

Every Runner Should Know These Three Things About Shoes



Daren DLake: 00:00

Most runners know the importance of shoes and running, but have you ever wondered what the role of feet and in particular shoes are with the quest to perform better as you age? If so, find out how critical feet and shoes really are and more on this episode of D-Lake Deliverates. Welcome to D-Lake Deliberates, where we do deep dive stories on uniquely fun topics and ideas, and we show smart runners and endurance athletes, that's hopefully you, how to get 1% better every day so that you can perform amazingly throughout your life. I'm Darren D. Lake, a sub three-hour marathoner and 10-hour Ironman finisher, and I've been in this endurance sport and distance running game for over 25 years. So, I have a few things I'd love to share with you on my journey. Oh, and before we get into it, you know the drill. Please make sure you like, subscribe, or do whatever you need to do, follow, et cetera, on whatever platform that you use, whether that's a podcast if you're listening, or whether that's YouTube if you're watching, or wherever you might be watching or consuming this. and let's just go on a quick walk so I can show you what you'll learn. Right now is the part where I would talk about what this episode's about, right? You know, you came here for that. So on Google, there's an abundance of running shoe reviews out there that will be 100 times better than anything that I can do, I promise you. So let's jump into what the episode is not going to be about. This won't be one single shoe review. This won't be a shoe shootout where I pit one shoe against the other and tell you which one I think is better. It also won't be a whole lot of technical specs and jargons about a bunch of stuff. I don't care

about that in regards to shoes. And if that's what you came here for, sorry, not sorry. Now, what will this actually be about? The main objective is to talk about heel drop importance. That's number one. Two is orthotics, and three is feelings. Not just how the shoe makes me feel in the ooey goey love type way. I'm talking about the actual feeling of connecting with the earth, like my feet touching the ground, and in particular, how the condom, I mean, shoe that sits between my feet and the ground actually feels. Enough from me. Let's get into it.

Narrator: 02:12

Fun fact, your feet contain thousands of nerve endings that provide lots of sensations to every part of your foot. All those nerve endings start way back at your spine, branching off from the sciatic nerve where it exits the lumbar spine.

Daren DLake: 02:24

So why do feet have so many nerves?

Narrator: 02:27

This is possible because the skin on our feet contains an extensive network of nerve endings and touch receptors, which make them sensitive to many different kinds of stimuli such as pressure, temperature, vibrations, or pain.

Daren DLake: 02:39

To answer our question from the start, why feet and shoes will help you perform better as you age and how critical they are, the whole 1% thing. I'll be talking about a few shoes and companies that have crept up on my radar over the last few years. And because I'm far from a shoe or foot expert, I was able to talk to a few running specialists and foot specialists, podiatrists to help answer a bunch of my burning questions. One specialist that I've grown really close to is Amelia Hoffer or we call her Millie as her nickname for short. She wears many hats or shoes from being a podiatrist at Balmain Sports Medicine to the Mizuno Technical Sales Specialist here in Australia and has a degree in exercise and sports science. She does everything. A few minutes ago, again, I talked about what this episode won't be about. So let's jump into why you should listen. One, if you're someone that loves shoes and really cares about the feeling of those shoes on your feet, Two, if you're someone suffering from any injury, especially injuries below the knee, so that's the lower leg, like calves, Achilles, shins, and your plantar fascia. And three, if you want to perform better as you age, that whole 1% getting better and be the healthiest that you can actually be. While this is about feet and shoes, it's secretly actually a story about how I destroyed my Achilles. by doing dumb things with shoes and how I'm going to have Achilles issues moving forward for probably the rest of my life as my Achilles deteriorates. And along the way, I've had plantar fasciitis issues, corns, turf toe. My feet have taken a beating due to a lot of dumb things I've done with shoes. Feet are not an attractive thing. For most people in Western culture, they are synonymous with dirt and smelling bad. And to top it off, the toe

next to my big toe is longer than all the other toes. It's called Morton's toe. Just found that out. Or as my cousin called it, my hook toe. He said, it's so long that if I fell off a cliff, I could use my hook toe to grab onto something. Running sneakers. The one bullying factor of running. Everyone loves them. Everyone has to have the latest and greatest, but how well do they serve the future you? While I love my data technology and analyzing metrics, I'm not actually a gear head with the sneaker stuff and the running shoe thing. And to be honest, I like running for its simplicity, but I'm realizing running can get as geary as you like it to get. It can get crazy. Let's get into the first section of this episode, which is the feeling of shoes. Then we'll move into the second section where I talk about why feet and shoe choices are so important.

