



7 HILLS RUNNING CLUB

GO, RUNNERS, GO!!

WELCOME, NEW 7HILLS MEMBERS!!

Issue 4

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No shoes, no problem, no kidding Johnny Ramirez

In his ode to the joy of running Christopher McDougall—a former war correspondent for the Associated Press—begins his book by asking one simple question: Why does my foot hurt?

Determined to find an answer to his question, McDougall sets off on an epic adventure to find a tribe of the world's greatest distance runners to learn their secrets and in the process he is able to make a compelling case that running extremely long distances barefoot (yes, barefoot!) can be the key to achieving health, happiness, and longevity.

"Distance running was revered because it was indispensable; it was

the way we survived and thrived and spread across the planet. You ran to eat and to avoid being eaten; you ran to find a mate and impress her, and with her you ran off to start a new life together. You had to love running, or you wouldn't live to love anything else. And like everything else we love—everything we sentimentally call our "passions" and "desires"—it's really an encoded ancestral necessity. We were born to run; we were born because we run. We're all Running People, as the Tarahumara have always known." In *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never*

Seen McDougall takes a look at the Tarahumara, an indigenous people of northern Mexico inhabiting a remote region of the Chihuahuan Desert known as the Copper Canyon. The Tarahumara are legendary for their ability to run extreme distances in inhospitable conditions without breaking a sweat or getting injured. They are superathletes whose diet (pinole, chia seeds, grain alcohol) and racing method (upright posture, flicking heels, clear-headedness) would place them among elite runners of the developed world even though their society and technology are 500 years behind it.

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Trail Runs in Huntsville State Park

Members from 7Hills Running Club meet at Huntsville State park most Tuesdays and Thursday at 4:00 pm to run the trails. You can meet these runners just outside the park on the feeder road of I-45 a few minutes before 4 pm. As the spring weather approaches the group will grow in numbers. Some will run 1 to 3 miles and

another group may run the big loop around park. There is plenty of room for runners and walkers, fast and slow. Some of the runners even go back to the meeting place at 5:00 pm to catch the later crowd and do it all over again. Bring a friend or a family member and head on over to the trails to enjoy nice spring weather that will surely come our way soon!

Running Heroes

Curtis Barton

Running Heroes

A long haired, young runner yelled out his number at me as he flew through the aid station. I didn't even see him coming, so it isn't surprising that the number didn't register. I called out asking him to repeat the number as he ran beyond a curve. Another young runner, who had grabbed some sports drink from the aid station, hollered it as me as he chased after his friend. This was 2007 and it was the first ultramarathon I had seen. Like so many runners, I had read Dean Karnazes book, Ultramarathon Man, but I hadn't competed in anything beyond a six hour timed event. This was the first time I had witnessed a runner at mile 95 maintaining a steady 8 minute and 7 second per mile. Anton Krupicka finished the Rocky Raccoon 100 for first place in 13 hours, 32 minutes, and 20 seconds. He also planted the seeds of becoming a running hero to me.

After watching him run by and looking up some information about him, I decided that I could follow in Krupicka's footsteps, so I signed up for my first 50K. I went to Tyler State Park and ran the East Texas Ultra Runners 50K. I wasn't able

to maintain an 8 minute per mile average, but I finished the race and didn't come in last. This seemed like a huge accomplishment to me because it was my first distance race over a 1/2 marathon. Also, the night before the race, I decided to try out my new camping gear. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get a fire started because of rain off and on through the night. And I found out that a 30 degree sleeping bag isn't good enough when the weather drops into the teens. At least there wasn't any chance that I would have overslept the start of the race.

After that experience, I continued to read Krupicka's blog and felt inspired by him. I bought his dvd called Indulgence: 1000 Miles Under the Colorado Sky which chronicled an average summer for him which consisted mainly of mountain running (logging around 125-190 miles per week). That's when I decided that I could increase my mileage too (although, not even close to those numbers). I signed up for more 50Ks and even completed a 50 mile race. Although injuries have forced me to limit my long runs, I still try to run a couple ultras each year.

It has been an important part of my running to find someone that I can truly call a running hero. Someone that I respect as a runner, someone who impresses me, and someone that I am awed by. That is a large part of what has pushed me to try new races and to push myself to be a better runner. Of course not all runners are going to respect someone like Anton Krupicka the way that I do, because every runner is unique in what they value in other runners and what they want from their own running. Regardless of personal differences, I hope that everyone has someone who inspires them to become a better runner in whatever "better" personally means to them.



Anton Krupicka— Ultra Marathon Runner

No shoes, no problem, no kidding (continued from page 1)

Johnny Ramirez

While on this journey, McDougall meets up with a mysterious American living among the Tarahumara going by the name of *Caballo Blanco*, the “white horse,” who lets McDougall in on an audacious plan that he's concocting – he’s organizing an underground footrace whereby he hopes to bring some of the top distance runners on the planet down to the Copper Canyon to face off with the best the Tarahumara have to offer on a grueling 50-mile ultra marathon course.

