

Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen Study Guide

**Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the
Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen by
Christopher McDougall**

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Plot Summary

"Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen" by Christopher McDougall tells a story of race involving a tribe of super runners.

The author of the book had a problem. He enjoyed running, but his body was giving out on him. When he went to specialists to discover what the pain in his foot was and how he should treat it, he was told that running was not natural for the body and that he would most likely need cortisone shots if he wanted to continue to run. However, he might want to consider stopping his running. Specialists pointed out that many people were injured while running and the body just was not made for all the pressure put on the knees or the pounding on the feet.

The author was a writer and during an assignment in Mexico, he was reading a magazine article that caught his interest. He learned about a tribe of peaceful long-distance runners who seemed to be able to go long distances without any problems. It was a race of people called the Taramuhara, who kept themselves separate from society. They were known for their serenity, good health, and incredible running skills. He wanted to learn more about them.

The author tracked down some members of the tribe and learned about a man known as Caballo Blanco who knew these people better than anyone. He spent some time tracking him down and discovered that the man had an idea for a race. It was a race that involved some of the greatest runners in the world and the Taramuhara. These runners all had a true passion for the sport and not for winning alone.

As the author researched running and learned about these people who had a true joy of running, he learned how to improve his own running to a point where he could run without pain. Modern runners had many misconceptions, beginning with shoes. One of the best ways to run was to go about it naturally and as close to barefoot as possible.

He learned that the human body was made for speed and for distance. The Tarahumara didn't need to warm up or train. They did what their bodies instinctively told them to do. After studying these great runners, the best advice a coach could give was to change a diet so that one acts as if one were poor. Fancy drinks and fancy diets did not lead to great runners.

The author researched coaches and long-distance runners. There was a common denominator with the runners who did the best. The author began to realize that running well wasn't about the sport itself, but rather a success that stemmed from a pure lifestyle. Not only were the best runners good runners, but they were good people who shared a love and compassion for those around them.

The story ended with a race in which the greatest writers of the world actually competed against one another. Instead of being cutthroat, it became a celebration of kindred

spirits who cheered for each other and truly embraced the concept that all humans were born to run.



Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1-6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1

The book began with the author in a hotel looking for a man known as Caballo Blanco. He had been looking for him everywhere, but in each locale that he visited, he had learned the man had just left. At this point of the trip, he was beginning to wonder whether the man really existed or if he was just a legend.

At the hotel, he received good news. Apparently Caballo Blanco always arrived at five o'clock. The author was very relieved until he realized that it was after six o'clock. He sat down on the couch to think about the situation and rest.

There were many wild stories about Caballo Blanco, yet some of the details were always the same. Caballo Blanco had come to Mexico and had gone into the wild, impenetrable Copper Canyons years ago where he lived with the Tarahumara. This tribe was known for its health, serenity, and love of running. They also had a special drink that would give people energy. The people in the tribe kept to themselves and lived high up in the cliffs where no one could see them unless they wanted to be found.

As the author was thinking about all this, he fell asleep. He was pulled back to consciousness as he realized that he was hearing the voice of Caballo Blanco. He didn't look at all like anything that the author expected and he thought he had the wrong man until the man responded to his name. When the author said that he had been looking for him, Caballo Blanco looked as if he wanted to leave.

Chapter 2

The trip stemmed out of a simple question, and it led to amazing sights and bizarre adventures. It was January of 2001 when the author asked his doctor why his foot hurt. He was a big man at 6'4" and 230 lbs. and had been out for an easy 3-mile-jog when suddenly he felt as if an ice pick was going straight up through his foot.

He went to the doctor who was one of the best in the field of sports medicine and the doctor told them that the human body was not designed for the abuse that running offers. The author knew that his body had a difficult time with running. He had participated in a wide variety of sports over his lifetime and throughout his career as a Associated Press war reporter, but nothing felled him quite like running.

According to different sports health magazines, he wasn't the only one whose body had a problem with running. Many articles reported on the sensitivity of feet and the limited pressure they can handle. The author's doctor recommended that he quit running or at least use some cortisone. The author wasn't happy at the thought of taking the needle,



but he loved running and didn't want to stop. He felt as if running was a natural phenomenon that people should embrace rather than reject.

In the winter of 2003, he was reading a magazine while on assignment in Mexico. In that magazine, he saw a man running down a mountain in a robe and sandals. This inspired him to learn more about the Tarahumara. He began to research the tribe of runners who could keep on running for a couple of days on tough terrain without tiring.

Chapter 3

"Runner's World Magazine" assigned an article to the author. He was supposed to track down the Tarahumara. The job wasn't easy and he needed help so he hired a man called Salvador Holguin who knew Arnulfo Quimare, the greatest living Taramuhara runner.

The only problem with the journey was the fact that Salvador wasn't completely sure he knew where they lived. The author recalled stories and quotes from explorers over the past century who commented on how difficult it was to find the Taramuhara people since they blended and lived within the cliffs high in the mountains.

