Effects of Environmental Temperature on Aerobic Training Adaptations

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Previously we have demonstrated acute effects of endurance exercise in different environmental temperatures. However, training within these temperatures has not been examined. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of exercise training in different environmental temperatures on aerobic capacity, body composition, heart rate, sweat rate, core, and skin temperature. METHODS: Thirty-six recreationally trained males were 18 visits to the lab and performed a 3-week cycling training protocol in either a 7°C, 20°C or 33°C environment. Aerobic capacity, body composition, heart rate, sweat rate, core, and skin temperature were measured before and after the acclimation period. During the 3-week acclimation training protocol heart rate, power output, temperature, and sweat rate were measured. RESULTS: In 33°C compared to 20°C subjects, VO2peak (p = 0.02) and power output (p < 0.001) were greater for 20°C subjects following training, whereas core temperature (p = 0.036), skin temperature (p < 0.001), sweat rate (p < 0.001), and heart rate (p = 0.036) were higher in 33°C subjects. Body composition improved in both conditions (p < 0.001). In 7°C compared to 20°C, VO2peak (p < 0.001), body composition (p < 0.001), core temperature (p < 0.001), sweat rate (p = 0.05), and power (p < 0.001) improved in both conditions following training. Skin temperature was lower in 7°C (p < 0.001). CONCLUSIONS: These data indicate that physiological stress produced from exercising in 33°C environments inhibits performance measures. Whereas, 7°C environments allow for greater aerobic performance and training outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

• It is well documented that regular aerobic training produces improvements in aerobic capacity, heart rate, power output, body composition, and thermoregulation.
• We have previously demonstrated that different environmental temperatures have acute effects on endurance exercise capacity.
• The effects of environmental temperature on a 3-week, short-term aerobic training performance measures remain unknown.
• The purpose of this research was to determine the effect of exercise training in different environmental temperatures on aerobic capacity, body composition, and thermoregulation.

METHODS

• Thirty-six recreationally trained, college-aged males (age = 24 ± 5 years, height = 179 ± 7 cm, weight = 86 ± 21 kg) visited the lab for 18 trials over the course of 3 weeks.
• The trials were completed in either a 7°C, 33°C, or 20°C environment.
• Visits 1 and 18: subjects performed a VO2peak on the cycle ergometer and body composition was assessed via hydrostatic weighing.
• Visits 2 and 17: subjects performed a 1 hour tolerance trial in their assigned temperature at 50% of watts associated with VO2peak.
• Visits 3-16: subjects cycled on a cycle ergometer for 1 hour at a RPE of 15 in an environmental chamber in their assigned temperature.
• Stats: 2-way ANOVA (Trial x Temp), p<0.05 considered significant.

IMPACT OF 33°C

Table 1. Participant Descriptive Characteristics

Table 2. Participant Descriptive Characteristics

Figure 1. 33°C Core and Skin Temperature (°C), Pre-training and post-training core and skin temperature in 33°C and 20°C groups. Data are mean ± SE, * , p < 0.05 from pre-training of the same temperature. †, p < 0.05 from 20°C.

Figure 2. 33°C Sweat Rate (L·hr⁻¹), Pre-training and post-training in 33°C and 20°C groups. Data are mean ± SE, * , p < 0.05 from pre-training of the same temperature. †, p < 0.05 from 20°C.

Figure 3. 7°C Core and Skin Temperature (°C), Pre-training and post-training core and skin temperature in 20°C and 7°C groups. Data are mean ± SE, * , p < 0.05 from pre-training of the same temperature.

• Classical acclimation was evidenced by increased skin temperature in 7°C but not 20°C
• Sweat rate improved with training regardless of temperature.

CONCLUSIONS

• Performance measures were dampened in the 33°C environments due to the effects of heat stress, whereas there were no differences between the 7°C and 20°C environment.
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