



## Legendary Strength Podcast

### Barefoot Running Part 2

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**Logan:** Hey, Logan Christopher here with the [LegendaryStrength.com](http://legendarystrength.com) podcast. We're going to be picking up where we left off last week with my brother, Zane Christopher, and our talk about barefoot running.

Okay. Excellent. So the whole foot care thing, you mentioned that once you learned the proper technique then you'd stop having blisters and everything. Are your feet just as tough as nails now? I know a lot of people want to shy away because they don't want to have very crusty or dry, flakey skin or something. Is that something that occurs with the barefoot running? Can you talk about that?

**Zane:** Okay, common question, what do your feet look like? They must be super calloused and stuff. My feet are actually pretty smooth. There are no calluses on them at all and everyone I show them to is usually surprised that they look that way. Part of the thing about that is I run on trails and I think it's really good to run on trails because that really toughens your feet up. Obviously, you're not going to do that right away but as soon as you can do trails and eventually trails of gravel and larger rocks and stuff, the better. But then running on the street, which I think is also important especially if you ever plan on

doing races because most races are on the street, the street actually kind of works to file down the calluses. So your feet should be pretty smooth.

If you do get calluses and if you do get blisters, that means your form is not correct, you're not running right. This guy has a great way to tell if you have perfect form and that's to wear socks, a pair of socks, and do a marathon in a pair of socks. If there are no holes at the end of the marathon, you have perfect form.

**Logan:** That makes sense because if you're overusing a certain portion of your foot, like maybe just the point near the big toes and there's going to be a lot more stress on there, that's going to build up the calluses and the blisters. It will definitely wear through the pair of socks so that makes a lot of sense. Have you tried that yet, though?

**Zane:** No. I haven't tried that, maybe because he was like, "*Do it in a marathon,*" but yeah, that would be an excellent and good way to see where your weak points are. One of the things that happen a lot with people is they get blisters on their toes. I did. My friend, she's pretty decent there, for this now, probably the best I know of but she gets blisters on her toes. She has long toes and I think that can actually be a downside to barefoot running.

The only way real way to limit that if you are getting blisters on your toes and stuff is you need to actually think about lifting your toes up a little, not so much where your foot is going to get sore from the continual lifting of your toes but your toes don't really need to be hitting so much. At least until you know what you're doing, they don't need to be hitting so much. If I feel any hot spots in my toes, I will consciously lift them and that will prevent a lot of toe blisters.

**Logan:** Okay. Do you do anything as far as massaging or using a pumice stone or anything to take care of the feet, different lotions? What do you do?

**Zane:** One good way to massage the feet in case of soreness and stuff is a golf ball, putting it on the ground, and just rolling it around after you. I use a pumice stone on my feet in the shower after I run because your feet get ridiculously dirty and I find that's the best to actually clean them. Again, I'm not really using them for calluses or anything like that because my feet just won't develop calluses anymore from that.

The other thing is that people are like, "*How do you do that?*" like you said before. My skin is a lot thicker but it's not calluses. It feels a little leathery and stuff like that and a lot of times when I run now, I it actually feels like I'm wearing shoes because I don't feel a lot of the stuff. That just builds up. You have to take the time to build that up.

**Logan:** Right. That means the body adapts to anything so if you put it through that, it's going to develop tougher skin rather than having it in this nice, comfortable cast otherwise where we never encounter anything that will touch the skin down there.

**Zane:** Yeah. A lot of people are like, *"Well, isn't that painful?"* Probably the biggest question I always get, *"Doesn't it hurt to barefoot run?"* Yes, but it's not constantly pain the whole time you're doing it. You're going to step on stones. It's inevitable. It's going to hurt when you step on stuff. You'll step on a sharp rock. The feet are designed to take that, actually, but one of the techniques to lessen the pain is when you land, you're like putting your whole foot down and allowing it to spread.

Think of it like spreading out over the surface and if the surface area is concentrated, like if you land on your forefoot and it's just that, your forefoot, and you step on a rock and all that weight's going into it, it's going to hurt a lot. But if you have your whole foot come down and spread it out over the rock and stuff like they're designed to do, it's actually going to minimize it because the surface area is going to be so much bigger it spreads out the force.