The author and Salvador left while the moon was still high and they continued to drive throughout the day. At one point, they were surrounded by marijuana fields and found themselves in a tight situation with some drug cartels. The author knew that the drug runners hated musicians and journalists and he scurried to hide all the music and writing paraphernalia in the vehicle. They were not stopped.

After a few more hours of driving, they went through the woods to a canyon. Salvador reassured the author that they would be able to get down deep slopes without any problem. Apparently the Taramuhara did it all the time.

Chapter 4

After two days of traveling, Salvador announced that they had arrived at their destination. The author could not see anything. It was extremely hot and the author stopped for a rest at midday. Salvador led him into a crack between the rocks and they found themselves in a small hut. Arnulfo stepped out to greet him.

Later, the author realized that they offended the man in several ways since they did not understand his culture. Fortunately, he was forgiving. Salvador reminded Arnulfo that they had met before when he had run the 60 mile race through the canyons in Guachochi.

The author tried to talk with Arnulfo and asked him some questions about racing, but Arnulfo just shrugged. This was typical for their culture. The Tarahumara had purposely withdrawn from other cultures.

Chapter 5



Later that evening, the author was talking with the Tarahumara schoolteacher. He explained that people had lived there for a very long time before the tribe accepted them. For example, they had accepted Caballo Blanco. He was a tall white man who spoke his own unique language and appeared sporadically. When the man had first appeared, he had scared the children.

Many strange and interesting characters were drawn to the canyons. At first, the people in the tribe thought that the white horse was a ghost. Eventually they realized he was a regular man. Angel told the author that the man had been there the day before.

Angel gave the author a bit of a geography lesson. He said there was a village called Mesa de la Yerbabuena, which was known for its great runners. They had a good running trail that eventually became paved. As trucks began showing up in town, foods such as chocolate, sugar, butter, rice, flour, and soda were brought in. The locals loved the food and eventually picked up jobs so that they could pay for these foods. 20 years later, there were no runners left in the town.

Chapter 6

As they left to return home, the author was wondering if the story about Caballo Blanco was true or if it was a decoy. Before they left the school teacher's home, the author had a chance to see some of the students and witness a running game. It amazed him. One child named Marcelino really stood out. The author found out that he was the son of one of the greatest Tarahumara runners. He learned more about running in the competitions between villages. The running games could be brutal, lasting several days.

Before they left, Angel had given the author a drink. It looked like gooey slime, but it tasted wonderful. It provided incredible energy and strength. This helped on the journey home as they traveled into the evening. The author spent the next few days searching for Caballo Blanco.



Chapters 7-12

Chapters 7-12 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7

Caballo Blanco looked as if he was going to bolt out of the hotel. The author started shooting names at him, showing that he knew people from the tribe. When he mentioned Manuel's name, the man acknowledged him, asking who he was.

They decided to get something to eat. Throughout the entire evening, the author couldn't figure out what Caballo Blanco thought about what he was saying. As Caballo Blanco ate, the author realized how hungry the man was. That's why he seemed so angry at the hotel.

Caballo Blanco mentioned that the author had picked him out because he didn't know if he was related to any of the drug nastiness in the area. As they ate, he began to tell his own story and some of the stories related to running and the tribe. He began to drink some alcohol and spoke more freely. He told stories about his own life during the past 10 years as he disappeared from the outside world. He met interesting characters and lived through amazing adventures. He had a plan and it involved the author.

Chapter 8

Back in the early 1990s, there was a wilderness photographer from Arizona named Rick Fisher who decided to get the Taramuhara tribe some PR, garnering fame for himself in the process. Fisher didn't care about the fact that the Taramuhara fiercely guarded their privacy or about the fact that he didn't know how to find them. The man had a reputation for grabbing the spotlight and not really thinking of others.

Fisher became friends with a Taramuhara man who followed the roads to the modern world. He asked if he could take him to the rarajipari, an ancient Tarahumara ball race. At the race he developed a business plan that would greatly benefit him. At the time he didn't know that he was creating a disaster.

Chapter 9

His plan involved the Leadville race, which happened in the town of Leadville, the highest city in North America. It was a mining town that had faced some tough times after a main mine shut down. As people left, the town struggled to survive, and those that remained decided they could only make it by capitalizing on tourism, but their brutal environment wasn't exactly appealing to travelers.

A man named Ken Chlouber decided that the town would sell its grit. He created a monster of a race. The race had gone on for more than 25 years and attracted extreme sports enthusiasts such as one man who had his toenails surgically removed to improve



his times. Another man cut off his own hand when it was pinned by a boulder. He came back and raced again.

Chapter 10

The Leadville race was exactly the type of race that Rick was looking for. It was big, showy, and tough. He persuaded his Tarahumara friend to join the race along with several of his fellow villagers in exchange for corn for their alcohol. At the race, people tried not to stare at the five men who were trying to figure out their shoes and their unfamiliar laces. None of the Tarahumara team made it further than halfway through the race.

