



## Legendary Strength Podcast

### Barefoot Running Part 1

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**Logan:** Hey, there. It's Logan Christopher and this is the [Legendary Strength podcast](#). Usually, we're covering different topics on health and different aspects of training. Together, we're going to go into an area which is not my expertise at all. It's something that I don't personally do a whole lot of. We have quite a special guest. He's actually my brother and we're going to be talking about running, specifically barefoot running, how you can do that, why it's better, and all that stuff. So thanks for joining us today, Zane.

**Zane:** Of course. Anytime.

**Logan:** So this should be a fun call. I have mentioned you a few times. We definitely got the [Superman Herbs](#) thing going on so people may be a little bit familiar with you but for those that have never heard of you before, can you give a little background on how you got started in the fitness world and what led you to doing what you're doing now?

**Zane:** All right. I started out actually with our older brother, really. I used to be a little fat, chubby kid. I was in high school and my older brother tried to get me to go to the gym and work out with him and stuff—you'll recall that—and it just never stuck to me. I hated waking that early and stuff. So one time, he was just like, *"Come running with me on these trails near our house"* and I went running with him. I ran behind him, we did one loop, and he was pretty slow. I was on his butt the whole time and once we

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finished the first loop, he was like, *"If you're going to pass me, just pass me and do whatever."* So the second time we did the loop, I royally kicked his butt.

Ever since then, I've been a runner. I've loved it. That's pretty much what started out my fitness, running. I did it for years. I eventually got into racing and stuff. One of the huge things was that I always got blisters when I ran and actually my feet would go numb when I did longer distances. I never really understood why these things happened. I just kind of accepted it—all runners do—accept that they're going to get painful injuries and stuff.

As my fitness and health career continued, I learned more. I eventually got into all the herbal stuff, thanks mainly to you actually. Once I started getting into that, started learning about bodyweight techniques, it just naturally started to come into a more, I want to say basic way of working out that's been around for thousands of years using more nature made stuff. I took the hippie way to work out.

So I read a book called [Born to Run](#). Now Clive once again, my older brother, told me about a guy that was in the Special Forces who would run barefoot over trails and stuff. This was like six or seven years ago and I was like, *"That's crazy. How does anyone ever do that?"* I never expected myself to actually get into it but I read this book *Born to Run* and the guy's very good at laying out all the scientific evidence. It's just one aspect of the book, barefoot running, and it's because there's one guy in the book that he brings along that is a really good barefootist. He lays out all the scientific information currently available that says that we are actually evolved to run barefoot. We're not supposed to run in shoes and the whole running in shoes phenomenon, it was only 30 or 40 years right now, thanks Nike.

**Logan:** It reminds me of the theme from *Anchorman* where he was talking about going jogging or *"Yogging."* It may be a soft "j." It was a new fad back in the '70s. So there are quite a few things I want to touch on there. *Born to Run*, pretty much everyone that's a runner speaks about that book very highly. You said there's one chapter in there about the barefoot. Do you remember some of the science, some of the reasons behind that?

**Zane:** A good one to start out was he cited some studies. There were a lot of studies coming out about this because people are interested in it and there's huge movement to go back to what our ancestors did, like with paleo and stuff like that. So a lot more studies are coming out like that and barefoot running would be going back to our ancestors, too.

One of the studies they did was I think in 2009. They studied running shoes and how much torque would affect the joints on running shoes compared to going barefoot and walking in heels. They actually found out that running in running shoes is way worse for your joints than even walking in heels, which most people assume would be the opposite because running shoes are supposed to protect your feet. So that's one study.

Another study they did focused on the expensiveness of running shoes and how much cushion they had. The more expensive there are, the more heel they have, the more cushion to protect your shoe, prevented you from rolling, and all that stuff. They found that shoes over \$100 always ended up being way more injury prone than wearing shoes that were just \$40. So the cheaper the shoe you got, the better for you injury-wise in the long run. That doesn't make any sense if you look at the shoe industry because they're all about preventing roll, getting the right orthopedic for you so that you don't have foot injuries or joint or ankle injuries. But it's almost guaranteed that if you're going to be wearing running shoes, and I expect most people do, they say something like 90% of runners will get injured every year wearing running shoes.

**Logan:** Yeah, lots of knee injuries, back injuries, ankle injuries, all kinds of things from it.

**Zane:** And barefoot running kind of get rids of a lot of that.

**Logan:** I definitely want to get into that in more detail. The one thing that people are going to find if they've ever experimented with any sort of barefoot running is you go out, you try, and you really can't take much in the beginning. If you do try to do too much, you can go overboard with this and set yourself up for injuries in a different way. So talk about really how to break into barefoot running. I think it also would actually be good to talk about the low tech shoes which are, I guess, kind of high tech. Think like Vibram FiveFingers or flat-soled shoes and doing that versus running shoes and versus barefoot, the differences between those.

