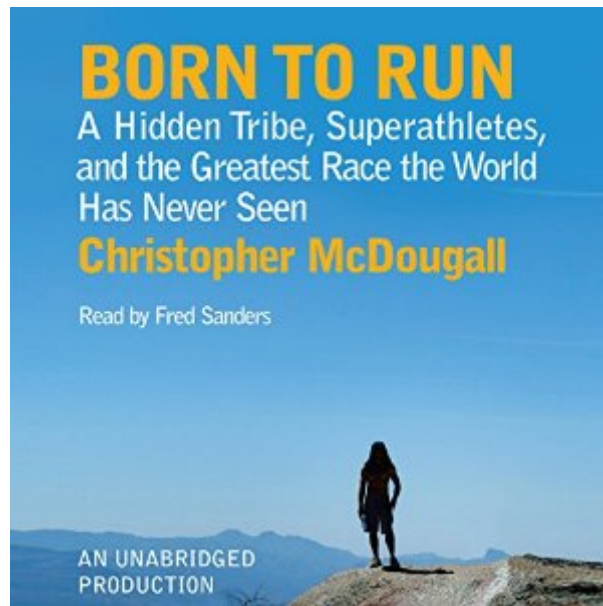


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Born To Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, And The Greatest Race The World Has Never Seen



Synopsis

Full of incredible characters, amazing athletic achievements, cutting-edge science, and, most of all, pure inspiration, *Born to Run* is an epic adventure that began with one simple question: Why does my foot hurt? In search of an answer, Christopher McDougall sets off to find a tribe of the world's greatest distance runners and learn their secrets, and in the process shows us that everything we thought we knew about running is wrong. Isolated by the most savage terrain in North America, the reclusive Tarahumara Indians of Mexico's deadly Copper Canyons are custodians of a lost art. For centuries they have practiced techniques that allow them to run hundreds of miles without rest and chase down anything from a deer to an Olympic marathoner while enjoying every mile of it. Their superhuman talent is matched by uncanny health and serenity, leaving the Tarahumara immune to the diseases and strife that plague modern existence. With the help of Caballo Blanco, a mysterious loner who lives among the tribe, the author was able not only to uncover the secrets of the Tarahumara but also to find his own inner ultra-athlete, as he trained for the challenge of a lifetime: a fifty-mile race through the heart of Tarahumara country pitting the tribe against an odd band of Americans, including a star ultramarathoner, a beautiful young surfer, and a barefoot wonder. With a sharp wit and wild exuberance, McDougall takes us from the high-tech science labs at Harvard to the sun-baked valleys and freezing peaks across North America, where ever-growing numbers of ultrarunners are pushing their bodies to the limit, and, finally, to the climactic race in the Copper Canyons. *Born to Run* is that rare book that will not only engage your mind but inspire your body when you realize that the secret to happiness is right at your feet, and that you, indeed all of us, were born to run. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Born to Run succeeds at three levels. First, it is a page turner. The build up to a fifty-mile foot race over some of the world's least hospitable terrain drives the narrative forward. Along the way McDougall introduces a cast of characters worthy of Dickens, including an almost superhuman ultramarathoner, Jenn and the Bonehead--a couple who down bottles of booze to warm up for a race, Barefoot Ted, Mexican drug dealers, a ghostly ex-boxer, a heartbroken father, and of course the Tarahumara, arguably the greatest runners in the world. Born to Run is such a rip-roaring yarn, that it is easy to miss the book's deeper achievements. At a second level, McDougall introduces and explores a powerful thesis--that human beings are literally born to run. Recreational running did not begin with the 1966 publication of "Jogging" by the co-founder of Nike. Instead, McDougall argues, running is at the heart of what it means to be human. In the course of elaborating his thesis, McDougall answers some big questions: Why did our ancestors outlive the stronger, smarter Neanderthals? Why do expensive running shoes increase the odds of injury? The author's modesty keeps him from trumpeting the novelty and importance of this thesis, but it merits attention. Finally, Born to Run presents a philosophy of exercise. The ethos that pervades recreational and competitive running--"no pain, no gain," is fundamentally flawed, McDougall argues. The essence of running should not be grim determination, but sheer joy. Many of the conventions of modern running--the thick-soled shoes, mechanical treadmills, take no prisoners competition, and heads-down powering through pain dull our appreciation of what running can be--a sociable activity, more game than chore, that can lead to adventure. McDougall's narrative moves the book forward, his thesis provides a solid intellectual support, but this philosophy of joy animates Born to Run. I hope this book finds the wide audience it deserves.