Horses do that, too. When they don't have a horseshoe on them, they found that a lot of horse injuries go away because they're basically barefoot and their hooves work as shock absorbers. So they actually spread out when they touch ground and then contract back up when they lift off, and that minimized rocks and stuff from damaging the hooves. Humans do the same thing. It's kind of like a pump and it actually gets your blood moving, too. It's Chinese medicine stuff. Like I said, you should walk like a pigeon to get that pump flowing, which is moving the whole body and getting the blood circulating. It's really healthy for you and one of things I always considered was really good was the foot pump gets your blood flowing, too.

**Logan:** I've heard before another benefit from the barefoot is when you're stepping on things like little rocks, if you just think about reflexology, there are points and different things all within your foot that correspond to the rest of your body and people pay hundreds of dollars for a reflexology massage but those little rocks there are going to chaotic and not targeted or anything but if you're doing it, you're going to get some of those benefits at the same time because like I said, the foot is really meant to be able to take these things. It may be slightly painful when you begin but once you're used to it I think there's significant health benefits that could come from it as well.

**Zane:** Well yeah, for sure, and there's also—I don't know if you've done a show about being grounded?

**Logan:** I don't think I've done a show on it but definitely I've mentioned it but yeah, that's absolutely another effect.

**Zane:** Yeah, and I think also one of the reasons why I like it so much may just be that connection to the earth. You feel the earth below you and just having that whole time being connected. It definitely changes your mood. People ask me why I barefoot run and my honest answer is I have never smiled so much while running as when I do when I'm barefoot running. Usually when you see people running, they're not smiling.

**Logan:** No. They have looks of pain on their faces often times.

**Zane:** Yeah, exactly.

**Logan:** Would you say that when you run mostly in nature or how much on the road?

**Zane:** It depends if I'm training for a race and I know it's coming up, I will do more road work, or if I'm lazy and I don't want to drive out to a trail. But lately I've been trying to hit more trails up just because it's completely different. It is a lot more work because you've got your feet a lot like rocks, just destroy them sometimes, and it takes a while but it's totally worth it.

You're grounded when you run on sidewalks but I really don't like to run on sidewalks because they're so smooth. I'm training for longer ultra distances and smoothness doesn't really help me for those distances.

**Logan:** Right. I remember hearing that concrete is grounded but asphalt is not.

**Zane:** Yeah, it's not. So now when I run on the road, I usually run on asphalt just because I see it as better training for my feet because usually it's a rough road. It's not—

**Logan:** Well you have specific goals in mind. If somebody was just doing this as purely for health benefits, then would you say the trail running is probably the best option?

**Zane:** For health benefits, I would just say running barefoot. Get out there. Starting barefoot, you're going to want to start on the street, I think. Yeah, I would say sidewalks just because they're smooth and your feet do need to get used to that kind of—I'm not supposed to say friction because that's not a good word but they have to get used to those pressures, those kind of surfaces. If you can get off the sidewalks and do the street, that's even better. Some roads are really, really bad. The worst road I ran was in Big Sur. I did the Big Sur marathon and I actually burned off a few layers of skin on my feet because the road was so bad and the race was 26 miles.

**Logan:** Well, I want to talk about your races but one other question that I'm sure you might get is some people might be scared the roads, especially if you're doing it on the road or the sidewalk, are going to

be very dirty and there's some things, like glass or there might be some parasites that can work their way into your feet or something like that. Do you have any worries about those, anything you do for it?

**Zane:** Actually, a good point you brought up were the parasites. I'm not really worried about that. I think I might have been worried about it before when I first started. I had the same worries as everyone. What if I stepped on glass? What if I step in dog poo—that's a common one.