On the way home after the race, Rick realized that they might have picked the wrong Tarahumara runners. They picked ones who were easy to persuade, who lived near the road, and were comfortable with outsiders. The real Tarahumara runners stuck to their traditional culture.

At the next Leadville race, an entirely different looking group of Tarahumara came to run. One was a short 55-year-old grandfather. The team went to the town dump and came back with strips of tire rubber that they made into sandals to run in. They didn't go for fancy sneakers.

As the race started, they were at the back of the pack. At mile 40, a couple of them started passing other runners. After 10 hours of running, they looked completely normal. They didn't seem exhausted or stressed. After 60 miles, it appeared as if they were flying. As they neared the finish line, they almost went by unnoticed. The first non-Tarahumara runner to finish with nearly an hour behind the winner.

Victoriano became the oldest winner of the race in its entire history and Felipe became the youngest finisher. Team Tarahumara was the only squad that ever one three out of the top five spots.

Chapter 11

Rick was ecstatic and just as he had planned, the publicity wave grew. Everyone wanted to know about the Running People. He promised that team Taramuhara would be back the following year and the event became major garnering the attention of ESPN. Reporters called up Ken and asked him the same question over and over, "Can anyone beat these guys?" When they asked him this, he responded that Annie could.

Ann Trason was a 33-year-old science teacher at a community college in California. She was short, standing at over just 5 feet. She loved to run, but hated going around the oval of the track. Since she enjoyed running so much, she kept doing it, increasing her distances each time. One good day, she ran 55 miles just for fun. The trick was to relax into the running.

Ann thought it might be fun to run in a marathon. The 50-mile endurance run caught her eye. After 47 miles on trails, the race finished off with a 3 mile, 1000-foot climb. She



broke the female course record. From there, she continued to break more records and win more marathons. She seemed to gain strength as she ran, rather than wilt away. There was only one thing that she had not yet done. She had not yet every won a major ultra outright. She felt it was her time in 1994.

Chapter 12

Rick was acting ridiculous at the next race. He would not let people shake hands with the runners and he acted as if they were better than anyone else. He hyped up the story of what it would be like if the female Annie beat the men on his team. It showed that he did not really understand their culture. The men did not see any difference between men and women and women were greatly esteemed in the sport.

Rick lost two of his best runners and replaced them with men from different villages. He wouldn't let others join them. He was hoping to inspire them to compete against each other. This also showed how ignorant he was of their culture as the Taramuhara considered running races to be socially bonding experiences. In another attempt to gain publicity, Rick made some racial statements saying that they were going to kick some white butt. This kind of talking would have been extremely out-of-character for the peace-loving Taramuhara. He kept the teammates away from the others before the race.



Chapters 13-18

Chapters 13-18 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, science, psychology, and the intensity of the Leadville race began to show. Dr. Joe Vigil knew about running and the psychology of running and he was there at the race to see what he was missing. He wanted to know exactly what it was that made Ann and the Taramuhara stand out.

The Taramuhara made such a sensation with their running that many people didn't realize what Ann was quietly doing. If it had not been for the tribal runners, she would have been the first person to ever win the Leadville race. She was determined that this year would be different.

Joe had his eye on the Leadville race in particular because it was a race that didn't make sense. Older people did better than younger people, and half the men dropped out while most of the women won their buckle. He wanted to observe and discover why.

The Taramuhara changed their strategy for this race. Instead of staying in the back, they were at the head of the pack when the race began. Ann overtook them by the 40-mile-mark. Her plan was to stay ahead and let fear spur her on - fear that they would catch up to her and pass her.

Chapter 14

Joe watched in awe as Ann ran without rules. She struggled as she headed up Hope Pass and the Taramuhara were effortlessly catching up to her to her intense frustration. She regained strength after reaching the peak. As Ann regained her speed, the Taramuhara were sidetracked by the Hopeless Crew, a group of hearty partying llama owners who set up camp at 12,600 feet to help injured runners.

At the 50-mile mark, Carl joined Ann. He was her mule, the one who helped her pacing and kept her sound mentally. The Taramuhara had some strangers they met the night before as their mules. At the 60-mile stop, Ann was 12 minutes ahead of the Taramuhara. Ken was there when Juan and Martimano came through and was struck by the fact that they were laughing and enjoying the run at a point where people were exhausted enough to just walk.

Chapter 15

Joe noticed how the runners ran with pure joy. Their toes pointed down as they ran and their backs were incredibly straight, but the joy seemed to be the secret key. The joy stemmed from love. Today's world has made running complex and has taken the fun out of the sport for most people.



Money was the culprit. Sponsorships and payrolls coincided with the decline in the joy of running. Joe remembered another runner named Emil Zatopek who ran purely for the love of running. He treated races like they were social gatherings. He did them for fun and in the late 1940s he raced almost every other week for three years. He never lost a race. Due to his love, his enthusiasm, and his kindness, other competitors actually cheered for him. Joe wondered if he was such a good man because he ran, or was he a great man who just happened to run?

