

**The influence of an afternoon nap on the endurance performance of trained runners**

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5 **The influence of an afternoon nap on the endurance performance of trained**
6 **runners**

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23
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27 **Abstract**

28 The effectiveness of a nap as a recovery strategy for endurance exercise is unknown
29 and therefore the present study investigated the effect of napping on endurance
30 exercise performance. Eleven trained male runners completed this randomized
31 crossover study. On two occasions runners completed treadmill running for 30 min at
32 75% $\dot{V}O_{2max}$ in the morning, returning that evening to run for 20 min at 60% $\dot{V}O_{2max}$,
33 and then to exhaustion at 90% $\dot{V}O_{2max}$. On one trial, runners had an afternoon nap
34 approximately 90-min before the evening exercise (NAP) whilst on the other runners
35 did not (CON). All runners napped (20 ± 10 min), but time to exhaustion (TTE) was
36 not improved in all runners (NAP 596 ± 148 s vs. CON 589 ± 216 s, $P=0.83$).
37 Runners that improved TTE after the nap slept less at night than those that did not
38 improve TTE (nighttime sleep 6.4 ± 0.7 h vs. 7.5 ± 0.4 h, $P<0.01$). Furthermore,
39 nighttime sleep predicted change in TTE, indicating that runners sleeping least at
40 night improved TTE the most after the nap compared to CON ($r^2 = -0.76$, $P=0.001$).
41 In runners that improved TTE, ratings of perceived exertion (RPE) were lower during
42 the TTE on NAP than CON compared to runners that did not improve (-0.4 ± 0.6 vs.
43 0 ± 0 , $P=0.05$). Reduced exercising sense of effort (RPE) may account for the
44 improved TTE after the nap. In conclusion, a short afternoon nap improves
45 endurance performance in runners that obtain less than 7 h nighttime sleep.

46

47 **Key words:** recovery, fatigue, sleep, training, time to exhaustion, RPE

48 **Introduction**

49 It is common for athletes to perform multiple exercise sessions on the same day and
50 work obligations mean this training is often completed early in the morning and late
51 in the evening (Sargent, Lastella, Halson, & Roach, 2014; Seiler, 2010). In addition to
52 its physical and psychological demands, athletic training can therefore also curtail
53 nighttime sleep (Sargent, Halson, & Roach, 2014; Sargent, Lastella, Halson, &
54 Roach, 2014). For example, it was recently reported that sleep averaged only 6.5 h
55 per night on training days in 70 national ranked athletes (Sargent, Halson, & Roach,
56 2014). A particular concern of this research was that the athletes reported increased
57 fatigue pre-training (Sargent, Lastella, Halson, & Roach, 2014). Moreover, the
58 athletes' sleep is not consistent with recommendation of 7-9 h of sleep per day to be
59 a healthy adult with optimal neurocognitive functioning (Hirshkowitz et al., 2015). As
60 insufficient sleep has been shown to reduce physical capacity, increase sense of
61 effort (RPE) during exercise and decrease mood (Oliver, Costa, Laing, Bilzon, &
62 Walsh, 2009; Bonnet, 1985), performance may be compromised in athletes that do
63 not obtain the recommended night-time sleep. Accordingly, strategies that enable
64 athletes to increase total daily sleep could benefit exercise performance and training.
65 For example, extending nighttime sleep may improve athletic performance in
66 collegiate basketball players (Mah, Mah, Kezirian, & Dement, 2011). Unfortunately,
67 due to early morning and late evening training, extending night sleep time is not
68 feasible for many athletes, and therefore, it is necessary to develop and assess the
69 effectiveness of alternative methods to increase total daily sleep; for instance,
70 daytime napping.

71

72 Defined as a sleep that is distinct from and substantially shorter than an individual's
73 normal night-time sleep (Dinges, 1989), napping has been shown to maintain
74 physical, psychological, and perceptual performance in persons involved in shift
75 work or early morning rising (Caldwell et al., 2009; Ruggiero & Redeker, 2014).
76 While athletes nap sometimes during training (Sargent, Lastella, Halson, & Roach,
77 2014), experimental evidence exploring the effect of napping on exercise
78 performance is limited to two studies that report disparate effects. Moreover, these
79 studies investigated anaerobic exercise performance (Petit, Mougin, Bourdin, Tio, &
80 Haffen, 2014; Waterhouse, Atkinson, Edwards, & Reilly, 2007). The effect of napping
81 on endurance exercise performance is therefore unknown. The primary aim of this
82 study was to investigate the effect of a short afternoon nap, after morning exercise,
83 on evening endurance exercise performance in trained runners.