**Logan:** Well, it's an awareness thing. You've got to avoid these things, right, at the same time.

**Zane:** Yeah, but you are going to be looking down a lot more. Ideally, you want to be looking ahead of yourself or not straight down at the ground because you want your head to be level but you've got to learn that stuff and you'll be looking down a lot more. I would say it improves hand-foot coordination hugely. But again, the parasites, I have never experienced a foot problem. I am not commonly trying to run through dog poo. I don't think I've actually ever run through that. I don't think I've run through some dog poop but—

**Logan:** Are there any areas that you specifically avoid? I know a guy, Bobby, who's been to a number of our workshops and he just got rid of his shoes completely he never wears and he was traveling around through Tokyo and a whole bunch of things to get those grounding benefits and also the awareness, everything we're talking about, not so much the specifically the running and he never had any problems from that.

**Zane:** So he just goes wherever?

**Logan:** Yeah. Unless he has to go in a place that requires shoes and he will put on Vibrams on but other than that, it's completely 100% barefoot, which I think is pretty cool.

**Zane:** That's awesome. I really wish I could do that. There's not really anywhere I wouldn't run now but it's going to be a little slow process. You've got to build the mindset that it's okay to run on a hard trail or something before you go, *"I can never do that"* or you've got to try it and then eventually you'll just see that you can do that and as you develop that mindset, you'll be able to go anywhere. It takes a little bit. It is just a restricting mindset that it's the tyranny of the shoes. They restrict your mind, not just your feet. They're protecting your feet but they're also putting blinders on your mind to what you can actually do in your normal form.

So I go anywhere. If there's tons of gravel, if there's glass. I don't try to run through glass but it doesn't really stop me. One of the things I learned is a lot of the glass on the street besides beet bottles is automobile safety glass and that glass is actually designed not to but you because if you get in a car crash, that would be little bad if the whole window shattered and you got cut to pieces. So it's not

designed to cut you. I've actually only stepped on glass one time and I've been doing this for over three years now.

So everyone worrying about glass and stepping on sharp things, it's kind of beside the point. If you're not looking down, you're going to step on stuff and it's going to hurt but it's probably not going to even injure you. You've just got to be aware. So to me that's a non-issue. You've just got to get out there and start doing it. A lot of people are just scared of pain and stuff. Pain's a part of life, right? It's not—

**Logan:** It's not really pain so much. It's being uncomfortable and by and large our society is quite weak and underdeveloped, I would say, so they could use some discomfort and I think this is a great approach to do it. You mentioned you run marathons barefoot. Can you tell us what you've done and how fast you run for those people that have an interest in that?

**Zane:** Well, I've never actually run a marathon. I hadn't run a marathon in my whole running career and everyone's like, you've run the marathons and stuff and I'm like, *"Actually no, I don't. I've never done one."* So last year, I decided to change that because I sick of saying, *"Actually, I've never run a marathon."* So I decided to do the Big Sur marathon, which is if you're a veteran and you know about marathons, it's not really an easy one, especially for your first marathon. It's kind of a hard one. It's super hilly. There's actually a two-mile hill on the middle of it and it's really rough. I really think everyone should do it. It is one of the most beautiful races ever right there on Big Sur, from Big Sur to Pacific Grove or almost to Monterey.

I decided early on when I first decided to do it that I was going to do it barefoot just because I was 100% training barefoot and I'm not going to change that and run in [Vibrams](#) or something, although I thought about it and I was really, really worried that I wouldn't be able to finish it because I had no idea about how the road was. Once you start running barefoot, like if you do races, that becomes a huge consideration. What am I going to be running on? Because 26 miles is far and you don't want to get halfway out there and then figure out that you can't run anymore and you're barely able to walk.

So I decided to do that. I actually scouted out the road. Unfortunately, I scouted out a smooth section on it when I was driving up to Santa Cruz once. So I was actually stoked and thought I could handle it. When I did the race, I did a lot better than I thought I would do. My goal was to beat five hours because it was such a hard race. People are a lot slower there so I was just trying to beat five hours. I got 4 hours and 14 minutes. I beat my two friends that came to do the marathon and they were wearing shoes. I was ten minutes behind another barefoot runner that had actually won a marathon before and had done multiple marathons barefoot. I was just stoked because I thought I did really good for my first marathon and being barefoot.