Joe was thrilled. He had discovered it. Their incredible skill stemmed from a joy of life.

Chapter 16

Shaggy noticed something was wrong. Martimano was not running with a smooth rhythm. As they assessed the situation, Martimano commented that he thought the witch had put a spell on his knee. He and Shaggy sent Juan up ahead to "catch the witch."

At the 72-mile station, Ann was leading by 22 minutes. There were 28 miles left in the race. Juan was going to have a tough time catching up because he had never run on asphalt before. He handled it as if it wasn't anything new and continued on to the last treacherous slope as if he were embracing it. Ann was looking exhausted. As she crested the mountain, Jaun's sandal broke.

Ann was in the home stretch when she was passed by. Jaun passed her so quickly that she froze where she was. As she watched him run, she noted that he actually looked like he was having fun. It made her want to quit. Her husband urged her on and she came in almost half-an-hour behind Juan. Martimano came in third. The rest of the Tarahumara team came in fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth, and eleventh.

The celebrations were stifled as Rick stepped in and tried to capitalize on the situation monetarily. People began fighting and the Tarahumara slipped away to head back home. They were peaceful people and not fighters. They never went back to the race. Shaggy followed them. Soon he became known as Caballo Blanco.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 opened as Caballo finished telling his story to the author. He would not answer questions about his own past, but he told the story of what happened with the Tarahumara runners in the following years. Rick behaved poorly at the races, getting them disqualified and not paying fees. He also made wild accusations. The Tarahumara felt used, especially since they observed that Rick was getting better vehicles and all they received for their running and time was a pittance of corn. Micah Trued or Caballo Blanco felt badly for them and determined to show them that not all Americans were like that.

He wandered around until he found Martimano. When he left the Tarahumara village, he found a good spot and built himself a home. He wanted to run, but his legs were beginning to give out on him. He decided to try to do it like the Tarahumara so he got



some sandals and started eating like them. At first, he was not good and he injured himself frequently. He learned from that. By his third year, he was taking on intense trails. His injuries didn't resurface.

The author asked Caballo to take him running. The first ten minutes were agonizing, then Caballo gave him some pointers. He was told to focus on easy, light, smooth, and fast. The author did not want to return when it was time to head back.

On the way back, Caballo mentioned how he ended out in Creel. Caballo wondered how a Tarahumara runner would perform if pushed. He wanted to see them run in their own land. Caballo wanted to create a unique event - a race that was held Tarahumara-style. He wanted the author to write about his race to publicize it. The author decided he wanted to run the race himself.

Chapter 18

When the author returned from Mexico, he began to hunt for people who knew, or heard of, Caballo. His search was disappointing. The only person who really knew anything about the man was the editor at "UltraRunner" who had rejected articles from the man.

He contacted Joe Vigil who had also never heard of him. The author had hoped they had met in Leadville, but Joe had received a phone call that changed him at the event so he didn't meet Caballo. The phone call was from a girl who wanted to train. She was only a mediocre runner, but she was willing to stick to his new-found Tarahumara-style training and she soon became an Olympic champion.

The author's article came out, but did little to inspire. Caballo came off as a cray man with little hope of a real race. The author felt guilty after the article came out, especially when he learned that Caballo became injured while running in the shoes that he had given Caballo as a gift. The man dedicated himself to the peaceful lifestyle and love of running and the author just portrayed him as insane. Then Caballo got a message from his god.



Chapters 19-24

Chapters 19-24 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 highlighted Scott Jurek, the best ultrarunner in America. He started out as an awkward runner with little training who was ridiculed by his teammates. As a young boy, he had to focus on raising his siblings and helping his mother, who had multiple sclerosis. When he was free from his obligations, the man ran. He ran for the love of running and naturally eked his way into top position. Even the most brutal races couldn't hold him back.

He wasn't out for publicity and frowned upon those who used their running talents to sell products. This was the man Caballo wanted in his race, but Scott kept ignoring his emails until one day, one of the emails caught his attention. He was looking for a real challenge and running with the best runners on earth might be a really good thing.

Chapter 20

The author was back in Mexico and he only had 24 hours to find Caballo, who was setting up the race now that he heard that Scott was going to run. They set the date for the race as March 5th then Caballo ran off to find and inform the Tarahumara, which was not an easy task .

There were some odd conflicts, and the author wasn't sure if Scott was relay going to show up. He also knew some terrific runners from the east coast might show, but he couldn't count on it. They all showed up near the same time, at the same airport. As he talked with the east coast couple about the west coast hero, he jokingly suggested they get him drunk and loosen him up. It was a foreshadowing of disaster.

Chapter 21

The author knew they were going to have to leave early the next morning. They had drinks as the runners met each other and learned about each other. They decided to go into town and party while the author went to bed. He was awakened hours later to a complete disaster. The east coast couple was completely wasted. One had passed out, and the other was wreaking havoc, earning herself a black eye along the way.