**Zane:** Well, I'll just tell you how I got into it because I incorporate all that stuff. The first thing, I just want to make this clear, the very first thing is you always have to start really slow because if you go your normal pace, which everyone wants to do to start out and keep running the same—no one really likes going back and having to work on getting back to where they were. I definitely did not like it—but if you do do it correctly, it's not going to take you as long to get to where I'm at right now.

I started out, my very first one, barefoot, I was like screw that. I'm just going to try it. I had this one-mile route planned out on my friend's little old manmade island. I fell in love with it right then and decided to increase my run. I just kept running because I felt so good, so different from wearing shoes because you feel everything. Actually, compared to your hands and your mouth, the feet have the third or the fourth most sensors of any part of your body.

So when you wear shoes, you're blocking out your sense feelings and they actually assist you in your running. Of course, I ran three miles and my feet were killing me when I got home. For the next three days, I could barely walk and that is a common thing.

**Logan:** I have a similar story to that. In our hometown, Santa Cruz, California, they have a race called the [Wharf to Wharf](#), which is six miles or ten kilometers. I've done that a number of times in the past just for fun and one of the years I did it, I was starting to learn about these barefoot things. I didn't actually even

have running shoes at the time but I also really wasn't involved in running so I didn't train for it at all. I think I went running all of maybe two miles in preparation for a six-mile race.

I was wearing the [Vibram FiveFingers](#) and went and did the race. After about the second mile, my lower legs just quit operating. I basically shuffled the rest of the four miles and I was sore for over a week. It definitely wasn't good and I think I might have been slightly injured from it, too. It was beyond just soreness so yeah, you've got to be careful with it. I can concur on that point.

**Zane:** You finished the race though, right?

**Logan:** I did finish the race. Yeah.

**Zane:** It's all in that enjoyment now.

**Logan:** It wasn't in a very fast time though.

**Zane:** That's the thing, even with the Vibram. I ran barefoot but I was still skeptical of the whole, I think, so I was also cross-training with my shoes normally and I'd try foot strike, fore strike, and my shoes, which to me are still kind of stupid but it does kind of get you used to fore-striking.

**Logan:** For people that may not be familiar with the terms of what that means, can you explain them in a little bit of detail?

**Zane:** The forestrike, normally with shoes, when you wear cushioned shoes, it's natural for you to start to a heel strike in most people, not everyone. That's just because of the shoes, the high heel and stuff, it just makes it easier. When you walk barefoot and stuff, you're supposed to heel strike. I think the extra padding and stuff kind of confuses your body mechanics into thinking you're just walking there, something weird like that.

You tend to heel strike if you're wearing shoes if you're running but when you run barefoot or in minimal shoes, you'll find instantly that you cannot heel strike because it will send shockwaves all the way up your leg and they will really hurt. You will go to a mid-foot or forefoot strike to compensate for that. That is the natural way to run because it turns your whole leg and foot into one giant string or spring. This conserves and helps you run. I can explain that a little more later. So those are the terms. Even if you're wearing shoes they found out it's a little better to do forestrikes instead of heelstrikes because then you're not getting that huge shockwave going up your leg, even if you're wearing shoes. So that's—

**Logan:** So that can be practiced regardless of what you're wearing.

**Zane:** You can practice before or before you do anything, ideally you should at least be doing that, even if you're going to stick with shoes. So I was doing both, shoes, I threw in some barefoot but I finally went and bought some Vibrams when they first came out. I think you gave me the idea actually.

**Logan:** I'm a trendsetter.

**Zane:** I loved them. I thought it felt like running barefoot. It's not exactly the same feeling and I started wearing those and I wore those for like every run after that. It is kind of cool. It does kind of give you protection and stuff and you still have the feeling of running barefoot. You will definitely work out your feet a lot more, your ankles and all those little muscles because you don't have something holding your foot in a cast, which is what a shoe basically is.

So all in all, I think minimal shoes are good but I would not stick to them because even I went a little overboard and actually got injured wearing minimal shoes, kind of like you got injured on that race. I just went too far too fast in them. That's part of their appeal. They can protect you so people think that they can keep doing these same distances and stuff because their feet aren't screaming at them to chill out, put a brake on things, let them rest, and get used to this. A lot of people actually get injured when they switch to Vibram because again, they're going too far too fast. Even with Vibram you need to take it slow and let your body get used to this new way of running. You have to relearn running pretty much—

**Logan:** Because when you're doing these, the forestriking or the midfoot, it really does engage the entire musculature in a different manner and if you're not used to that, you're going to affect your body's ability to keep up with it. It will fatigue and it's when you push through that and keep going because you're used to running a whole bunch more that you get that extreme soreness and injury?