After that, a month later, I had my second marathon, which might not have been smart, to go from one marathon to another that fast since it was my first one. But I did the San Diego Rock and Roll Marathon which was a way flatter course, thankfully, and the streets are a lot nicer to you although they still were not super smooth sidewalks. That one I got 3:47, I think is what I got.

I've only done a couple of races since then. I've been kind of taking a break but I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to be doing some ultra marathons now and those are usually more trail. Most of them are usually trail. There's so long they just have to be on trails usually. That's why I'm picking up the trail pace but right now those are the two biggest ones I've done barefoot. After the first one, I really could not believe that I had done that. It's still kind of dumbfounding to me that I was able to run 26.2 miles barefoot.

**Logan:** It's quite an achievement.

**Zane:** Because just running a marathon with shoes is an achievement. Running it barefoot, I just can't believe did that. So many people came up to me and were amazed. It was really awesome. They'd never even think of running barefoot.

**Logan:** There aren't many people that do it.

**Zane:** Well, yeah. That's the thing. Well, there's a reason but one of the benefits, I think, of running barefoot just in general are the looks you get from people. I've really enjoyed that.

**Logan:** Yeah, even just running in the Vibrams when I did that wharf to wharf. Most people don't do it and they think it's out of this world so actually barefoot is just a whole other step beyond that. So you're training for these marathons or your average training, what does it look like? How much are you running in the week? Is it all just long distance stuff? You mentioned you do some sprinting as well. How do you put it all together?

**Zane:** Well, now I'm at a point where I kind of do what I want. There are all those training plans throughout marathons and stuff and I'd read those books. At this point, I just do what I want. Usually I try and do one long distance one because when you do it barefoot, it changes everything. I know in CrossFit the new thing is doing intervals and not even doing long distances to do a marathon, which I guess can work out for people, but when you're barefoot you can't do shorter distances to build up for a marathon. You really have to get up or at least get close to that race mark because you need your feet to be able to handle the difference.

**Logan:** Right. So it more about the toughening of the feet and getting the people to get to the fatigue rather than the conditioning aspect of it.

**Zane:** Yeah, It is. That's the biggest thing actually. If your feet can't handle it, you're not going to finish the race so you have to train your feet and through training your feet, you're going to train for the marathon. The thing with running barefoot, a lot of people complain, *"Well, I'm going to be really slow."* Yeah. When you get started out, you're a lot slower, a lot slower and that kind of annoyed me when I first started out but as you get better at it and you continue in your training, you'll actually become faster than when you were. When I wear shoes now, which I've only done a couple of times just to see how it went—I wore some Vibrams—I am terribly fast at any distance. It's ridiculous. I've even considered doing a race in Vibrams just to see how fast I go.

A lot of universities actually train barefoot or part of their training is barefoot and it actually builds up speed. It helps you improve your speed so if you're looking for faster sprints and stuff, which I know you do sprints, right?

**Logan:** From time to now.

**Zane:** Yeah. Actually training and doing runs barefoot and stuff will actually increase your speed.

**Logan:** Interesting.

**Zane:** As you learn the form, it just—it's weird—it just naturally increases it. I'm faster than a lot of runners now just from running barefoot and it definitely helps sciences.

But it is important. That is the thing. Train your feet. So my whole occupation for the next training is can my feet handle the distance. The better it can handle the distance the faster I can go in the race. That's the only thing. So for my first marathon, I only actually got up to 20 miles. I think it was the furthest I ran for it but once racing I learned stuff and it's easier to push through pain and that was very.

**Logan:** So in your training, you mentioned before barefoot running really helps you get in tune with your body, which I do the same thing. I'm always looking to better do that because I think that's going to allow you to better control your body, get the best progress, avoid injuries and all that. So are you really listening to your body and especially your feet I guess, when you're doing your training for how far you need to push it on a given day?

