We’re Training Bodies Harder Than Brains, Say Scientist and Pro Athlete

A scientist and professional hockey player warn that cognitive fatigue, burnout, and long-term brain strain are quietly limiting performance across sport, work, and modern life.

Los Angeles, California Jan 21, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - People have never pushed their performance harder than they do today. Physical training, productivity systems, and recovery protocols are optimized down to the smallest detail.

But according to scientist Dr. Darren Burke, one critical system remains largely overlooked.

The brain.

“We are training bodies harder than brains, and it is showing up in performance, burnout, and long-term brain health,” said Dr. Burke. “The brain is coordinating every decision, reaction, and emotional response. Yet cognitive load and neural fatigue are rarely treated with the same seriousness as physical strain.”

This gap is becoming more visible as professionals, parents, and athletes alike report rising levels of mental fatigue, decision-making errors, poor sleep, and burnout. While these challenges are often discussed separately across sport, work, and wellness, the underlying strain on the brain is shared.

Professional hockey player Evan Nause experienced this firsthand during his career.

“The physical side of training was dialed in,” said Nause. “But mentally, I was carrying fatigue that never fully reset. Focus, reaction time, emotional steadiness. You push through it because that’s expected, but it accumulates.”

Nause’s experience mirrors a broader shift happening inside elite sport, where athletes are beginning to talk more openly about cognitive fatigue beyond concussion or acute injury. The same pressures now extend well beyond sport into high-stakes professions and daily life under constant mental demand.

That shared reality is what brought Burke and Nause together.

They co-founded a performance health company focused on advancing brain-first approaches to performance. Their work centers on translating neuroscience and performance research into practical tools that support mental clarity, recovery, and long-term brain protection.

“The science has been pointing in this direction for years,” Burke said. “What has been missing is translation. How do we make brain health practical, measurable, and actionable for people who rely on their mind every day.”

As conversations around burnout, longevity, and sustainable performance continue to accelerate, Burke believes this shift is inevitable.

“The next era of performance is not about pushing harder,” he said. “It is about understanding the limits of the brain and training with them in mind.”

About Dr. Darren Burke. Dr. Darren Burke is a scientist and entrepreneur focused on performance, cognitive health, and resilience under stress. His work bridges neuroscience, physiology, and real-world application across high-performing populations.

About Evan Nause. Evan Nause is a professional hockey player whose experience navigating cognitive fatigue and performance demands has shaped his advocacy for brain health in sport and beyond.

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