They had to leave early or they might miss the race so the author made plans for the others to go on ahead while he took care of the two drunkards. To his surprise, they were up and sober before the others left. As they made it onto the bus for their 15-hour ride, Eric commented that if they raced the way they partied, the Tarahumara wouldn't stand a chance.

Chapter 22



Jenn and Billy were the partying couple from the east coast. They met while lifeguarding in Virginia. They shared a passion for parties, action, and literature. Wanting to live life to the fullest, Billy and Jenn signed up for a race in the mountains.

To prepare for the race, Jenn read about embracing nature. She was on a high while running, embracing every second until she reached the 75th mile mark. Seeing that she wasn't going to make it and she wasn't doing well, Billy joined her. As she broke through her exhaustion, she began to feel elation. She finished the race in second place and beat the top women's record by three hours. She could have gone professional, but didn't want to deal with the training.

Jenn ran because she loved it. While interviewing her after a race, the author mentioned the race in Mexico. She was totally into the idea.

Chapter 23

The travelers arrived in Creel with no problems, which was quite unusual. Caballo was there to meet them. Barefoot Ted was very excited and wouldn't stop talking, just as he hadn't stopped talking on the bus. The man had an interesting life with close relationships to famous artist friends, but he didn't seem to have any talents of his own to capitalize on. As he was nearing his birthday, he set up his own endurance event. Unfortunately, he began to have excruciating back pain. Ted tried all kinds of fancy, expensive shoes. By accident he ended up walking barefoot and realized that his back didn't hurt when he wasn't wearing shoes. He began to compete shoeless and began to win countless competitions.

Ted continued talking until Caballo called for everyone to stop and take an oath that if they died it was their own fault. Over dinner he shared the sad news that Marcelino had been killed, possibly by drug runners. He mentioned that Arnulfo might still run, and that shocked the author. They went to their cabins to sleep.

Chapter 24

Luis and Scott woke up the author at the crack of dawn on a freezing morning to see if he wanted to sneak in a run. Jenn, Billy, Barefoot Ted, and Eric joined them. Caballo hadn't slept all night since it stressed him to be in town. He didn't join them on the run at first because he was tired, but he did join them after a bit. Caballo was impressed with the way the author had improved his running.

As they talked about the upcoming race, Ted insisted that he was going to go into the canyons barefoot. This made Caballo mad. He disappeared and the author wondered if the race was off. When the author got on the bus to leave, Caballo wasn't on the bus. He was, however, on top of the bus so all was good.



Chapters 25-30

Chapters 25-30 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 25 focused on the history of barefoot running and the evolution of the running shoe. Ted was right on. Studies proved that runners who trained barefoot had less injury than those with more expensive shoes. In fact, the more expensive the shoe, the more likely runners were to have injuries.

Nike was the first company to focus on creating running shoes and this chapter gave the history of how the company evolved. Ironically, by the end of the chapter, the company was advertising a brand new and better running shoe that looked nearly natural. The slogan for the thin shoe was "Run Barefoot."

Chapter 26

Caballo was filled with pride as he show off his home. The author thought it was the derelict mission in front of him until Caballo pointed out a trail that led to a clay-walled hut. It was very basic and suited him perfectly.

The runners were staying in rented rooms up the road and over dinner they learned about the way the peaceful Taramuhara let their emotions go. They had a special drinking party every once in a while where the adults got drunk and let loose of their inhibitions, both in anger and sexually. When they sobered up, they went back to their peaceful lifestyles.

The next morning they went for a run, planning to beat the heat. Caballo had told them about a fresh water spring they would find on the run, but when they got to it, the spring was dry. They decided to run back down the hill, and Barefoot Ted was doing an amazing job throughout the run. Billy and Jenn disappeared. They were overheated, dehydrated, and realizing they were going to die when they were rescued by the author and Eric.

Chapter 27

After the author first met Caballo, he tried to run without pain. It didn't work. A few weeks later he interviewed Eric, who began to help him by sending him for some specialized training with a man named Ken then with himself as a the trainer. He learned to run like a Kenyan.

The training went well, and he ran farther and faster than ever before. He also changed his diet by eating more fruits and vegetables. By the time he headed back to Mexico for the race, he we able to do five-hour runs without worry of pain or injury.

Chapter 28



David Carrier was a young scientist who discovered something intriguing. He felt that the intake of air was a critical element for a runner. He shared his thoughts with Dr. Bramble, who examined animals and humans from the past and present to see how they compared and contrasted. Bramble realized that legs seemed to be designed for distance, and the human body as we know it is designed for speed. Humans can breathe while running, and can regulate body temperature by sweating.

