealing the optimal area of a goal to strike a penalty, to reducing dwell time on putting in golf, adidas is releasing a neuroscience-powered athlete guidance series

**Herzogenaurach, February 8th 2024:** adidas unveils its ambition to help disarm negative pressure in sport by working with elite and grassroots athletes to reveal the impact it can have on performance. Uncovering how pressure has a significant impact on the next-generation’s relationship with sport, affecting enjoyment and overall participation, adidas is using neuroscience to explore how the world’s best manage it. Through this unique athlete insight, spearheaded by the brand’s positive rallying cry – *You Got This –* the goal is to help everyday athletes disarm pressure and achieve their possibilities in sport.

Through cutting-edge research, adidas discovered the extent to which pressure is experienced across all levels of sport. The main finding from this study was that grassroots athletes and their elite counterparts experience similarly intense levels of pressure in high-stake moments - but elite athletes were up to 40% more effective at managing pressure during these moments1. To help close this gap, adidas is working with leading neuroscientists, neuro11, to set out how and why negative pressure hinders play, whilst providing guidance on how athletes at all levels can help to disarm this feeling.

Bringing together a selection of its elite athletes across football, basketball, and golf, as well as grassroot players from the same sports, adidas and neuro11 captured and analysed their cerebral readings during high pressure moments. FIFA World Cup 2022 winner Emiliano Martínez, Ryder Cup 2023 champion Ludvig Åberg, eight-time WNBA All-Star Nneka Ogwumike, breakthrough golfing phenom Rose Zhang, and WSL star forward Stina Blackstenius all took part in the study to help athletes around the world better understand pressure and how to overcome it.

**Dr Niklas Häusler, co-founder of neuro11 says**, *“While pressure looks and feels different for everyone, there is a scientific sweet spot in the brain that all can reach – the optimal zone, commonly referred to as “being in the zone”. This is where the brain is physically relaxed but mentally focussed, leading to optimal movement and performance. When we work with athletes, we study their brain frequencies to establish how often and how deeply they enter this optimal zone during pressure moments, as well as what contributes to them falling into ‘too low’ or ‘too high’ zones for performance, all with the intention of teaching routines that they can implement. Building on this, and in support of adidas’ mission to help everyday athletes realise their potential, we have created practical guidance that helps enhance performance, when it matters the most.”*

Delving deeper into some of the most pressured moments in sport, adidas and neuro11 studied professional and amateur athletes during penalty shootouts, high-stakes putts, and must-make free-throws. Through measuring how their brains reacted and calculating how effectively and efficiently each athlete was able to reach the optimal zone, the findings demonstrate to what extent the elite athletes are better prepared in facing pressure and show what steps grassroots athletes can take to help better disarm pressure.

During the penalty shootout testing, Emiliano Martínez showed that he excelled under pressure, as he was 90% more in the optimal zone during high pressure moments in the penalties test. Martínez showcased a world-class mental ability to switch his focus from any surrounding distraction to concentrate solely on the penalty taker, resulting in him being three times more effective at harnessing pressure to get into the optimal zone compared to the grassroots goalkeeper.

While undertaking the free-throw tests, Nneka Ogwumike proved the importance of having a set and consistent pre-shot routine. When executing this, she was able to get 52% more in the optimal zone – 40% more than the grassroots basketballer. The routine allowed her to shut out any external distractions and thoughts, to focus her mind and work effectively with the pressure during the shot.

For the golf putting tests results showed that putts which were nine metres, or less, created significantly more pressure on the putting green. During these moments, both Ludvig Åberg and the grassroots golfer’s ability to get into the optimal zone were less, compared to putting situations that were further from the hole, with the grassroots golfer moving 42% more into the ‘too high’ brain zone. However, for long distance putts Ludvig was able to get 71% more into the optimal zone, whereas the grassroot golfer was less focused and moved 91% more into the ‘too high’ brain zone.

**When talking about pressure in his game, Emiliano Martínez** **shared:** *“Penalty shootouts are one the most high-pressure moments of the game, but for me, I see it as an opportunity to channel that energy to my advantage. When standing on the goal line, I try to maintain a clear mindset and stay focussed. I allow my intuition to play a role, paying close attention to what the shooter is doing – their run up, their body shape – and use this to form my decision on what my next movement is. Following my session with adidas and neuro11, it was interesting to see data which proved that when the pressure is on, I am more in the zone and perform better– as it reinforced my own evaluation.”*

adidas is releasing a wide range of athlete stories, insights from experts and neuroscience-powered guidance materials - all designed to help athletes at any level to disarm pressure in sport. Across a series of multi-sport how-to guides and a candid four-part fly-on-the-wall athlete series, it will share how to access the optimal zone through a series of insider techniques. The guidance reveals the optimal area of a goal to strike a penalty, how to use time to regain focus before netting a free throw, as well as the impact of dwell time on putting in golf – the science-backed insight helps enhance mental focus during some of the most pressured moments across sport.

**Florian Alt, VP Global Brand Comms at adidas says:** *“Understanding the extent to which negative pressure affects performance underlines the importance of our mission to help athletes across the world overcome it - to fully unlock the joy sport brings. Ahead of a stellar year of sport, we’ve set out to inspire next-gen athletes to tackle pressure by giving them unique insight into how some of the world’s best athletes manage pressure. Using the latest in neuroscience data and research, we have also released tools and techniques to help empower everyone to disarm pressure in sport. We hope this campaign enables athletes to get back to what they love about the game - by reminding them with our positive rallying cry – you got this.”*

Over the course of the new global brand campaign adidas will continue to unite a wide range of sporting icons to demonstrate how they handle pressure in some of the most high-stakes moments, inspiring everyday athletes to do the same. Coming to life through a series of star-studded content and activations alongside some of the biggest spectacles in the sporting calendar, adidas’ message dedicated to the next generation of athletes is to believe they can overcome pressure to achieve their possible possibilities in sport.

The episodic fly-on-the-wall style series will be available on adidas’ Instagram and YouTube channels from 8th February 2024, with the how-to-guides for each of these sports available to download [here](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/news.adidas.com/basketball/adidas-releases-neuroscience-powered-guidance-to-help-athletes-overcome-high-pressure-moments-in-spo/s/b6881d9f-f55c-42c4-b04d-22763b571e2d__;!!BupLon6U!u2NsBHgS2L3wIWDyEfVr36shn9WBwnC4yCvkzFneAiDsQkVTe3JFLV1pcuuPNy0llzjuAUE7R5rvvHbnHKf6QNpjHzRIwd2F51A$), and also set to preview on adidas' TikTok. Visit [www.adidas.com/us/yougotthis](https://www.adidas.com/us/yougotthis) explore more about the campaign.

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**Notes to editor**

**References**

1 Findings captured during athlete training sessions, as part of adidas SS24 Brand Campaign, in collaboration with neuro11 (November ’23- January ’24). Study carried out with Emiliano Martínez, Ludvig Åberg, Nneka Ogwumike, Rose Zhang, and Stina Blackstenius, in addition to 5 grassroot athletes.

**About adidas**

adidas is a global leader in the sporting goods industry. Headquartered in Herzogenaurach/Germany, the company employs more than 59,000 people across the globe and generated sales of € 22.5 billion in 2022.

**About neuro11**

German-based neuro11 provides its scientific expertise in neuroscience, psychology, sports science, and neuroeconomics to worldwide partners in elite sports and high performing business environments.