84

85 As napping has previously been shown to reduce subjective daytime fatigue, and
86 maintain preferable mood profiles in occupational settings (Petrie, Powell, &
87 Broadbent, 2004; Schweitzer, Randazzo, Stone, Erman, & Walsh, 2006), it was
88 hypothesised that endurance exercise performance, as assessed by running time to
89 exhaustion (TTE), would be longer after the nap because of a reduced sensation of
90 pre-exercise fatigue. The two previous studies that report equivocal effects of a nap
91 on short-term anaerobic exercise performance may be explained by the different
92 sleep duration the night before the exercise test was performed. That is, a nap
93 benefitted anaerobic exercise performance in those that slept 4 h the night before
94 (Waterhouse et al., 2007) but not in those that slept 8 h the night before (Petit et al.,
95 2014). A secondary aim of the study was therefore to determine whether nighttime
96 sleep influences the effectiveness of a nap on endurance performance. It was

97 hypothesised that the nap would benefit endurance performance of runners with the
98 least nighttime sleep.

99

100 **Methods**

101 ***Participants***

102 Eleven healthy, trained male runners (mean \pm SD; age 35 ± 12 years, height 176 ± 4
103 cm, body mass 72.7 ± 10.0 kg, $\dot{V}O_{2max}$ 60 ± 11 ml·kg·min⁻¹, weekly training distance
104 72 ± 37 km) volunteered for this study having been recruited through local
105 advertisements at running clubs and race events. Sleep questionnaires identified the
106 runners as intermediate chronotype (56.7 ± 8.1 , Horne-Östberg Morningness-
107 Eveningness Questionnaire; Horne & Östberg, 1976) and having typical going to bed
108 and rising times ($23:24 \pm 00:48$ and $07:21 \pm 01:01$ h), nighttime sleep duration ($6.9 \pm$
109 0.9 h) and sleep quality (4.7 ± 1.9 , Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index; Buysse, Reynolds
110 3rd, Monk, Berman, & Kupfer, 1989). Runners' also completed the Epworth
111 Sleepiness Scale (ESS; Johns, 1991) scoring 5.9 ± 2.5 , which is below the threshold
112 of 10 for clinically meaningful daytime sleepiness. The study received local
113 University Ethics Committee approval for testing human participants and was
114 completed with ethical standards in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.
115 Runners gave written informed consent after receiving verbal and written information
116 about the study. To be eligible to complete the study runners were required to have
117 completed a 5 km running race in less than 23 min in the previous 12 months. We
118 also requested that runners maintain a consistent sleep-wake pattern for the entire
119 study. Exclusion criteria included an alcohol intake of greater than 20 g (2.5 units)
120 per day.

121

122 ***Design***

123 Runners visited the laboratory on three occasions. The first visit was to establish
124 maximal oxygen uptake ($\dot{V}O_{2max}$) and running speeds for the treadmill runs during
125 the experimental trials in Visits 2 and 3. The study was a repeated-measures
126 crossover design where participants completed either a control (CON) or nap (NAP)
127 trial in a randomised order. The randomisation was completed by SJO using
128 www.randomization.com. The experimental trials were separated by a minimum of 5
129 and a maximum of 9 days. All visits and exercise tests were conducted on the same
130 motorised treadmill (h/p/ cosmos mercury med 4.0, Nussdorf, Germany), in the same
131 laboratory, under the same environmental conditions ($19.7 \pm 0.6^{\circ}C$, $59 \pm 7\%$ relative
132 humidity, wind speed $2.3 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ generated by a fan placed 2 m in front of the
133 treadmill).

134

135 ***Preliminary testing***

136 During Visit 1, anthropometric measures of height and nude body weight were
137 recorded and then an incremental exercise test to volitional exhaustion was
138 completed on a treadmill to establish $\dot{V}O_{2max}$. The test started at $10 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ with a 0%
139 treadmill gradient. Increments were achieved by increasing the treadmill speed by 1
140 $\text{km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$ every minute until $16 \text{ km}\cdot\text{h}^{-1}$. Thereafter the gradient was increased by 1%
141 every minute until exhaustion. Oxygen consumption was recorded continuously
142 throughout this test by a metabolic cart (Metalyser, Cortex, Leipzig, Germany) with
143 $\dot{V}O_{2max}$ defined as the highest 30 s average at any given time point. Additionally,
144 during the final 15 s of each incremental stage recordings of heart rate (HR) and
145 RPE were made by remote transmitter (FT3, Polar, Kempele, Finland) and the CR10
146 scale (Borg, 1998). After active recovery until HR decreased to less than 100

147 beats·min⁻¹, $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$ was verified by runners returning to the treadmill to complete
148 running at one intensity greater than at exhaustion (i.e. 1% greater gradient). After a
149 further 10-min rest, runners re-mounted the treadmill, set at a gradient of 1% to
150 reflect the energy cost of road running (Jones & Doust, 1996), to determine the
151 running speeds equivalent to 60, 75 and 90% $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$ for the subsequent
152 experimental trials.