I have to ditto other readers who said this book changed their life. And that is not hyperbole. Prior to reading this book I viewed myself as a fast short distance runner and I rarely, if ever, ran more than 3 miles at a time. I felt this was just the way things were and that I should accept it. "Born to Run" completely changed my internal thought process about running. I was already aware of the running shoe issue. I've been slowly using Vibram Five Fingers for over a year and I've been trying to alter my gate from heel strike first to toe strike first. I found that it just takes patience and time to adapt in getting those muscles developed. McDougall is no liar - we've been screwed over by the running

shoe companies. The first time I ran with the Vibram's I could barely walk for a week I was in so much pain. Now I can climb mountains in them. What changed for me after reading this book was just the simple notion that I wasn't limited by some personal flaw or lack of will. I was failing to run longer distances because both my mindset and my running style were flawed. One, we can all run farther than we think. Two, don't get obsessed over speed or time, just run at a pace that feels comfortable. Your body will tell you when you can step it up a notch. In other words, just enjoy the experience. Before I started the book my max was 3 miles with a hard push on the first two. Five weeks after reading the book I can now do 8 miles or more. I can probably do 10 or more now, but haven't pushed because I'm still working on getting those calve muscles stronger and adapted to the new running style. Don't get me wrong - I'm running slow! But wow, does it feel good. I'm enjoying running more and I feel better than ever before. My blood pressure, which was high, is now below normal and I feel great. One of the points McDougall makes in the book is that many experienced ultra runners don't run that fast. Many of them are just doing 10 minute miles. That's part of what caused me to rethink my obsession over speed. Unfortunately, as a few critics have pointed out, McDougall's book does come off as hyperbole in some parts. I also strongly disliked his focus on extremists. "Barefoot Ted" is one example. Just search the net for the term "barefoot running" and you'll find some of the most absurd absolutist garbage about how the only way to run is barefoot and anyone who stoops to using shoes (even the likes of Nike Free shoes or the Vibram's) is misguided or even stupid. The sad reality is that we have all been lied to by the shoe companies - Nike especially. These lies are pushed on us by the alleged "experts." I recently picked up a pair of Nike Hayward Prefontaine runners. "Runners World" gave them a mixed review and slammed the shoe for not having enough support. So we have the barefoot absolutists telling us to ditch our shoes and we have the mainstream press telling us we need to wear the very shoes that are making us weaker runners. And the accepted normal shoes do make us weaker - I was told by a doctor after two major ankle injuries that I'd be limping for life if I was injured again. That ankle is the strongest it has ever been after changing my running style. You don't change people's minds by using extremists to make your case. And that's unfortunately what comes across at times in McDougall's book. I would have personally preferred more information about his personal transformation and less on the likes of "Barefoot Bob" and the other runners who share very little in common with everyday people who just want to get into shape. I don't think "Born to Run" is going to be that interesting to those who are already hardcore runners. The more you already run, the more the hyperbole will stick out. But I do recommend the book to those who thought like I did about what was physically possible for them. After reading this book you won't be able to watch a marathon

again and think of how it's beyond your abilities. You won't make it into the Olympics, but the odds are you can run a marathon. And speaking of marathons, McDougall makes an earth shattering point about older runners and their ability to outrun teenagers. The age at which you can beat a teenager (in long distance running), assuming you've trained appropriately, will blow your mind. Since it's one of McDougall's "secrets" I won't post the spoiler here. It's just one of his many points that will make you rethink your own ability to run. EDIT: I have to scoff at all the critics of this book who say to take it all with a grain of salt. Each person is obviously different so your mileage will vary. Nonetheless, the central message in McDougall's book is that YOU can run and you can run longer distances than you think. I served in the Army and I was a runner in high school. And yet, at almost 40 - with heart disease and a stent implant! - I'm now running longer distances than I have ever run in my life. One of the reasons is simply because I took McDougall's advice. I'll never run ultra-marathons, but that doesn't matter. There are nuggets of truth and inspiration in this book along with all the exaggerations. If you're already a long distance runner there's very little meat for you to digest and the hyperbole will annoy. But if you're one of the many people who've never gone more than a few miles there's a powerful message here. I now can outrun all 3 of my nephews (15 to 24) nephews in the long distance. On one fast 4.5 mile mountain hike (Mt. Monadnock in NH) I beat my athletic 15 year old nephew by more than 3 minutes. He led the entire run/hike until the end when I left him in the dust after he ran out of steam. He had the speed, I had the stamina - just like McDougall presents it in his book.

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