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[Back to Abstract list](#)

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### ICAP 2014 Abstract

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#### An Investigation into the Psychological Characteristics of Ultramarathoners

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**Abstract:** Considerable research has focused on the impact that psychological factors have on the development and maintenance of expert athletic performance. However, to date a universal characterization of the psychological factors that determine expert performance has not been established. Despite recent rapid growth and popularity of ultra-endurance sports, there is limited research identifying specific psychological characteristics of discrete groups of ultra-endurance athletes such as ultramarathoners. Ultramarathons are running events which cover distances longer than the official marathon distance of 42 kilometers. Of the limited investigations which have attempted to assess the unique characteristics of ultramarathoners, findings regarding the distinguishing cognitive orientations of these athletes have been inconsistent. Recent studies of ultra-endurance athletes have found them to have substantially different cognitive profiles than endurance athletes. Conversely, research into personality attributes of ultramarathoners found no significant differences in the personality attributes of ultramarathoners and non-endurance runners. The current study aimed to determine whether a psychological profile of ultramarathoners could be determined through the measurement of six psychological characteristic variables: personality traits, coping styles, dispositional flow, dispositional resilience, emotional intelligence, and emotion regulation. Twenty athletes currently participating in ultramarathons completed a battery of well-validated self-report questionnaires. Results indicated ultramarathoners possess a personality profile characterised by low levels of neuroticism and high levels of conscientiousness, and a coping style dominated by problem-focused strategies. Of the nine dimensions of flow, ultramarathoners reported experiencing higher levels of autotelic experience, clear goals, and unambiguous feedback. High emotional intelligence was associated with low levels of neuroticism and conscientiousness. Ultramarathoners were found to have higher levels of control in relation to dispositional resilience, indicating that, when confronted with stressful events, these athletes felt they are able to actively influence the situation. They were also found to be more likely to utilize cognitive reappraisal strategies in terms of emotional regulation. Implications of these findings will be discussed.

**Keywords:** coping style emotional intelligence emotional regulation flow personality resilience ultramarathoners

[Back to Abstract list](#)

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