Narrator: 05:16

The story of the marathon.

Anastasia : 05:17

So I don't know what you learned growing up about the marathon. So folklore is about Pheidippides ran the 26 miles, ran his heart out to Sparta to tell everyone that the war had finished and then he died because this effort was so ruling that he just keeled over and died. That's what I had heard too. But the real story is that he was one of these elite runners. That was a job back then. Before you had cars, you had trains to take messages different places. Runners, like real people, would just run hundreds of miles a day in order to deliver messages. Pheidippides was one of these elite runners. That day, he had run 100 miles. and fought in the battle and then ran to Sparta. And so when he died, he did die, but he died of a battle wound, not because the act of running 26 miles is so grueling that you're going to keel over and die, but because of other injuries. And so I just love that because it's not that our bodies aren't made to do long distances. We were made to do long distances and it just takes a little bit of training to get there.

Daren DLake: 06:30

Why do we run? That's Anastasia. She's a lifelong runner and fellow American expat living here in Sydney, Australia. While she's passionate about her feet and shoes, she takes a stance, hard stance, that's different than most and prefers more minimal shoes and even run sandals.

Narrator: 06:47

Feelings do and will always matter over everything.

Daren DLake: 06:50

Look, a lot can be said about certain shoe technology. And while I know based on studies and my own experience that the latest shoes are fast, I refuse to put the feeling of a great

pair of light, neutral, simple and low heel drop shoes to the side. And it's one of the main things I rank a shoe on. If it feels bad and it goes fast, I'm not wearing them for that long.

Narrator: 07:12

Why feet and shoe choice are so important as you age.

Daren DLake: 07:15

If we have the barefoot minimal movement over here, let's go to the other side of the spectrum, which is super shoes. Super shoes are defined as the latest and greatest technology. I'm trying not to name too many companies, but just for reference, Nike Vaporflies and Alphafly are super shoes. Sockity Endorphin Series are super shoes. Mizuno Wave Rebellion are super shoes and Asics and New Balance and Puma, they all have their own super shoes out there. They usually come with a carbon plate or some type of plate. that rockers forward and propels you forward. That's basically what a super shoe is. And they're really, really light. So they give you free speed. Here I am talking with ex-pro runner and triathlete Mike Trees and co-host of this video podcast about the polarizing question of super shoes and if you should wear them as little or as much as possible.

Mike Trees: 08:01

Yes, you need to run in them to get used to them. The downside is, yeah, because they're working a little bit harder than normal shoes, certain muscles might switch off. So I think that the downside is that you could get injured if you run in them too often. So I'm on the middle. I'm right in the fence here that I wear them at the moment. I'm getting ready for Ironman and Being the sort of person I am, I've got my ASICS Metaspeed, my new Balance Fuel Cell, I got my, you know, my VaporFly, my AlphaFly, I got my Hawkets. I'm testing them all out. And so, yeah, I am using them a lot in training at the moment, and that's to test them out to see what is the most efficient for me over a marathon in an Ironman after I've ridden a bike, which is totally different from running a 5K. If you use them every day, they have a limited lifespan. That PBax material in there that's lovely springy and squashy and responsive, they reckon it only lasts about 250 kilometers and then it's gone. And then it's sort of all the cells in it have squashed together, so you're not getting the performance. So if you overuse them, They won't perform for you on race day. So you need to be rich if you're going to wear lots of shoes. Base season winter, they're sitting in the cupboard all winter. They're not coming out. I'm looking like you. I'm on the trails. I'm on as much natural running as I can find. And that's what we're designed to do, to run on natural territory. What these shoes do is they help you run quickly in an unnatural world on concrete, which we weren't designed to run in. So that's what they're designed for, to make us go quicker in an unnatural environment, whereas I like running in a natural environment.

Daren DLake: 09:47

in five words or less. Yes, five. Sum up the importance of feet and running.

Narrator: 09:52

You've got to know that your leverage system, you need them to get forward.

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 09:54

If they're not working, you're sore.

Trent Salkavich: 09:56

Entry and exit point, the ground reaction forces.

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 10:00

You know, you're in contact with the ground. So if you're not making contact in the right spot or inefficiently, then that's going to work through your whole body.

