

## **A Qualitative Study of the Psychologically Challenging Aspects of Taking Part in an Ultra-Endurance Atlantic Rowing Event**

**Authors :** John Allbutt, Andrew Murray, Jonathan Ling, Thomas M. Heffernan

**Abstract :** Ultra-endurance events place unique physical and psychological pressures on participants. In this study, we examined the psychologically challenging aspects of taking part in a 3000 mile transatlantic rowing race using a qualitative approach. To date, more people have been into space than have rowed an ocean and only one psychological study has been conducted on this experience which had a specific research focus. The current study was a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews. Participants were an opportunity sample of seven competitors from a recent ocean rowing race. Participants were asked about the psychological aspects of the event after it had finished. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Several themes emerged from the analysis. These related to: 1) preparation; 2) bodily aches/pains, 3) race setbacks; 4) boat conditions; 5) interpersonal factors and communication; 6) strategies for managing stress and interpersonal tensions. While participants were generally very positive about the event, the analysis showed that they experienced significant psychological challenges during their voyage. Competitors paid considerable attention to preparing for the physical challenges of the event. However, not all prospective competitors gave the same time to preparing for psychological factors or were aware how they might play out during their voyage. All Atlantic rowing crews should be aware of the psychological challenges they face, and have strategies in place to help cope with the psychological strain of taking part.

**Keywords :** confinement experiences, ocean rowing, stress, ultra-endurance sport

**Conference Title :** ICPESS 2016 : International Conference on Physical Education and Sport Science

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** July 28-29, 2016