Looking at the evolution of man, Dr. Lieberman, another scientist realized that man could literally run an animal, such as a deer, to death. David decided to try it himself. But he failed. Many years later, Louis Liebenberg called to say that he could show how an antelope could be run to death. He had learned how to do that in the bush. The rest of the chapter showed how the human ancestor worked with family as a running team. Now it's different.

Chapter 29

It was a half hour before they were going to leave to meet the Tarahumara as Chapter 29 opened. Caballo was concerned about the couple from the East Coast and he was worried that Barefoot Ted would offend the Tarahumara with his incessant chatter.

The Tarahumara appeared at the meeting place, including Arnulfo and Manuel. Caballo introduced the Americans, using animal names. They moved onward toward Urique and observed that the Taramuhara were already examining their gait.

Chapter 30

The race was more popular than Caballo had hoped it would be and Tarahumara were trickling in from everywhere. The night before the race, there were 25 competitors. Arnulfo and Scott were considered the favorites for winning.

The author had noted on their journey that both Arnulfo and Scott shared the same gait and also the same joy and passion. He also noted that Scott dropped back to spend time with him, caring more about being with others and supporting them than going ahead to prove his worth.

After dinner, Caballo made a speech, pointing out something odd. He pointed out that typically the Tarahumara didn't like Mexicans, and the Mexicans didn't like Americans and the Americans didn't like anyone, yet they were all getting along and helping each other.



Chapters 31-32

Chapters 31-32 Summary and Analysis

On the morning of the race, the racers were eating breakfast and they noticed the East Coast team was missing. Caballo was getting stressed and the author and Caballo went to find the team. He left the eating area to find the street decorated, the entire town assembled, and a mariachi band on the ready. It was thirty minutes until race time.

Jenn and Billy almost missed the start, and they made it to the startup with seconds to spare. The Urique Tarahumara cheated and were disqualified. The author felt better than ever before, then was startled by a coral snake that sent him over the cliff where he had to claw his way back up.

Jenn had to fend off Tarahumara runners who kept boxing her in. She found her strength in the downhills where they dropped behind her. She fell, but continued on. Scott stopped to ask her about the others and warn her about things she would face not he trail. Meanwhile, the author was just trying to complete the course.

The top runners were close to each other. The author was struggling to survive, but some Tarahumara kids helped him along. He went to refill his water at a station and discovered everyone had left, but old Bob hiked five miles to bring him some mango juice, repaying a kindness the author had extended to him several days before.

Near the finish line Scott encouraged Silvino, then he came in second as Arnulfo won. Scott had never lost a race and he bowed to the winner. As the slower runners came in, the faster runners cheered them on in a spirit of unity.

Chapter 32

Caballo was telling his story. He had been a boxer, mostly to keep bullies at bay since he was a scrawny lad. He became a professional and made enough money that he flew to Hawaii where he met a hermit who showed him the island's sacred sights and taught him to run. He changed his name to Micah True from Mike Hickman.

He left Hawaii to go back to boxing, and did things he wasn't proud of. Right when his career was about to skyrocket, he retired from boxing and started running marathons on a whim. At one point he found himself in the hospital after a bike accident and realized he didn't want his life to follow the path he was on. He left for Leadville where he met Martimano. In the summers, he worked as Micah True to earn cash that would take him through a year. He said that someday when he could no longer work, he would wander into the canyon and lay himself down.



Characters

The Tarahumara

The Tarahumara, also known as Rarámuri, were a tribe of superathletes that lived in the Copper Canyons. They kept themselves cut off from the modern world as much as possible. They even cut themselves off from each other, preferring their privacy. They were known for their phenomenal health, their kindness, and their amazing ability to run. The Tarahumara counted on running for their own survival since they lived in a dangerous canyon and had to find their own food.

People who saw the tribal runners were in awe of them because they could run effortlessly over nearly vertical terrain as well as rocky passes. The runners could go a hundred miles without even seeming to tire. Their love for running inspired the author to find out how people could go so far and so fast and still seem to enjoy the sport. Learning about them, he also wanted to discern how they could run the way they did without injury.

Caballo Blanco

Caballo Blanco originally hailed from California, and he lived in Colorado before heading to Mexico. He was born Michael Randall Hickman, son of a Marine Corps gunnery sergeant. The family moved around a lot and he became a professional boxer. Taking a break from the boxing circuit, Michael ended up in Hawaii where he befriended a hermit who taught him to love running. He changed his name to Micah True.

Micah was not happy with his lifestyle and he ran off to Mexico where he met the Tarahumara at the Leadville race. The Tarahumara runners knew him as Shaggy. He was a strange man who appeared and disappeared randomly. Many people thought he was crazy. He had a great respect for those who truly enjoyed running, and he set up a race so some of the world's best runners could compete. The competition was unique because it was a celebration of love for the sport rather than a race to dominate.

Dr. Joe Torg

Dr. Joe Torg was one of the most prominent doctors in the field of sports medicine. He warned the author that he might want to quit running or get a cortisone shot.