**Zane:** Yeah, actually a really good thing is checking your body. When you're running—I do this a lot—I'll just check and see how everything's going mentally. Check throughout my body. See if I'm running properly. Especially with barefooting, you end up doing that a lot, to be like, *"Am I lifting my leg with the least amount of energy? Am I lifting it and not pushing off? Again, am I like bending my knees?"*

One of the best things to do is bending your knees, depending on what kind of training it is. If it's gravel and stuff, to actually run through gravel—and I didn't say this before—you bend your knees. Naturally,

you bend your knees when you run over sharper things and that helps absorb the impact. So that's a constant thing. Am I bending my knees enough? Am I absorbing the impact enough? Because if you're not absorbing the impact enough, it could lead to some foot injury or foot attrition, which is going to limit your run eventually.

So yeah, you check yourself a lot and you just try to get into that flow. When you are in the flow and you're barefoot, you'll definitely kill it and it's just super fun. It becomes like a little game. That's how you know you're doing good. It's when you're having the most fun of your life, at least for me. That's how it feels.

I want an insight to for everyone that I don't just train barefoot. I do a lot of strength stuff, body—

**Logan:** I was actually going to get to that next. You do like this sort of stuff I teach, [kettlebells](#) and [bodyweights](#)?

**Zane:** Yeah.

**Logan:** You're going very far with running because it's something that you love to do. Obviously there are some great health benefits but to push it to that extreme level, especially if you're going toward the ultra marathon that's like competing in powerlifting, not necessarily, you have to make some sacrifices in order to do that. But overall, it's not a complete strength training program by itself, or fitness program?

**Zane:** No. I do a lot of body strength stuff, gymnast—a lot of stuff you do. Of course, you've helped me with that. I do a lot of gymnastics. Me and my older brother have done—I don't know if you heard of this—but a lot of people might not heard of this. It's called natural movement. It's pretty much using your environment as your gym and it's about moving efficiently, which is really nice for barefoot running because they really focus on efficient movements, efficient jumping, walking, running, climbing, efficient fighting, defense-related skills. We do a lot of that and we'll do it barefoot, too. It crosses over both ways. Barefoot running helps that. That definitely helps barefoot running.

But that's usually more or less the stuff I do. I do use kettlebells or stuff. I'm not aiming for the super big, super strong thing. I leave that to you because my specialty is running. I'm not trying to get super big but obviously I want to be able to defend myself as I have to or move or push a car off someone if have to. That's my goal in strength training, to be functional.

**Logan:** Exactly. We all have our own specific goals and places we want to go. That's why, as I do have on the call, barefoot running is something that I've played with a little bit but it's not something I'm pursuing to a higher level.

I want to thank you very much for sharing all this information. For anyone who's interested in doing it, I think it'll really help them out and maybe it will get some people interested in trying it that have never thought about doing it before. So are there any—?

**Zane:** I was going to say even just training normally, just do it barefoot. Why not?

**Logan:** Oh, I'm all about that. Everything I've done, almost never have shoes on pretty much regardless of what I'm doing when I'm doing my training. Any final words of wisdom or things you want to share with people?

**Zane:** I'm just going to say again, if you really, really want to do this, take it slow and enjoy the process. People try and want to know about speed. They want to get the best PR. They want to know about speed. They want the best PR times and stuff so I've been learning lately. Like often times, you are going to get PR time. I you are just relaxed and you're having fun, and your whole goal isn't the PR time. So just enjoy it. Don't take life too seriously.

**Logan:** Well, that's great info. After doing this, I kind of want to go do some barefoot running.

**Zane:** Oh, really? I was going to say next time I'm up there, we should probably be go running in the forest.

**Logan:** Sounds good to me. All right, well thanks everyone for listening. If you have any more questions in the future for Zane on barefoot running or what else he does, then be sure to [let me know](#) or contact Tim. You can find us both at [SupermanHerbs.com](#). We have some more stuff from Zane. I think maybe getting you, Claude, and Nicole, I'm talking about the natural movement. At some point in the future, we'd also be good to—

**Zane:** Oh, that woman?

**Logan:** It would be great to share with people as well. So thank you very much, Zane.

**Zane:** Thanks, Logan. Thanks for having me on this show finally.

**Logan:** Yeah, you're welcome. Thank you everyone for listening. That's going to do it for us here