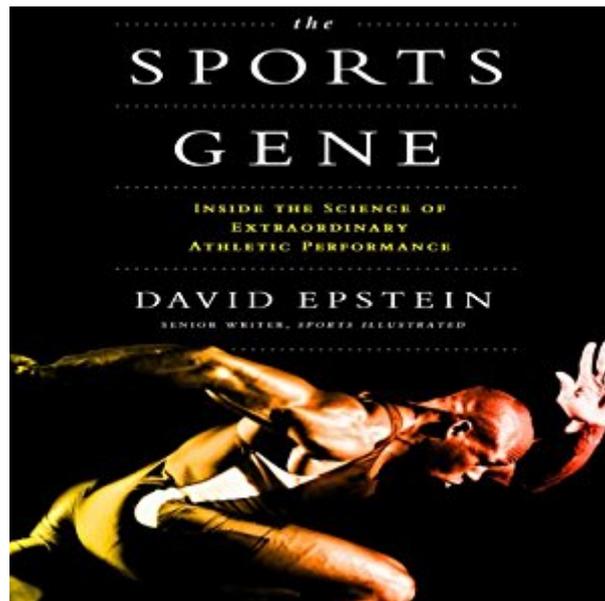


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# The Sports Gene: Inside The Science Of Extraordinary Athletic Performance



## Synopsis

"In high school, I wondered whether the Jamaican Americans who made our track team so successful might carry some special speed gene from their tiny island. In college, I ran against Kenyans, and wondered whether endurance genes might have traveled with them from East Africa. At the same time, I began to notice that a training group on my team could consist of five men who run next to one another, stride for stride, day after day, and nonetheless turn out five entirely different runners. How could this be?" We all knew a star athlete in high school. The one who made it look so easy. He was the starting quarterback and shortstop; she was the all-state point guard and high-jumper. Naturals. Or were they? The debate is as old as physical competition. Are stars like Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps, and Serena Williams genetic freaks put on Earth to dominate their respective sports? Or are they simply normal people who overcame their biological limits through sheer force of will and obsessive training? The truth is far messier than a simple dichotomy between nature and nurture. In the decade since the sequencing of the human genome, researchers have slowly begun to uncover how the relationship between biological endowments and a competitor's training environment affects athleticism. Sports scientists have gradually entered the era of modern genetic research. In this controversial and engaging exploration of athletic success, Sports Illustrated senior writer David Epstein tackles the great nature vs. nurture debate and traces how far science has come in solving this great riddle.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Athletic Performance by David Epstein "The Sports Gene" is an enjoyable book that shares the latest of modern genetic research as it relates to elite athleticism. In the never-ending quest to settle the debate of nature versus nurture, David Epstein takes the readers on a journey into sports and tries to answer how much does each contribute. This fascinating 352-page book includes the following sixteen chapters: 1. Beat by an Underhand Girl: The Gene-Free Model of Expertise, 2. A Tale of Two High Jumpers: (Or: 10,000 Hours Plus or Minus 10,000 Hours), 3. Major League Vision and the Greatest Child Athlete Sample Ever: The Hardware and Software Paradigm, 4. Why Men Have Nipples, 5. The Talent of Trainability, 6. Superbaby, Bully Whippets, and the Trainability of Muscle, 7. The Big Bang of Body Types, 8. The Vitruvian NBA Player, 9. We Are All Black (Sort Of): Race and Genetic Diversity, 10. The Warrior-Slave Theory of Jamaican Sprinting, 11. Malaria and Muscle Fibers, 12. Can Every Kalenjin Run?, 13. The World's Greatest Accidental (Altitudinous) Talent Sieve, 14. Sled Dogs, Ultrarunners, and Couch Potato Genes, 15. The Heartbreak Gene: Death, Injury, and Pain on the Field, and 16 The Gold Medal Mutation.

Positives: 1. Well-written, well-researched book. Epstein is very engaging and keeps the science at a very accessible level. 2. Fascinating topic that sports fans will enjoy. A look at elite athleticism through the eyes of science. Sports elites. I'm there! 3. Epstein does a fantastic job of skillfully handling the very sensitive topic of race and genetics. Any minor miscue and it would have derailed the book but Epstein never lets that happen and should be commended for his utmost care. 4.

\*A full summary of this book is available here: [An Executive Summary of David Epstein's 'The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Athletic Performance'](#) What does it take to become an elite athlete? The intuitive answer for most of us is that it probably takes some lucky genes on the one hand, and a whole heck of a lot of hard work on the other. Specifically, that we may need to be blessed with a particular body type to excel at a particular sport or discipline (after all, elite marathon runners tend to look far different than elite NFL running backs, who in turn tend to look far different than elite swimmers), but that beyond this it is practice and diligence that paves the way to success. When we look at the science, though--as sports writer David Epstein does in his new book *The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Athletic Performance*--we find that the story is much more complicated than this. In general terms we find that nature and nurture interact at every step of the way in the development of an elite athlete, and that biology plays far more of a role (and in far more ways) than we may have expected. To begin with, when it comes to physiology, we find that genetics not only has a large role to play in influencing our height and skeletal structure (as we

would expect), but that genes also influence physiology in many other ways that are important when it comes to elite sports.

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