Arnulfo Quimare

Arnulfo Quimare was the greatest living Taramuhara runner who the author set out to find with the help of Salvador. He participated in the race at the end of the book.



Marcelino

Marcelino was a very talented runner who was the son of a running champion. He was killed before the race at the end of the book.

Rick Fisher

Rick Fisher was an arrogant wilderness photographer from Arizona. He tried to take advantage of the Taramuhara in order to obtain fame and wealth for himself.

Ann Trason

Ann Trason was a runner who ran for the joy of it and won multiple marathons, breaking world records along the way. She was amazed at the joy that she saw in the Tarahumara runners.

Dr. Joe Vigil

Dr. Joe Vigil was a 65-year-old coach who was once the greatest at figuring out what made long distance runners successful in America. He went to Leadville to study the runners to find out what their secret was.

Emil Zapotek

Emil Zatopek was a runner who ran for the pure joy of it. He didn't care about winning, yet never lost a race, even in the Olympics. Even his rivals cheered for him because he was so friendly.

Scott Jurek

Scott Jurek was the greatest ultrarunner in America. Caballo invited him to the race because he embodied the spirit of the Tarahumara.

Jenn Shelton

Jenn Shelton was a socialite from the East Coast who also had a real passion for running. She frequently acted on impulse to a point where she endangered her life.



Billy Barnett

Billy Barnett was Jenn's boyfriend. He was a lifeguard from the East Coast who was also a socialite and partied hard.

Ted

Ted liked to run barefoot and he never stopped talking. He showed compassion for Manuel by asking for his help in making some shoes.

Eric

Eric was an adventure-sports coach in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He helped the author learn to run without pain.



Objects/Places

Mexico

This is the place where the author first learned about the Taramuhara while reading a magazine.

Sierra Madre

This is the place where the author hunted for Caballo Blanco and found him in a hotel lobby.

The Copper Canyons

The Copper Canyons are where the Tarahumara make their home.

Runners World Magazine

This magazine assigned the author the task of finding the Tarahumara.

Guachochi

Guachochi is the frontier town that lies on the edge of the Copper Canyons.

Yerbabuena

Yerbabuena was once a town filled with runners, but modern life and nutrition interfered, and all the running became extinct.

Leadville

Leadville is the highest city in North America and home to the infamous and brutal Leadville race.

The Russian Outback

The Russian Outback was where Vigil went to learn more about distance running.



Ultra Running Magazine

UltraRunning Magazine was the magazine the author wrote for. He wrote about Caballo's race for this magazine.

Creel

Creel is the town where Caballo went to find Internet. It is also where the author and runners from America met him before the race.

Batopilas

Batopilas is where Caballo lived.



Themes

Joy of Running

As seen in the title, the focus of this book is to show people that we are born to run and not to hate it. So many people associate running with injury and exhaustion, yet that is not how the human body is designed. When done properly, running is extremely natural and enjoyable according to the author. To prove his point, he highlights some of the best runners in the world and explains to the reader what it is about these individuals or groups of people, in the case of the Tarahumara, that makes them unique. He explains how they are able to not only run for long period of time, covering great distances, but how it is that they are able to enjoy the running process.

The author makes a case for the fact that it really isn't a few super athletes that have the natural-born ability to run with joy, but it's actually something all humans are capable of. Some of the most downtrodden and mediocre runners have become some of the world's greatest runners. The author surmises that what it really boils down to is a joy of life and the ability to see running as a connection to nature rather than as a sport in which one constantly has to beat down other competitors.

To illustrate his point, the author uses his own circumstances. At the beginning of the book, he experienced excruciating foot pain when he tried to run. Throughout the book, he learned to become more natural with his running, leaving fancy shoes and techniques behind. By the end of the book, he learned the true joy of running and was able to run without any pain.

Joy of Life

Another main message of the book was living life to its fullest. This did not mean that one should go out, become a professional who earns a lot of money and get all the frivolous advantages that champions can embrace. One common characteristic that all the great runners seem to share with the radiance in their features when they ran. It wasn't the prize money or the metal that urged them on. It was a true joy of running.

The author noted that the joy extended far beyond the running. It was also a celebration of people and life in general. Many of the great runners put others ahead of themselves. Since winning a race wasn't their main goal, they were the first ones to go back and help those who were not as experienced as they were. When running became a chore or obligation, they quit.

This was clearly shown at the race that occurred at the end of the book. The only people invited to participate were ones who truly enjoyed running and looked at the race as a social event where they could share their passion with others who embraced running for what it was, not what it could offer them. The race was a success and sponsors wanted to promote future races, but Caballo turned them down even though it



would have made his future stable. That wasn't what the race was about. It was about a celebration of life.

The Science of Running

While this book was an observation of running and an analysis of the people who were addicted to running, it also provided scientific evidence of why humans were born to run. Throughout the book there are many details description that ranged from scientific theories to actual studies. The author explained why running shoes were such a problem, citing scientific evidence that proved that expensive shoes only cause more damage to runners. The author also spent a good deal of time explaining how the human skeleton evolved and proved the fact that humans are made to run, not walk around at a sedentary pace.

