

The Kalenjin Running Tribe

The **Kalenjin** are a small tribe in the east of Africa. They are known as the 'running people' as they have dominated middle and long distance running for the past 50 years.

Why are they so good?

Body type

Kalenjin have particularly thin ankles and calves, a body build common to tribes who grow up near the **equator**. This is particularly important in running because your leg is like a **pendulum**. The more weight you have farther away from your **centre of gravity**, the more difficult it is to swing.

If you take a runner and put 8 pounds of weight around his waist, he can still run reasonably well. But if you put those same 8 pounds in the form of two 4-pound weights around his ankles, that will take much more energy and slow him down considerably.

Diet and Altitude

Their diet is **meagre** and mainly **starch** based.

Their **environment** means that they have to run at **altitude** every day. This increases the amount of red blood cells in the body.

Culture

Running is the National sport of Africa. It is common to find a group of 50 people meeting at 6am every morning on the street corner in order to go for a training run together.



Mental toughness

The tribe are poor people. Children routinely run 5km barefoot each day to fetch milk. They are also trained for an **initiation ceremony** which they go through at the age of 16 in order to enter adulthood. In this ceremony they will have to endure intense pain. They are expected to crawl naked through a tunnel of stinging nettles, have the bony part of their ankles beaten and endure formic acid wiped across their **genitals**. They must endure this with complete **stoicism** – they must not flinch or make any sound.

Eliud Kipchoge

In October 2019 **Eliud Kipchoge** from the Kalenjin tribe made history by becoming the first person to run a **marathon** (26.2 miles) in under 2 hours

The Kalenjin Running Tribe vocabulary

- 1) Kalenjin _____
- 2) equator _____
- 3) pendulum _____
- 4) centre of gravity _____
- 5) meagre _____
- 6) starch _____
- 7) environment _____
- 8) altitude _____
- 9) initiation ceremony _____
- 10) genitals _____
- 11) stoicism _____
- 12) Eliud Kipchoge _____
- 13) Marathon _____



What else I would like to know