Daren DLake: 10:09

Those were the words of three highly professional sports podiatrists. We'll get way more bombs of information and knowledge from them shortly. Heel drop. Another thing to take in consideration when thinking about performing well as you age is a shoe's heel drop.

Narrator: 10:24

fun fact. Unfortunately, as we age into our 50s and 60s, our Achilles starts wearing out. Blood flow to the Achilles tendon decreases and stiffness increases, which raises the risk of injury. Fortunately, you can slow down the slowing down by staying active, strength training with weighted calf and soleus raises, keeping your ankles mobile and wearing the correct heel drop shoe. It wasn't until about five years ago that I started to pay attention to the heel offset. or heel drop. This is when your sneakers say 4mm, 8mm, 12mm, etc.

JP Gloria: 10:55

And as JP Gloria from YouTube defines it, the heel to toe drop in a shoe, more commonly known as heel drop, refers to the difference in height of the shoe from the heel region and the front of the foot. For example, on one side of the spectrum, women's heels typically are considered to have a high offset between the heel and forefoot region, therefore have a high heel drop. Now looking at the other extreme, being barefoot or wearing flat shoes have basically no difference in height when comparing it at the heel and forefoot region. Therefore, if a shoe does not have any offset, they are typically classified as a zero drop shoe. Now, you may ask yourself, how does heel drop affect the way you run?

Daren DLake: 11:46

Here's Millie Hofer, the Mizuno technical shoe specialist and podiatrist at Balmain Sports Medicine with that answer.

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 11:52

So when you're going into a high drop, it's shifting that higher up the chain, so into your hips and into your knees. Think about it like when you're running downhill and your quads are getting smashed, but your Achilles isn't really an issue. So when we're coming back down from that 12 minute drop, obviously it needs to happen gradually.

Daren DLake: 12:10

More about the heel drop effects from JP Gloria on YouTube.

JP Gloria: 12:13

Heel drop can impact the way forces are distributed in the foot. This can be helpful to know when trying to find a shoe that's comfortable for you, especially when a particular region of the leg is bothering you when you run. For example, if you get some pain in the knee as you run, you can find shoes that are flatter to try to decrease pain in the knee region. Or if you have increased irritability in the Achilles region, you may want to try a shoe with more of a heel drop to take loads off that area.

Daren DLake: 12:46

I think heel drops are fascinating as they're a tool to be used for different situations by different people at different times. All right, so we know about when to use low versus high heel drop shoes. What if you're like me and used a relatively low heel drop, zero to four millimeters, but now are using a high heel drop eight to 12 so that I could recover from Achilles injury? Should I even do it? Millie Hofer with her expert opinion.

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 13:10

Given your injury history, it may be that you may not say wear a zero or a four mil drop all of the time. So knowing what I do know, it might be that, okay, maybe the goal is to wear it twice a week in your runs. And then you might, you know, cruise at a six to eight mil drop. And then on your recovery days, that's where you might go back to your 12 mil for a nice easy run.

Daren DLake: 13:32

And one of my podiatrists, Trent Salkovich, with more on the advantages.

Trent Salkavich: 13:37

Firstly, for performance enhancement, I'm always encouraging patients to push towards a zero millimetre drop, providing, number one, their biomechanics allows and providing their injury history also allows. I would not be attempting a drop in height if a patient's in an inflamed state. basically do this with quite a long time frame in mind, so dropping down between two and four meal event increments every couple of months. But just know that

it's tricky. You've just got to weigh up what your goals are and also make sure your body's in optimum condition before you try it.

Daren DLake: 14:15

And because every story has two sides, here's my other podiatrist, Sigrid Dawson, who also works at Balmain Sports Medicine. So you think it's not possible?

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 14:23

You think it's not possible, but you know, mechanically, you're going to be better to look at shoes that help you out, not not increase your load. Okay. Yeah. Reverse age is a good answer, though, I think.

Daren DLake: 14:35

So there's, there's no benefits out of going down the four millimeter and zero millimeter.

Millie Hofer/Sigrid Dawson: 14:38

I'm not really like what you're trying to do, I don't think. Really? I don't think so. But you know, it depends on what you want. You're going to have quicker time for the shoe that starts you falling.

Daren DLake: 14:47

Yeah. Here's Mike Trees with his sum up of using different shoes for different jobs.