**Zane:** Yeah, for sure. I didn't know this when I first started forestriking is that you have to bring your heel down or ideally you should. Some people don't but if you don't bring that heel down, you're putting a lot of stress on your Achilles and your calves—

**Logan:** So that all of the foot hits first then your heel comes down?

**Zane:** The ball also hits and then the heel, yeah. You want to drop the heel. When I first started, I thought forestrike was you forestrike, you hit the ball of the foot and then you keep going. So you're basically bouncing along. Don't do that.

**Logan:** Let me ask this. What's the difference? So this is how you run, I would say, at like a normal pace? If you were sprinting all out then it's all going to be on the ball of the foot, right?

**Zane:** Yeah.

**Logan:** So it really does depend on the speed. How you walk, regardless of shoes or barefoot, is different from how you run at moderate speed versus how you sprint. It's all different mechanics in the body?

**Zane:** Sure. Well, you get more speed when you are just on the top of your foot because you're getting a larger bounce but you can't keep that up. Even when I sprint, I try and bring the heel down but it's going to slow you down. Just bringing the heel down that far even is going to slow you down because that's extra time you're spending doing that. Often times, I'll just forestrike going up the heel because it's easier and bringing the heel down a little harder on the hill.

**Logan:** Right, because you'd have to extend it even further.

**Zane:** It's really good for the range of motion so even practicing that on the hill is really good.

**Logan:** Interesting. So backing up a little to building up, if someone was to, let's say that they run some long distances and they want to start trying the barefoot thing, how would you advise them to break into it?

**Zane:** There's one guy, Barefoot Ken Bob, I learned a lot from him. He has a book that is really good on running techniques and how to break into it and stuff called [Barefoot Running Step by Step](#). I highly recommend it. He thinks that even running, I think, 25% of your running and 75% in shoes or whatever, that 25% is enough to actually prevent running injuries from occurring.

Ideally when you first start breaking into this, you don't even have to do it too much. I don't recommend it. You should go slow. A good way to figure out if you should even start running barefoot, because you said a lot of people can run far barefoot because their feet just start hurting really bad and that's because you've been wearing shoes all your life. Your feet are basically weak. The skin is soft. It's weak. It's not going to hold up that well when it's hitting friction and sharp objects on the ground.

You have to build that up and one really good way is just go barefoot walking actually. There are some schools of thought on how far you should go but one of them is just 45 minutes barefoot walking. If you can do 45 minutes barefoot, you can probably start running without any large problems. Walking 45 minutes barefoot on the street is actually not as easy as it sounds if you're not used to it.

**Logan:** I've done some of that myself, going on hikes. If there are like little pebbles and rocks, in the streets as well, it really is tough when you're starting out with it.

**Zane:** Well, hikes are a good way to start out with it if you can find trails that are more dirt and sand and stuff. Here's a good thing. A lot of people are like, *"I want to start barefoot running. Should I just go barefoot at the beach?"* I get that all the time and I always say no to that one because the beach is really soft and while it's good to barefoot run and stuff, if you don't know how to barefoot run, you don't have the correct form and stuff, it's almost akin to wearing shoes.

**Logan:** Because you can heel strike in the sand and get away with it.

**Zane:** Yeah, you can do that and it's just you're not going to be running correctly. So you don't learn good form at the beach unless you already know the form. It's just soft. It's sloppy. You just end up sloppy if you don't know. I wanted to bring up some techniques for running like that but I'll do that after we talk about getting started.

So I say walk for 45 minutes. If you can do that, that's awesome. Just go for a small run and just do it slowly. When your feet hurt, you should stop running. That's kind of how it is. Your feet are your coaches. They tell you when you should stop and when you should go. You'll eventually learn how far you can push your limits. Even me, I've done a whole marathon barefoot, I still will be so high on running that I push my feet too far and they hurt for a day or two.

One of the things I love about barefoot running is it helps you get in tune with yourself more and your body. You're more in tune with nature, too, because you have that connection but getting in tune with your body and your feet especially. It's just a different kind of awareness. It takes a little while to learn it but you really begin to appreciate it once you start to learn it. So just go slow. That's the whole thing. Go slow.