153

154 ***Experimental procedures***

155 For the main experimental trials runners attended the laboratory on two separate
156 occasions within the same day. This consisted of a morning exercise session (08:48
157 ± 01:09 h) and an evening exercise session (17:03 ± 00:50 h). To control for
158 circadian variation runners attended the laboratory at the same time of day for both
159 of their experimental trials; these exercise sessions replaced the runners' normal
160 morning and evening exercise sessions in their scheduled training plan. To
161 standardise diet and activity, 24 h before each visit runners recorded and replicated
162 a diet and activity diary, consumed water equal to 35 ml·kg⁻¹ body mass and avoided
163 alcohol (Oliver, Laing, Wilson, Bilzon, & Walsh, 2007). Between the morning and
164 evening exercise runners continued their normal daily obligations. The night before
165 each experimental trial, and the day of each experimental trial, runner sleep-wake
166 activity was monitored by a diary and wristwatch accelerometer worn on the non-
167 dominant arm (GT1M, ActiGraph LLC, Florida, USA). The sleep diary was used to
168 calculate time in bed from the difference between time asleep and time awake. Time
169 asleep was calculated from time in bed minus sleep latency and interrupted sleep as
170 determined by accelerometry (Ancoli-Israel et al., 2003). Sleep efficiency was
171 determined by dividing time asleep by time in bed.

172

173 At the beginning of the morning exercise session runners completed two subjective
174 sleep questionnaires: The Karolinska Sleepiness Scale (KSS; Akerstedt & Gillberg,
175 1990) and the St Mary's Sleep Questionnaire (Ellis et al. 1981). The KSS assesses
176 current sleepiness on a single 10-point likert-type scale ranging from (1) "extremely
177 alert" to (10) "extremely sleepy, can't keep awake". The St Mary's Sleep
178 Questionnaire is a 14-item questionnaire that assesses prior night's sleep duration
179 and quality. Sleep quality was determined from the sum of the seven likert-type items
180 permitting an overall score of between 6 and 38, with higher scores representative of
181 better sleep quality. Runners then completed a 30-min treadmill run at a speed
182 equivalent to 75% $\dot{V}O_{2max}$. During this, HR and RPE were recorded at 1-min
183 intervals. Runners did not consume food or fluids during the run. Upon completion of
184 this exercise protocol, runners showered, fitted the accelerometer wristwatch, and
185 were free to leave the laboratory with instructions to continue their normal daily
186 obligations with or without an afternoon nap, depending on the assigned
187 experimental condition. Runners were also reminded to avoid alcohol and strenuous
188 exercise during this time.

189

190 On NAP trial, approximately 90 min before re-visiting the laboratory for the second
191 exercise bout, runners commenced the afternoon nap (mean clock time of 15:20 \pm
192 1:00 h, range 14:00 to 16:50 h). To commence the nap, runners rested on a bed, in a
193 familiar, quiet, darkened room until they fell asleep. Runners were instructed to rest
194 for no longer than 40 minutes and to set an alarm to indicate the end of this 40-
195 minute period. On waking all runners immediately completed the KSS before
196 returning to the laboratory.

