

## Transcript

### The sleep secrets of British Cycling

#### SIR DAVE BRAILSFORD:

When we started out in British cycling and we looked at where we wanted to get to, the top of that mountain seemed a long way away for us. It was. It was an awful long way away.

And I think sometimes when you look at that and you think, how the hell we going to move forward? It's just, you don't get those big, massive step changes in performance. So you think, all right, so we're going to have to break this down into something where instead of looking for perfection, let's look for progression. Can we progress from where we are today, and make a little step forward in a whole host of different areas?

So we started looking at all these different things and training, nutrition, equipment, technology, everything that we could look at. And the way we were behaving, and our attitudes. We smile and we're not smiling, and all these little things. We put it together and, lo and behold, you start to feel like we got some momentum.

From my point of view on the recovery side, I think sleep is a topic area. We know that we recover fully in sleep, and what we focused on in particular is actually how can we promote better sleep, and therefore better recovery. And what does the environment require to be able to facilitate that?

#### NICK LITTLEHALES:

Sleep is a big recovery period, and just taking it for granted and not treating it in some sort of way as a performance criteria just doesn't wash in today's world. We need athletes, men and women, to recover properly from any period, mentally and physically. If you're not giving them that opportunity, then whatever you ask them to do, you're going to struggle.

I'm principally looking into any athletes or players' routines, what their sport is asking them to do, and I'm looking at your physical profile. And I can see your shoulder bridge dimension, I know how high you are, I know what your weight is. I ask you about allergies and breathing, mouth breathing. I look, are you susceptible to temperature.

And you put all of that together, and you create a sleep profile. We're really trying to pinpoint what I tend to call the sort of key sleep recovery indicators. The aim is to have more sustainable and consistent levels of recovery. It's-- in the end that will build towards better performance levels.

I was fortunate enough to get involved with British cycling. They wanted something that was a little bit more practical. And most importantly, something you can replicate wherever you are. We looked at very simple things. Do you know anything about circadian rhythms? Do you know anything about chronotypes? The things that make you who you are? Do you know anything about pre and post sleep routines?

Sleep tends to be projected to us all as you need a good healthy eight hours, but I've never met anybody yet who plans and approaches that way. So you need to put that one to one side and look at

it totally differently in the modern world. And that is, mental and physical recovery periods in any 24 hour period. And applying the three natural sleep cycles that we have every day, the three periods that we've got available to us, which we've just shifted away from over the centuries, and look at a more-- what you class as a more polyphasic approach to it.

If you look at it in 90 minute cycles rather than hours, you can get a much better focus on what's happening during any 24 hour period. All I'm doing is trying to redefine our approach towards that subject that's in a way that athletes and players can understand and take a little bit of control.

**SIR CHRIS HOY:**

If you're traveling from hotel to hotel, you're moving from place to place every night, and that can break that routine of sleeping, and sleeping is all about routine. It's all about habit. So what we started doing and what I believe they're doing now as a matter of course is to take your own bed with you.

So really you have this travel mattress, this kind of orthopedic mattress that gives you great support. You take the mattress off the bed in the hotel, you put this mattress on top, you have your own orthopedic pillow. And in essence you were sleeping in your own bed every night, no matter where in the world you were. It's like one of these little marginal gains you couldn't quantify and say that was what made a difference. But it must have helped me.

**MICHAEL JOHNSON:**

It makes a difference in your mindset, and certainly it makes a difference in terms of relaxation, which we all know is extremely important.