Mashing up science, investigative reporting, and engaging story-telling, *Born to Run* is a must-read for avid runners everywhere. McDougall weaves in a fair amount of scientific research pertaining to running form, running shoes, and running injuries, ultimately leading to question what, in fact, is the most natural way for us to run.

So if we’re born to run, why are runners so often injured?

It’s a combination of factors, experts say.

Exercise early in life can affect the development of tendons and muscles, but many people don’t start running until adulthood, so their bodies may not be as well-developed as they could be for distance. Running solely on artificial surfaces and in high-tech shoes can change the biomechanics of running, increasing the risks of injury.

The solution is slower, easier training over a long period of time along with brief walk breaks, which mimic the behavior of the persistence hunter. Running on a variety of surfaces and in simpler shoes with less cushioning can restore natural running form, as well.

McDougall says that while researching his book, he corrected his form and stopped using thickly cushioned shoes. He has run without injury for a few years now.

Additionally, brand-name footwear—with all its elaborate engineering of support and gel-based cushioning—is a common cause of athletic injury, McDougall argues. Look no further, again, than the Tarahumara. Interestingly enough, earlier this month on Sunday, March 7, the Fourth Annual Michelob Ultra El Paso Marathon invited Tarahumaras to run the race as special guests.

But at its heart, *Born to Run* is much more than a book about running shoes. It is a book about regaining the joy that running can bring to your life, about why running is more than just a way to keep your weight down and your muscles toned. It is a book about why we all should run, and why those of us who enjoy running love it as much as we do. It is a book about why running is a part of our history as a species, and why running is truly a gift that was bestowed upon us as human beings.

McDougall’s anti-shoe stance is further supported by Harvard researchers as well. The site www.barefootrunning.fas.harvard.edu presents scientific evidence supporting the notion that humans evolved to be runners. In a paper featured in the journal *Sports Medicine*, Daniel E. Lieberman, a Harvard evolutionary biologist, and Dennis M. Bramble, a biologist at the University of Utah, wrote that several characteristics unique to humans suggested endurance running played an important role in our evolution. Most mammals can sprint faster than humans — having four legs gives them the advantage. But the amazing thing is that when it comes to long distances humans can outrun almost any animal. Due to the fact that we cool ourselves by sweating rather than panting, we can stay cool at speeds and distances that would overheat these animals. On a hot day, the two scientists wrote, a human could even outrun a horse in a 26.2-mile marathon.

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7HILLS RUNNING CLUB

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Johnny Ramirez

There is also evidence showing that evolution favored endurance running. A study in *The Journal of Experimental Biology* showed that the comparatively short toes of the human foot allowed for more efficient running, compared with those belonging to longer-toed animals. Increasing toe length as little as 20 percent doubles the mechanical work of the foot. Even the fact that the big toe is straight, rather than to the side, suggests that our feet evolved for running.

“The big toe is lined up with the rest, not divergent, the way you see with apes and our closest nonrunning relatives,” Dr. Bramble said in an on-line interview. “It’s the main push-off in running: the last thing to leave the ground is that big toe.”

Spring-like ligaments and tendons in the feet and legs are crucial for running—even our close relatives the chimpanzee and the ape don’t have them. A narrow waist and a midsection that can turn allow us to swing our arms and prevent us from zigzagging on the trail. Humans also have a far more developed sense of balance, an advantage that keeps the head stable as we run. Furthermore, most humans can store about 20 miles’ worth of glycogen in their muscles. And let’s not forget about how important our booties are, too. The *gluteus maximus*—the largest muscle in the human body—is primarily engaged only during running. “Your butt is a running muscle; you barely use it when you walk,” Dr. Lieberman said in an interview with *The New York Times*. “There are so many features in our bodies, from our heads to our toes, that make us good at running.”

Upcoming races...

March 13 - Toughest n' Texas Trail Runs, 50K, 20-mile, 10-mile, Waco

March 13 - Run the Woodlands, 5K, 8 a.m., The Woodlands

March 13 - Bayou City Classic, 10K, 8 a.m., Houston

March 20 - Seabrook Lucky Trail Half Marathon, 7 a.m., Seabrook

March 20 - Lookin Good 10K, 5K, 7 a.m., Houston

March 21 - Seabrook Lucky Trail Marathon and Half Marathon, 7 a.m., Seabrook

March 21 - Top of the Morning 10K, 5K, 7:30 a.m., Houston

March 27 - Run the Woodlands, 5K, 8 a.m., The Woodlands

March 27 - Law Week 5K, 8 a.m., Houston

March 27 - Tyler Azalea 10K, 8 a.m., Tyler

March 27 - SCOPE Run for Colorectal Cancer, 5K, Houston

March 27 - Memorial Hermann Bunny Hop 5K, 8 a.m., Sugar Land

March 27 - Downtown Derby Run, 5K, 8 a.m., Bryan

March 28 - Angie's Half Crazy! Half Marathon, 6:50 a.m., Houston

March 28 - Lake Bryan Mud Run, 5K, 10 a.m., Bryan

March 28 - Run the Trails, 3.5 miles, 2 p.m., Huntsville State Park Nature Center. Non-competitive. Finisher medals. Register at the starting point. \$3 entry fee, plus park entry.