197

198 At the beginning of the evening exercise session, runners completed questionnaires
199 to assess current sleepiness (KSS) and mood (Brunel Mood Scale (BRUMS); Terry,
200 Lane, & Fogarty, 2003). Total mood disturbance was calculated by the sum of
201 BRUMS fatigue, anger, tension, confusion and depression subscales minus vigour.
202 A constant of 100 was added to prevent negative numbers (Lastella, et al, 2015). To
203 assess hydration status before exercise, a urine sample was collected to determine
204 urine specific gravity (Atago Uricon-Ne, New York, USA) and nude body mass was
205 measured. As napping was previously shown to reduce core body temperature
206 (Waterhouse et al., 2007), which may benefit endurance performance, runners also
207 fitted a rectal thermistor for core body temperature monitoring (YSI 4000A, Daytona,
208 FL). Runners then performed a treadmill run for 20-min at a speed equivalent to 60%
209 $\dot{V}O_{2max}$. During the run, HR and core body temperature were recorded every minute,
210 whilst RPE was recorded at 2-min intervals. Runners did not consume food or fluids
211 during the run. After the 20-min run, runners removed the rectal thermistor and
212 completed the BRUMS and the KSS during a standardised 13-min rest period before
213 beginning the treadmill run TTE, which was completed at a speed equivalent to 90%
214 $\dot{V}O_{2max}$. Runners TTE was defined as the time elapsed between the onset of running
215 at 90% $\dot{V}O_{2max}$ and volitional exhaustion. HR and RPE were recorded every minute
216 during the TTE test, and finally at exhaustion. During the TTE, runners received no
217 encouragement and they were blind to their elapsed running time. Results of all tests
218 were only provided to the runners once they had completed both experimental trials.

219

220 ***Data and statistical analyses***

221 An analysis (G*Power, Version 3.1.2) using standard alpha (0.05), beta values (0.8)
222 and typical coefficient of variation (8%) of high-intensity running TTE tests in trained
223 runners (Billat, Renoux, Pinoteau, Petit, & Koralsztein, 1994) indicated a sample size
224 of eleven would provide adequate statistical precision to detect a 8% or ~30 s
225 difference between CON and NAP trials in the main outcome measure, TTE. To
226 determine the effect of a nap on TTE, a paired sample t-test was used to compare
227 TTE on the NAP and CON trials. To determine the effect of the nap on individual
228 runners performance, the percentage change in individual runners performance was
229 compared to the coefficient of variation of the TTE (8%). A paired sample t-test was
230 used to determine if nighttime sleep and exercising responses were different
231 between those runners that improved TTE after the nap compared to runners that
232 did not improve TTE after the nap. In addition, simple regression was used to
233 determine if time asleep the night before the trials, and time asleep the night before
234 combined with the nap duration, predicted the effectiveness of a nap to improve
235 TTE. Time asleep was calculated as the average of the night's sleep before both
236 experimental trials. A paired sample *t*-test was used to determine if a difference
237 existed between sleep duration the night before the experimental trials and a 4-day
238 mean from the sleep diary that was completed one month prior. Paired sample *t*-
239 tests were also used to assess for differences between the CON and NAP for: night
240 sleep-wake activity and subjective sleep quality the night before each experimental
241 trial; 30-min morning exercise responses (mean HR & RPE); responses 90-min after
242 the nap and before evening exercise (urine specific gravity, nude body mass, core
243 temperature, BRUMS subscales and total mood disturbance; and at the end of the
244 TTE. In addition, a 2 x 4 (condition x time) fully repeated measures analysis of
245 variance (ANOVA) was used to assess sleepiness throughout each trial day, and 2 x

246 3 (condition x time) ANOVA's were used to assess iso-time RPE and HR at 0% (first
247 minute), 50%, and 100% (final full minute) of the TTE test (Blanchfield, Hardy, de
248 Morree, Staiano, & Marcora, 2014). Bonferroni follow up tests were used where
249 appropriate. Statistical significance was accepted at $P < 0.05$ (two-tailed). Unless
250 noted otherwise, all data are shown as mean \pm standard deviation.

251

252 **Results**

253 ***Nighttime sleep before each trial and morning exercise***

254 Sleep duration the night before the experimental trials was similar to the 4-day mean
255 that was recorded one month before the first experimental visit (419 ± 46 min before
256 experimental trials vs. one-month prior 406 ± 62 min, $P = 0.53$). Runner's sleep-wake
257 activity, including sleep duration and quality were also similar before each
258 experimental trial (Table 1).

259

260 The 30-min morning treadmill exercise at $75\% \dot{V}O_{2max}$ elicited similar mean HR (NAP
261 153 ± 19 beats \cdot min $^{-1}$ vs. CON 150 ± 18 beats \cdot min $^{-1}$, $P = 0.71$) and RPE (NAP $4.2 \pm$
262 1.0 vs. CON 4.5 ± 1.4 , $P = 0.49$), indicating that runners completed the morning
263 exercise in a similar physiological and perceptual state on each trial.

264

265 ***Nap intervention***

266 All runners confirmed that they were able to nap on the NAP trial. Runners were in
267 bed for 34 ± 12 min with 20 ± 10 min time asleep. As expected, our follow up tests
268 for sleepiness revealed that it was increased immediately after the nap (Figure 1,
269 NAP 5.5 ± 1.6 vs. CON 4.0 ± 1.4 , $P = 0.001$).