Many critical observations about running were made by coaches and scientists who wanted to see how it was possible for a human to run for long periods of time without their body feeling stressed. Using physical history as well as cultural history, the author demonstrated how our ancestors used running for their own survival. He also showed how it was possible for people to run and gain strength in their feet even after injury.

Nutrition was another scientific area that the author addressed. He didn't promote fancy diets. Instead, there was a strong emphasis on using natural seeds and herbs as well as a vegetarian diet. Instead of just stating that this was how the champions ate, the author explained how the body works and why this diet was effective. There were several times in the book when he highlighted the fact that the best diet for a runner was one in which the runner pretended that he was poor and ate accordingly.

Style

Perspective

Christopher McDougall was the author of this book. He added a lot of credibility to the book because he was normal. McDougall was interested in running like many other people but he was limited in how far he could run due to injuries. Many people would also relate to that. However, instead of happily taking the cortisone that the doctors recommended, he let his investigative mind take over.

McDougall was a former war correspondent. This meant that he was used to action and he also knew how to write. Both of these factors work in his favor throughout the book. The writing was interesting to read and it made more of an impact as the reader could see how he struggled to learn how to run correctly.

When McDougall realized that he could run without pain, his victory becomes a victory for the reader as well. He never became one of the top runners, but this too, helped a reader identify with him. It showed that one doesn't have to be the best runner in the world to be able to enjoy running. It emphasized that perhaps, humans are just born to run.

Tone

"Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen" by Christopher McDougall was written in the first-person narrative. This point of view made the reader feel as if they were on the journey with the author, trying to understand how it be possible that people could enjoy running, especially for long distances.

The author offered a fine balance of anecdotal evidence and scientific research. He wove the two together to form an interesting read that inspired one to keep turning the pages. His story argued the case that all humans are born to run.

The story was about sports, culture, and kindness. The great runners the other highlighted did not only excel in running, but also excelled in the game of life as they treated others with compassion and caring in spite of difficulties that they came into their path.

The author's tone and responses to others showed that he accepted people for who they were, no matter what their background. He greatly respected many of the people he came in contact with, even if they seemed extremely eccentric.

The story took place in Mexico and there were Spanish phrases interspersed throughout the book. The author carefully translated each of the Spanish phrases so that the reader never felt lost.

Structure

"Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen" by Christopher McDougall consisted of 32 chapters, acknowledgments, and a note about the author.

The chapters ranged in length. Some were less than 10 pages and others were more than 30 pages. Many of the chapters began with quotes from famous people and famous books. The chapters did not have specific names. They were simply called Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and so on.

The book started out in Mexico and then it flashed back to the past in America. It jumped around to different countries and locations as the author gave a history and told the stories of great races and great runners. The final race in the book occurred in Mexico.



Quotes

"We're all Running People, as the Tarahumara have always known." (Chapter 15, p. 93).

"Let us live so that when we come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry,' Mark Twain used to say." (Chapter 15, p. 97).

"Perhaps all our troubles - all the violence, obesity, illness, depression, and greed we can't overcome - began when we stopped living as Running People." (Chapter 15, p. 99).

"Lesson two,' Caballo called. 'Think Easy, Light, Smooth, and Fast.'" (Chapter 17, p. 111).

"Beyond the very extreme of fatigue and distress, we may find amounts of ease and power we never dreamed ourselves to own; sources of strength never taxed at all because we never push through the obstruction." (Chapter 17, p. 112).

"...the only way to truly conquer something, as every great philosopher and geneticist will tell you, is to love it." (Chapter 19, p. 125).

"When you run on the earth and run with the earth, you can run forever." (Chapter 17, p. 114).

"Strictly by accident, Scott stumbled upon the most advanced weapon in the ultrarunner's arsenal: instead of cringing from fatigue, you embrace it." (Chapter 19, p. 124).

"You don't stop running because you get old," said the Demon. "You get old because you stop running." (Chapter 27, p. 202).

"Because if you don't think you were born to run, you're not only denying history. You're denying who you are." (Chapter 28, p. 244).

"It wasn't Arnulfo's and Scott's matching form so much as their matching smiles; they were both grinning with sheer muscular pleasure, like dolphins rocketing through the waves." (Chapter 30, p. 252).

"Caballo Blanco, lone wanderer of the High Sierras, had finally come out of the wild to find himself surrounded by friends." (Chapter 30, p. 256).

Topics for Discussion

What problem did the author have when he tried to run and how did this change over the course of the book?

Describe the Leadville race and how it saved the town.

What was unique about the Tarahumara and what threatened them?

Why was the location of the race Caballo set up so dangerous?

What is wrong with expensive running shoes?

What were some of the common characteristics the great runners in this book shared?

Why did Caballo change his life from his past? Do you think this was good or bad?