Mike Trees: 14:51

Generally, I do like to vary shoes as much as possible. And that's contrary to what most people say, get a pair of shoes and stick with them. I like the fact that different shoes act differently. They use different muscle groups, force you to react differently. Therefore, your body becomes generally all around stronger. If we only have one pair of shoes, we're constantly pronating in a certain direction or supinating in one direction. And our muscles get strong in certain areas and weak in others. You have imbalances. So yeah, I love to go on the beach and run barefoot. I love to run on grass barefoot sometimes. I love to run in a zero drop minimalist Newton shoe sometimes. Fibrom, I walk on the beach. I then wear the big super shoes. I vary it as much as possible. And I just think this variety is the best way to produce an all round stronger physique and more injury resistant as well.

Daren DLake: 15:40

This is all subjective to each person, and it took me years of research, experience, and lots of talking to professionals to figure it all out. So for you, consult with your own running specialist, podiatrist, physical, physiotherapist, etc. for what kind of heel drop and shoe is right for you. I'll talk more about this at the end.

Narrator: 15:59

The Orthotics Debate Amongst The Running Community Orthotics, what are they?

Narrator: 16:04

Orthotics are a special shoe inserts that can be used to treat numerous foot conditions. There are many different types of orthotics and they will vary in materials and features based on where you get yours.

Daren DLake: 16:14

I've observed that orthotics ironically divides the running community. On one hand, the specialists say you should be wearing them as much as possible. And on the other hand, a lot of coaches and elite self-coached athletes, myself in the past, say you don't need them once you are healthy and healthy runners with strong feet, ankles and Achilles shouldn't use them. So who's right? Well, it all depends. I'd like to say, like most things in life, that I'm in the middle. I genetically have lower fat padding under my feet than most people. This means I'll be off later. I'll earn the side of science and caution because not being able to run in 20 years is not my objective and doesn't sound fun. I like running, so I want to keep running. Obviously perform better as I get older, 1% better. Can't do that if my feet aren't working. Here's Trent with his opinion on fat pads and orthotics.

Trent Salkavich: 17:02

Essentially, fat pad is finite, similar to coal in the ground. Once it's gone, it's gone. You can't get it back. Injections and silicon pads have been unsuccessful. The way I describe it is that an orthotic is used as a protector and a shock absorber for the foot. So instead of the stress going through the foot, we can choose to put the stress in different parts of the orthotic.

Daren DLake: 17:29

I was born with some really good genetics that I'm super grateful for, but fat padding under my feet isn't one of them. Closing thoughts. Over this article or episode or whatever you want to call it, we've talked about a bunch of themes from heel drops to all those ooey gooey feelings. Through all of that, I wanted to highlight the importance of feet and shoes to help you get 1% better and perform amazingly as you age. While I'm not a fan of having a big piece of technology sitting between my most sensitive and important organ, the skin of my feet, I do understand that there's a time and place for certain types of shoes and certain feet. Sometimes it's barefoot strides on grass and sand, and other times it's full orthotics and carbon plated rocker super shoes. Please, as with anything, make sure you talk to a medical specialist and experts along the way. I am not one, nor do I play one on the internet. and they will help you figure out what you need as you have many blind spots and many specific issues to yourself. As in all things, endurance, sports, running and life results may vary. Time. Time is a resource no one can make more of, so we appreciate you taking precious time out of your day to listen this far. Our goal is to show the world how to live

better through running, cycling, and triathlon. The episode and many others have a transcription. Go to the show notes description to find out more. This was produced in Sydney, Australia, and I'd like to acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation. who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay my respects to the elders, past, present, and future. I recognize their continuing connection to the land, waters, and culture. These lands were stolen and sovereignty was never ceded. If you liked this episode, again, we'd highly appreciate it if you'd go on whatever app you listen to and make sure to follow DLake Creates Podcast. We're on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon, Acast, and a bunch of others. And if you're feeling real loose, a rating, review, or share of this episode to anyone you know that would be into something like this would be amazing. The more people that hear about us, the dooper stuff we can do to then help other people. And if that virtuous cycle continues forever, we would always be grateful to you. If you have any questions, concerns, suggestions for the episode, or hell, you wanna be on the show, hit us up. The best way is to email talk, T-A-L-K, at [dlakecreates.com](mailto:talk@dlakecreates.com). We're also on the socials, mainly Instagram. You can hit up Mike Trees at the letters R-U-N.N-R-G, or you can hit me up on Instagram at [dlakecreates](https://www.instagram.com/dlakecreates), or just wherever you can find us is fine. Don't worry if you didn't get all that. There's a link in the show notes description. Thank you again so much for listening. Peace.