

## Does genetics separate Olympians from everyone else?

For decades, scientists have been studying the role of nature and nurture in producing Olympic athletes...What they've learned is that while genes do play some role, they're not a silver bullet. Environmental factors are extremely important: It makes a big difference if the athlete's parents are interested in sports, and if they had access to both high-quality training and fresh food.

Scientists have pinpointed some gene variants that are associated with endurance and power, but are by no means predictive. "There is no super-athlete gene," says [bioethicist] Jennifer Kristin Wagner...

One gene that is frequently cited is the ACTN3 gene, dubbed the "speed gene," which encodes instructions for making a specific kind of muscle protein...[However,] its importance shouldn't be overstated, Wagner stresses.

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[One] concern is that coaches start testing their athletes, and using the information to differentiate between them. One could imagine a spreadsheet of sorts with a list of athletes and their genetic information. Wagner asks: "Would this be for the athlete's benefit or for discriminatory reasons?"

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Do Olympians Have Better Genes Than You And Me?](#)**