



Abstract GLMS Prof. Andrew Mark Edwards,

17 December 2026

Time perception in sport and exercise: from performance regulation to sustainable behaviours

Exercise and sport are organised in chronological (clock) time, yet performance and participation are governed by how that time is experienced. This presentation examines subjective time as an emerging component of the psychophysiology of exercise, integrating work on pacing, physiological strain, interoception, attention, motivation and affect. Studies across maximal exercise, competitive cycling and professional football suggest that time perception changes with exercise intensity and with the nature of the activity, while emerging evidence indicates that cardiorespiratory fitness may also shape how quickly exercise seems to pass. These effects have implications at both ends of the performance spectrum. In athletes, perceived time may interact with effort regulation, attentional focus and pacing; in less active populations, exercise that feels prolonged may be less enjoyable, less valued and less likely to be repeated. Understanding why time flies in some exercise experiences but drags in others may therefore offer a useful bridge between performance science and the design of exercise experiences that people are willing to sustain.