270

271 On arrival to the laboratory, approximately 90-min after the nap period had
272 commenced, there was no difference in urine specific gravity or nude body mass,
273 which suggests that runners arrived for the evening exercise in a similar state of
274 hydration on both trials. Sleepiness (Figure 1), core body temperature and total
275 mood disturbance (Table 2) were also similar approximately 90-min after the nap
276 and before the 60% $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$ steady state run. Further, there was no difference in any
277 of the mood subscales including fatigue and vigour, suggesting mood was not
278 altered by the nap.

279

280 ***Evening exercise following an afternoon nap***

281 As a whole group, running TTE was similar after the nap to the control trial (NAP 596
282 ± 148 s vs. CON 589 ± 216 s, $P = 0.83$). Similarly, isotime HR and RPE did not differ
283 during the TTE (HR and RPE, $P = 0.88$ and $P = 0.81$, respectively). Examination of
284 individual runner responses to the nap revealed that the nap improved TTE of five
285 runners and impaired the TTE of three runners (Figure 2A).

286

287 Those runners that improved running TTE after the nap slept less the night before,
288 and in the 24 hours before, the TTE than those that did not improve running TTE
289 after the nap (nighttime sleep 382 ± 39 min vs. 449 ± 24 min, $P = 0.007$; total 24 h
290 sleep (nighttime sleep plus nap) 401 ± 37 min vs. 469 ± 20 min, $P = 0.004$).

291 Furthermore, time asleep the night before the TTE predicted change in TTE,
292 indicating those that slept less at night improved TTE most after the nap ($r^2 = -0.69$,
293 $P = 0.002$: Figure 2B). Total sleep in the 24 h before the TTE also predicted change
294 in TTE ($r^2 = -0.76$, $P = 0.001$). Sleep efficiency ($P = 0.37$) and subjective sleep quality
295 ($P = 0.08$) was however similar between those improving TTE and those that did not.

296

297 Runners that improved TTE after the nap reported a lower RPE at 100% TTE isotime
298 on their NAP trial versus their CON trial (-0.4 ± 0.6) compared to runners who did not
299 improve TTE after the nap (0 ± 0 , $P = 0.05$). There also was a relationship between
300 the change in RPE between NAP versus CON at 100% TTE isotime and change in
301 TTE ($r = -0.64$, $P = 0.02$), indicating that where a nap lowered RPE it was
302 associated with a longer TTE. In contrast, there was no difference between those
303 runners that improved running TTE and those that did not in other resting or TTE
304 physiological or psychological responses (i.e. sleepiness, fatigue, vigour, core
305 temperature or HR, $P > 0.1$).

306

307 **Discussion**

308 Research on napping and athletic performance is limited. Accordingly, this study
309 uniquely adds to the napping literature by providing the first experimental evidence
310 into the effect of a nap on endurance exercise performance. As a strength, we
311 included trained runners with typical sleep-wake schedules. Our primary aim was to
312 determine the effect of a short afternoon nap on evening endurance exercise
313 performance in trained runners. In contrast to our first hypothesis the nap did not
314 reduce fatigue or improve endurance performance in all runners. A secondary aim of
315 the study was to determine whether sleep duration influences the effectiveness of a
316 nap to improve endurance performance. Consistent with our second hypothesis the
317 nap improved endurance performance of runners that slept least the night before the
318 trials. This was true regardless of whether sleep duration before the experimental
319 trials was defined as nighttime sleep only or nighttime sleep plus the nap.

320

321 An additional strength of this study is that we confirmed that nighttime sleep before
322 the experimental trials was similar to the sleep the runners typically experienced
323 (419 ± 46 min before experimental trials vs. one-month prior 406 ± 62 min, $P = 0.53$).
324 These data suggest that the nap improved endurance performance in those that
325 typically sleep less, rather than improving runners that had poor sleep the night
326 before the endurance performance tests. Poor sleep the night before the
327 experimental trials might also be discounted as mood before each endurance
328 performance test (Table 2) was similar to that typically reported by athletes (Lastella,
329 et al, 2015; Terry, Lane, Lane & Keohane, 1999) as opposed to being indicative of
330 poor mood which is a hallmark of sleep deprivation (Kahn, Fridenson, Lerer, Bar-
331 Haim, & Sadeh, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2006; Scott, McNaughton, & Polman, 2006).
332
333 Our runners had typical sleep-wake patterns, sleeping as a group 7 h per day, which
334 is consistent with the 7-9 h sleep recommendations for a healthy adult with optimal
335 neurocognitive functioning set by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Sleep
336 Research Society and National Sleep Foundation (Hirshkowitz et al., 2015; Watson
337 et al., 2015). It is then perhaps not surprising that the nap did not improve endurance
338 performance in all runners. Indeed, in this study we show that the benefits of a nap
339 for endurance performance are dependent on typical sleep. Runners obtaining sleep
340 recommendations did not improve endurance performance after the nap. In contrast,
341 the endurance performance of runners that did not obtain the recommended sleep
342 benefitted from the short afternoon nap. The observation that a nap aids athletic
343 performance in those that sleep least is consistent with the only two other studies to
344 investigate the effect of napping on athletic performance. These studies indicate a

