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NONFICTION: RUNNING

Indians' long distances show up Americans' weakness for shoes

BY ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS • ASSOCIATED PRESS • MAY 17, 2009

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Whether you're a weekend jogger or serious marathoner, you wear shoes to protect your feet.

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Yet if that's the case, Christopher McDougall asks in his new book, "Born to Run," why have running injuries increased even as shoes provide more padding?

One tidbit sure to stop a few people in their tracks: Studies show that the more expensive your running shoe, the more likely you are to be injured.

McDougall, a runner who overcame chronic injuries, makes a compelling case that ditching those pricey running shoes in favor of bare feet, or at least far more basic running apparel, might be the kindest thing you ever do for your body.

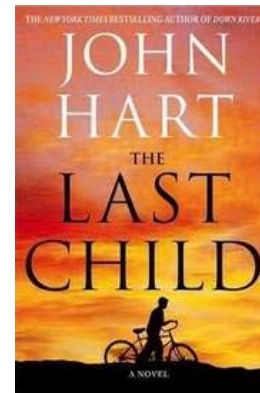
But McDougall's book is far more than a treatise on what runners should -- or shouldn't -- wear on their feet. He uses an extended portrait of one of the world's least known cultures, the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico's Copper Canyon, to put modern American running under a magnifying glass.

The Tarahumara are retiring people known for their ability to run long distances -- really long distances like 50 and 60 miles at a time -- in little more than [sandals](#). No \$150 running shoes and, above all, no injuries.

The Tarahumara channel our evolutionary ability to run long distances without overheating. It's a skill that came in handy when the earliest humans chased down prey that might have had the upper hand -- or leg -- at shorter distances, but were outmatched the longer the hunt went on.

McDougall, a former Associated Press reporter, also talks to some of America's top ultramarathoners, who turn their noses up at the paltry 26.2 miles of a traditional marathon and regularly race 50 to 100 miles or more. Their stories make some of the most [entertaining](#) reading of the book.

McDougall uses these tales to pose tough questions about the state of U.S. running. Why is it, he asks, that in the early 1980s one track club in Boston boasted half a dozen world-class marathoners, yet less than 20 years later, not a single American man could meet the Olympic marathon qualifying time?



"BORN TO RUN"

out of four stars
By Christopher McDougall
Knopf, 304 pages, \$24.95

BOOKS EVENTS

Elmore Leonard: Author of "Road Dogs" discussion and book signing, 7 p.m. Tue. Borders Books & Music, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham. 248-203-0005. www.borders.com.

Elmore Leonard: Author of "Road Dogs" and his son Peter Leonard, author of "Trust Me," discuss and sign copies of their books, 7 p.m. Thu. Borders Books & Music, 17141 Kercheval, Grosse Pointe. 313-885-1188. www.borders.com.

Joel Howell: Author of "Washtenaw County Bike Rides: A Guide to Road Rides in and around Ann Arbor" discussion and book signing, 7 p.m. Wed. Shaman Drum Bookshop, 313 S. State St., Ann Arbor. 734-662-7407. www.shamandrum.com.

Poetry from Eternity Series: Hosted by Sandra Hinton, 9 p.m. Wed. Centaur Bar, 2233 Park, Detroit. 313-963-4040. www.centaurbar.com.

Robert Underhill: Author of "Death of the Mystery Novel" reading and book signing, 7 p.m. Thu. Shaman Drum Bookshop, 313 S. State St., Ann Arbor. 734-662-7407. www.shamandrum.com.



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The answer is complicated, but McDougall places a chunk of the blame on the influence of money, especially the running shoe industry.

Lost in the financial greening of the sport: the feeling experienced by anyone who ever dashed around the backyard as a child.

"That was the real secret of the Tarahumara: They'd never forgotten what it felt like to love running," McDougall writes. "They remembered that running was mankind's first fine art, our original act of inspired creation."

Sandra Agazzi Chimenti, M Ed: Author of "The Real Me: Awakening Your True Self -- Positive Affirmations for Empowering Your Life" discusses writing and publishing. Book signing to follow, 7-9:30 p.m. Tue. Borders Books & Music, 1122 S. Rochester Road, Rochester Hills. 248-652-0558. www.borders.com.

2009 Book Lunch: Meet Elmore Leonard, Diane Mott Davidson, Joe Queenan, Laurie J. King and Michael Greenberg. Authors will sign purchased books after the luncheon, 11 a.m. Mon. Burton Manor Banquet & Conference Center, 27777 Schoolcraft, Livonia. 586-775-3533. www.burtonmanor.net. \$30. (Sold out.)

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TOP SELLERS

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1. **Dead and Gone**, Charlaine Harris (Ace)
2. **The 8th Confession**, James Patterson & Maxine Paetro (Little, Brown)
3. **Pygmy**, Chuck Palahniuk (Doubleday)
4. **First Family**, David Baldacci (Grand Central)
5. **Just Take My Heart**, Mary Higgins Clark (Simon & Schuster)
6. **Summer on Blossom Street**, Debbie Macomber (Mira)
7. **Lover Avenged**, J. R. Ward (NAL)
8. **Tea Time for the Traditionally Built**, Alexander McCall Smith (Pantheon)
9. **The Host**, Stephenie Meyer (Little, Brown)
10. **The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun**, J. R. Tolkien (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,)

NONFICTION

1. **Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man**, Steve Harvey (Amistad)
2. **Always Looking Up**, Michael J. Fox (Hyperion)

3. **Liberty and Tyranny**, Mark R. Levin (Threshold Editions)

4. **Resilience**, Elizabeth Edwards (Broadway)

5. **The Girls From Ames**, Jeffrey Zaslow (Gotham)

6. **The G-Free Diet**, Elizabeth Hasselbeck (Center Street)

7. **Outliers**, Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown)

8. **Master Your Metabolism**, Jillian Michaels (Crown)

9. **The Last Lecture**, Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow (Hyperion)

10. **A-Rod**, Selena Edwards (Harper)

Source: Publishers Weekly

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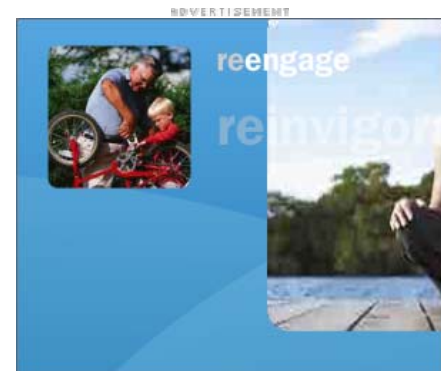
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