



Name: David Vezmar

Age: 36

Town/neighborhood/School: South Milford.

What sport(s) I play: Running.

What I like most about the sport(s) I play: I can go at my own

pace. If I feel like running hard I can, but if I feel like just taking it slow that's OK too. Going for a long, slow run on a trail — Milford's Cross Country Course is the best in the area — can be very therapeutic. If I'm having a bad day I can leave it out in the woods.

If I had picked a different sport, it might have been: I like soccer. I coached my daughter for about six years and I'm looking forward to coaching my son. Milford has a great parks and recreation program.

Health or fitness tip (something he or she does to stay healthy or improve their performance): Read. There is a ton of information out there on being healthy and getting the most out of yourself. Do a lot of reading on your chosen sport and talk to other athletes. Sometimes the best advice you'll



David Vezmar

get isn't from a coach or a pro, but your peer standing at the starting line with you.

Favorite professional team/athlete and why: Ryan Hall. He's one of the greatest distance runners of our time but he's grounded and he's secure with his relationship with God.

The best and/or worst sports memory in my life: Last week my daughter ran her first 5k with me. It was her first race and it was my first barefoot race. Awesome.

Athletes who inspire me (and how): Fellow barefoot runners on the forum I frequent. We are a community and they are quick to give sound advice and encourage each other.

The trait(s) I admire in other athletes: I admire anyone who considers themselves an athlete and does their best with what God gave them.

My advice to fellow athletes: Get involved with your kids' sports. Encourage them, go to all the games and if you have the time, help coach. They may not thank you now but they'll always remember. I do. And, once in a while kick off your shoes and go for a short run or walk barefoot, it's an amazing sensation.



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David Vezmar, 36, of Milford, and his daughter Morgan, 12, run the Classic Catering 5K race at the Rusty Ruddy on Aug. 8. The run was Morgan's first and Vezmar's first running without sneakers.

Running

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He said he ran a 10K barefoot this past Saturday, also at the Rusty Rudder, called the Highway One Group 10K, and plans to run a half marathon in October barefoot.

Vezmar said it has taken him a few months to learn how to run barefoot, but now that he has gotten the hang of it, he is "amazed at the difference. There was literally a weight lifted off my feet and I kind of felt like a kid again."

Of course, one might ask, how do you train to run barefoot? If it's so natural, why isn't it easy to do?

Vezmar explains:

"While reading about barefooting, I read about a shoe called Vibram Five Fingers, which is basically a glove for your feet with a thin rubber sole that runners were using as sort of a transition shoe.

"This shoe, as with other minimal shoes, provide no support they just provide some protection. I started slow, just a half mile at a time a few days a week because I was changing my entire way of running. Instead of striking with my heel, which running shoes almost force you to do, I was landing mid foot.

"A barefoot runner's gait will normally be a shorter stride, landing under your body weight, mid foot. This uses different muscles in your foot and your legs so it is important to take this transition slow.

"After a few weeks I started adding some true barefoot runs, again this is a slow transition to prevent injury. After about one and a half months I ran a couple 5k's in the Vibrams then a month later was able to complete a 5k barefoot."

He said his new way of running has affected his time, slowing him down as he transitions from sneakers to bare feet. However, Vezmar added that he is, "not

too concerned with times right now. I'm just enjoying running."

He said it has been difficult to change the way his foot lands when he is running, from a heel strike to a midfoot landing, which has caused him to receive a few blisters along the way. Vezmar also said it was painful to know that he had just bought a \$100 pair of shoes to "correct his problem," though he will probably never use them again.

He said he has been very careful about watching where he runs when he is barefoot since you never know what lay ahead.

"When I run barefoot I keep an eye on the road so I know what's coming. It is recommended that when making the transition to barefoot running it is done on a hard surface such as asphalt for a couple reasons: one is that it forces you into the proper running form. If you're doing it wrong your feet will tell you. And another reason is that you can see where you are stepping. Grass can hide a lot of things that could do harm."

Vezmar said he plans to continue running barefoot once the weather cools down, likely using his Vibram Five Fingers or utilizing a treadmill indoors, "unless my wife agrees to winters in the (Florida) Keys so I can run barefoot all year!"

He said his ultimate goal as far as barefoot running is concerned is to continue enjoying himself and to avoid injuries along the way.

"I hope to enjoy running for a long time without the nagging injuries that seem to plague runners.

"It has been said that when standing at the starting line of a race, look at the runners on each side of you, and within three months, two of the three of you will have a running-related injury. I don't want to be in the majority."

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