345 nap benefits sprint and strength (anaerobic) performance after sleep restriction
346 (Waterhouse et al., 2007) but not after a normal night of sleep (Petit et al., 2014).

347

348 Previous studies have suggested that obtaining less than recommended sleep
349 decreases mood and increases fatigue, which may negatively affect athlete training
350 and competition performance (Sargent, Lastella, Halson, & Roach, 2014). We did not
351 observe differences in mood following the nap. We also did not observe any
352 alterations in resting or exercising physiological measures after the nap. After the
353 nap however, ratings of perceived exertion (sense of effort) were lower at the end of
354 the time to exhaustion exercise in those runners that improved endurance
355 performance. As other mood and physiological measures were not altered before,
356 during or after exercise, the nap most likely improved endurance performance in this
357 study by lowering the sense of effort during exhaustive exercise. This explanation is
358 consistent with the consensus of previous studies that propose altered sense of
359 effort, rather than a physiological alteration, is responsible for altered endurance
360 performance after sleep restriction (Oliver et al., 2009; Martin, 1981; Myles et al.,
361 1985).

362

363 To develop the long-term implications of napping for athletes it is important that the
364 constraints of the present study are considered. We intentionally selected a short
365 (~20 min) afternoon nap so our findings would be comparable to previous exercise
366 studies (Petit et al. 2014; Waterhouse et al. 2007) and because this is a practical
367 duration for athletes to adopt. It is possible however that the benefit of napping
368 interventions for endurance athletes would become more apparent with alternative
369 nap durations and scheduling. Further research should therefore examine the effects

370 of different nap durations and alternative napping schedules on exercise
371 performance. In the present research, we also did not assess our participants for
372 recent travel. This is something that should be considered in future napping
373 research; as should the capture of participant sleep-wake data throughout the
374 experimental period. As well as these considerations future studies may wish to
375 investigate the effect of chronic daily napping on athletic performance. As sleep
376 extension has been shown to improve athletic performance (Mah et al., 2011)
377 chronic napping may also benefit athlete training and competition performance.
378 Given the demands of training early in the morning and/or late in the evening,
379 daytime napping is likely a more practical strategy than extending nighttime sleep for
380 most athletes.

381

382 In summary, this study investigated for the first time the effect of a nap on endurance
383 exercise performance, revealing that a short afternoon nap improved endurance
384 performance in runners with least sleep. The runners that improved running
385 performance after the nap slept typically less than the 7-9 h sleep recommendations.
386 These findings have important applied implications for endurance athletes; indicating
387 a nap may benefit training and competition performance in athletes that struggle to
388 obtain recommended sleep due to training, work, social and domestic demands.
389 Further, athletes should consider napping as a strategy to adopt when travel and
390 training causes sleep duration or quality to be compromised e.g. long-haul flights,
391 intensified or altitude training. As the first investigation to test the effects of napping
392 on endurance performance, this study provides an important point of reference for
393 future research that seeks to develop napping. In an ever more 24/7 society napping

394 represents a promising strategy to optimise work, domestic and social performance
395 of athletes and non-athletes alike.

