

Cognitive training

So Barry tells us a little more about what you guys do here?

We focus on the brain's role in elite performance. So we're trying to help elite athletes improve their performance so when they're undertaking expeditions or playing elite sports and trying to figure out what's going on in the space between your ears.

Can you tell us who else you're working with here?

We work with the McLaren F1 team, so that includes the race team and pit crew, looking at the effects of travelling to far flung races on their brain function.

We've also worked with the Brownlee brothers, we've done some cognitive and brain function work with them as well and we've worked with a few football and rugby teams.

We have what we call decision making tasks where guys have to look at a video and make a decision and then we try and train that and see if they can improve.

And then we try and put pressure on them to see how they respond under different types of pressure.

So this brings back some memories. Is this the same test as we were doing in Antarctica?

It is indeed, so this is the same group of tasks that you did on the iPad in Antarctica.

This is the simple reaction time task to look at your physiological readiness to continue an expedition.

So this task is similar. It's what is called a response inhibition task where you have to hit the green ones and don't hit the red ones so inhibiting a response is quite a hard thing for the brain to do when it's under stress.

Or when I'm trying to multi-task.

Exactly, yes, when you're trying to listen to me and do this test is quite tough.

So Barry, where is your research at, at the moment?

It's still early days. Brain function as a marker of readiness to train and compete is developing and I think in the future we can use that as a way of

telling you how an athlete is at any one point in time and then using that information to help them improve their performance.

So does this sentence sum this room up then?

Pretty much, it's putting brain function back on the map in elite sports.

I think the brain takes up 20% of the energy you take in every day so it's not something we can ignore when it comes to improving, monitoring and looking at elite performance.