If you can, you learn from someone, how to actually do it right because, like I was saying when I was running in minimal shoes, my ankles got really screwed up, both of them, to the point where I couldn't even run without extreme pain. So I ditched the shoes and I decided right then and there to go full, 100% barefoot. I actually did what I tell people not to do now, which is I went to the beach and ran. I did that mainly because of my ankle injuries. It didn't hurt as much. So as my ankles got better, I eventually got off the beach and started just running.

It was a slow process but I eventually was doing 100% barefoot running. The only thing is I started getting crazy blisters and stuff. I had no idea how to combat them so for a year I struggled so hard running barefoot to get back to where I was at one point. It was painful and I did it the complete wrong way. I really, really should have talked to somebody that had been doing it for a long time.

I went to a workshop by Barefoot Ken Bob. That's where I learned of his book. Talking to him, reading his book, everything he said sunk in to a tee because I had been doing it for so long. Immediately after that, I never got blisters anymore and the length I could go and my speed both increased I'd say by times ten, at least. My length when crazy high after that, just from learning how to correctly run so that there's enough friction. That's what I kind of wanted to talk about.

**Logan:** Yeah, can you share that big "aha" was?

**Zane:** The big "aha." There are a few things. The biggest thing that I would say is probably the mindset. You have to change your mindset. You can't think like runners think or joggers think where they're, *"I'm going out to pound the pavement."* No. You're going to be barefoot. You don't want to pound the pavement. You don't want to be pushing off, first thing like that. You don't want to push off the ground

That's not what you're trying to do. If you do those things, there's going to be friction and your feet are not going to like it. So you change it so your feet are landing on the pavement. You're not pushing. You're lifting off. You're not pushing off. It's huge in everything but it actually works. Once you stop talking like that.

**Logan:** Well, I imagine it does. Also, it may be subtle but it changes how you're muscles are actually used because you're lifting rather than pushing off, which is a different mechanic.

**Zane:** Yeah. That goes to reason one of the techniques is just lifting with your thigh as opposed to pushing up with your foot. If you think about it, your thighs are a huge combination of muscles and bone and it's so much easier for you to lift your thigh up because of that, all those muscles and stuff, than for you to push down and away with your foot to lift your entire body weight with your foot and push off the ground that way.

That was a definitely probably the biggest game changer for me, just that concept where you're lifting with your thigh. You're lifting a tiny little weight at the end of your leg as opposed to pushing up with all that, pushing all that weight off the ground. That in itself will get rid of a tremendous amount of friction.

**Logan:** I have a question. I did a small workshop on pose running. How are these techniques different or the same as that because that is supposed to be a better way to run than what people normally do?

**Zane:** Yeah, it is for sure. Actually, pose running—there's one called chi running, I think—those are all methods of running, how you're supposed to run. If you run barefoot, you actually do that stuff normally. So all that kind of trains you to run. It's actually good to learn that way because you learn how to run correctly but if you run barefoot, you will naturally do that stuff, like they talk about falling forward and stuff when you're running and keeping your legs moving under you. Well when you're running correctly barefoot, that's what happens.

**Logan:** The whole lift off thing, if I remember correctly, that was definitely in there as well. You're lifting your leg rather than falling forward.

**Zane:** Well, that's huge. No one ever told me that. That's an imagery thing. You don't want to push out through that; you want to lift it. Even shot runners, which are people wearing shoes, they should use that because that's super important and it conserves a lot of energy.

**Logan:** Once you have technique down, how long does it take to practice?

**Zane:** Actually, you've got to actively running. When you go running, you've got to think about it. But eventually, it comes to you naturally. When I run now, where I'm like am I pulling up with my thigh or am I pushing off.

**Logan:** So it's something that can always be improved upon a little more. Also if you have a lot of repetition in the past, would you say those people will take a little longer for them to drive it in just because there's so much habit built in?

**Zane:** Yeah. That's the thing. You've got to kind of let go of everything you learned about running, which most of it's going to be wrong, unfortunately. At least for me, that's how it was. Everything I did before was totally wrong and it makes perfect sense to me. It's like whenever I would run over ten miles, I would get knee injuries or my knees would start to hurt and stuff. I figured out later that a lot of my lower back pain had to do with me running like that, because a lot of it went away when I switched to barefoot running. Actually, I have no lower back pain at all and I used to have it all the time. I attribute it to barefoot running mostly and also to sleeping on the floor occasionally. That helps a lot.

You have to learn these things. It takes a little while and that's go slow. Don't let cruise through this as fast as possible to get back to where you were Just go slow. There's no rush.

**Logan:** Yeah.