396

397 **Conflict of interest**

398 The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

399

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507 **Tables with Captions**

508 **Table 1.** Nighttime sleep duration and quality before each experimental visit

	Time in bed (min)	Time asleep (min)	Sleep latency (min)	Sleep efficiency (%)	Subjective sleep quality
CON	447 ± 35	416 ± 39	18 ± 15	93 ± 4	25 ± 6
NAP	459 ± 64	421 ± 64	22 ± 22	92 ± 6	25 ± 7
<i>P</i>	0.44	0.75	0.43	0.35	0.67

509 Abbreviations: CON, Control trial; NAP, Nap trial.

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528 **Table 2.** Resting physiological and psychological responses 90-min post-nap

	Urine specific gravity	Body mass (kg)	Core body temperature (°C)	Fatigue (BRUMS)	Vigour (BRUMS)	Total mood disturbance (BRUMS)
CON	1.005 ± 0.004	73.0 ± 10.0	37.10 ± 0.30	2.2 ± 1.9	7.7 ± 3.7	97.6 ± 6.9
NAP	1.004 ± 0.004	72.9 ± 10.0	37.05 ± 0.25	2.8 ± 1.8	7.0 ± 3.8	98.4 ± 6.0
<i>P</i>	0.55	0.80	0.11	0.36	0.30	0.62

529 Abbreviations: CON, Control trial; NAP, Nap trial; BRUMS, Brunel Mood Scale.

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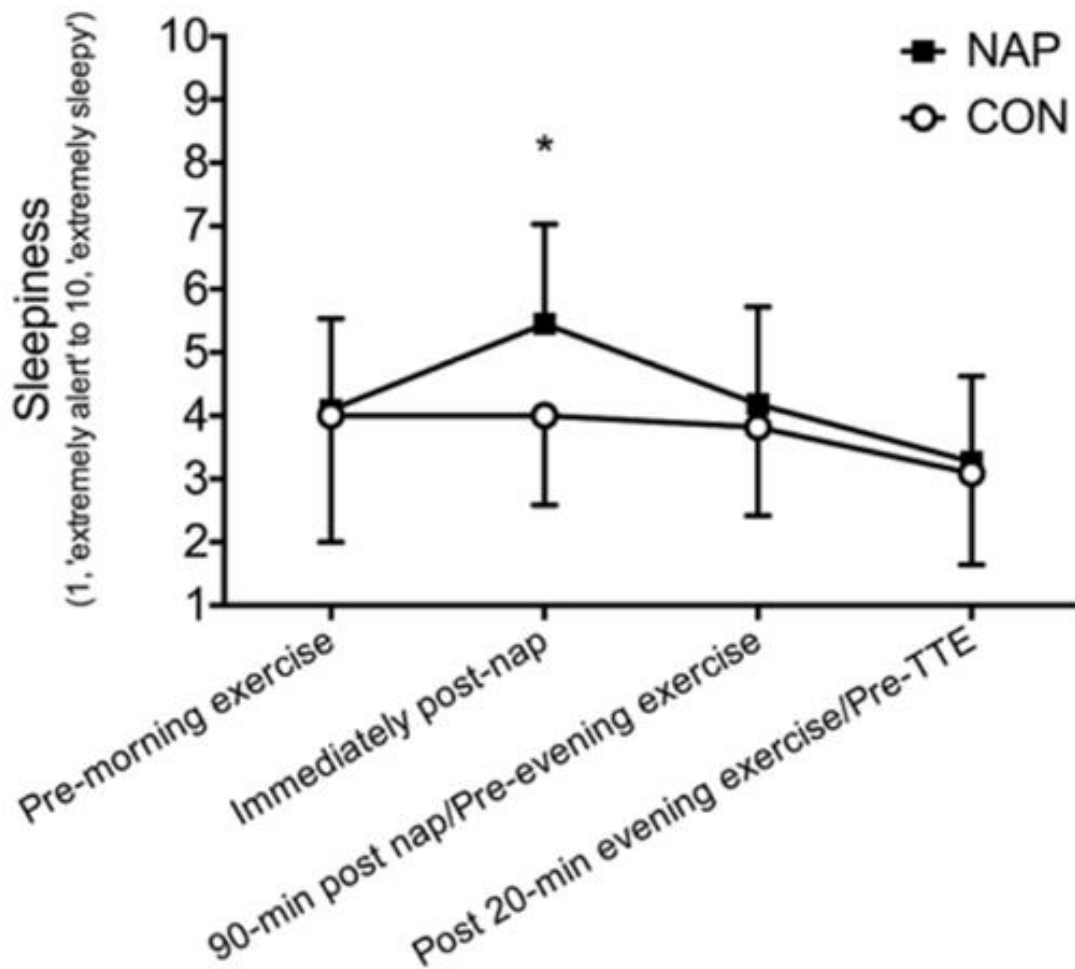
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550 **Figure Captions**

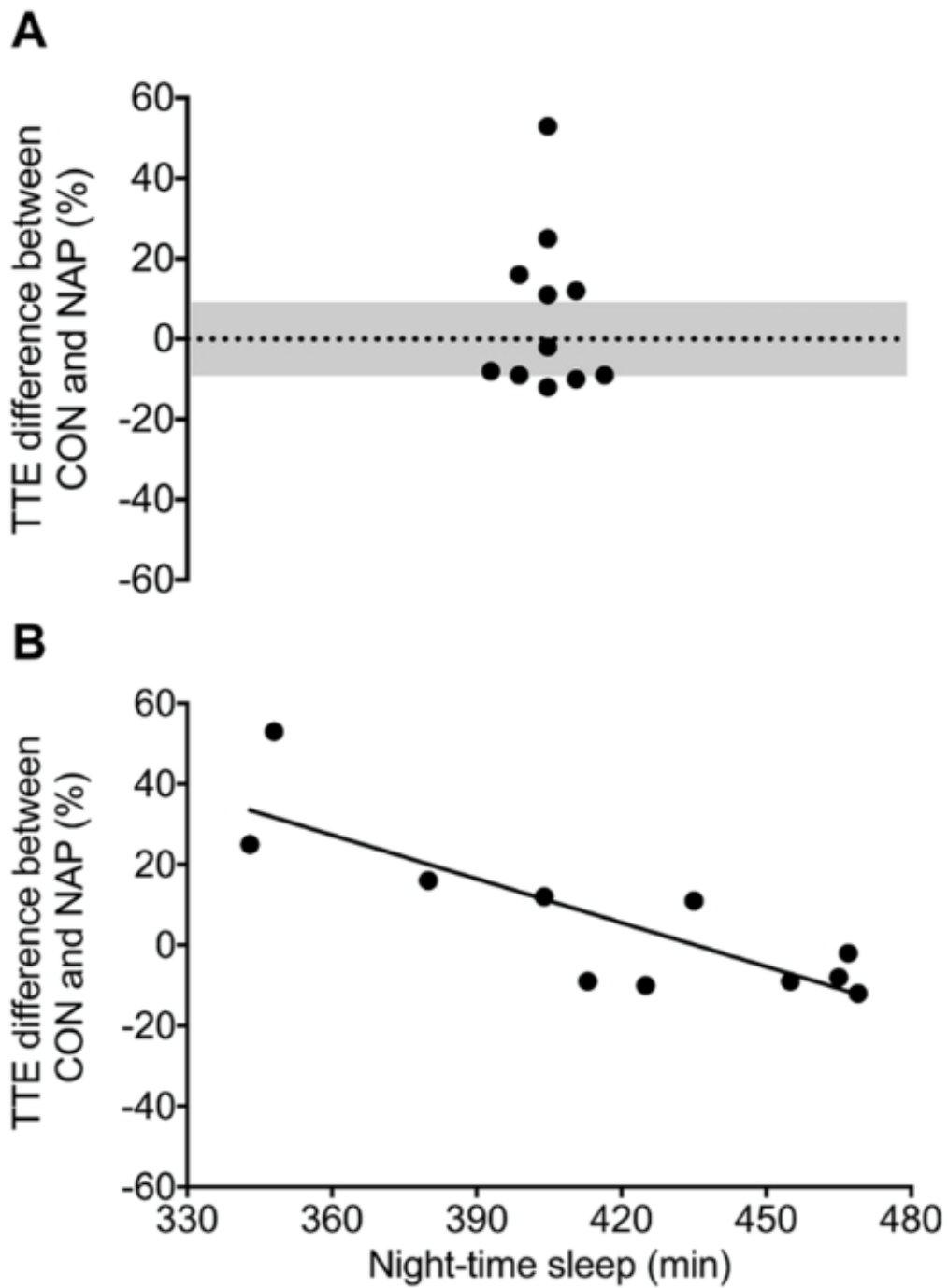
551 Figure 1. Runner alertness and sleepiness during control and nap trials. Immediately
552 after a nap runners reported increased sleepiness but this declined before evening
553 exercise including the running time to exhaustion (TTE). * indicates greater
554 sleepiness on the nap trial (NAP) vs. control trial (CON) ($P = 0.001$). Data are mean
555 \pm SD.



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558 Figure 2. Running time to exhaustion (TTE) after a short afternoon nap (NAP)
559 compared to a control trial (CON) in trained athletes. Data are individual (dot plots)
560 and the TTE coefficient of variation ($\pm 8\%$) is represented by the shaded area (A);
561 Nighttime sleep predicted the change in running time to exhaustion (TTE) after a
562 short afternoon nap. Data are individual (dot plots) (B).



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