

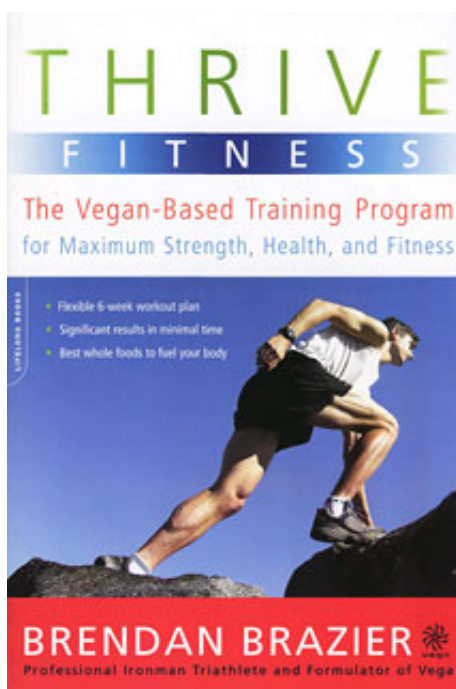
Brendan Brazier

Thrive Fitness: The Vegan-Based Training Program

Reading excerpt

[Thrive Fitness: The Vegan-Based Training Program](#)
of [Brendan Brazier](#)

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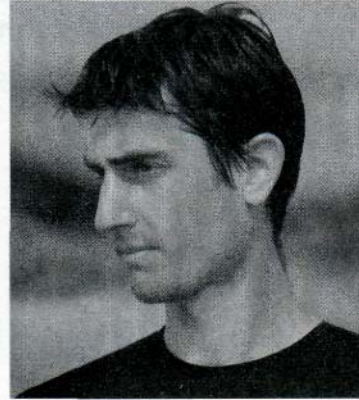
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Brendan Brazier is one of only a few professional athletes in the world whose diet is 100 percent plant-based. He's a professional Ironman triathlete, bestselling author (*Thrive*, Da Capo Press, 2008), and the creator of an award-winning line of whole food nutritional products called Vega. He is also a two-time Canadian 50km Ultra Marathon Champion.



Nominated in 2006 and 2008 for the Manning Innovation Award, Canada's most prestigious award for innovation, Brendan was short-listed both times for the formulation of Vega. In 2006, Brendan was invited to address the U.S. Congress on Capitol Hill, where he spoke of the significant social and economic benefits that could be achieved by improving personal health through a plant-based diet and regular exercise. The focus of his speech was to draw attention to the role food plays in the prevention of most chronic diseases currently plaguing North Americans.

Brendan has appeared on CTV and CBC in Canada and on NBC, ABC, and FOX in the United States. He was also named one of the 25 Most Fascinating Vegetarians by *VegNews* magazine.

As a renowned speaker and sought-after presenter throughout North America, Brendan is a guest lecturer on the topic of high-performance plant-based nutrition at eCornell in New York.

He lives in Los Angeles, California and Vancouver, British Columbia.

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introduction

For me, fitness wasn't an option. In ninth grade, I had decided that I wanted to be a professional athlete, so I had to be fit. Starting out as a track runner, it didn't take long before my strengths and weaknesses revealed themselves. Apparently, I had very little natural speed. So I figured that perhaps I would fare better in endurance sports. But I didn't. My ability to run for a long time without fatigue setting in wasn't particularly impressive either. With no speed and little endurance, I would either have to rethink my career goals or find out how to dramatically improve.

Despite these shortcomings, I genuinely enjoyed running. Each morning before school, I would run around the track for 10 minutes. Even in that brief amount of time, I began to appreciate some of running's many attributes. It served as a "mental time-out"— little new information entered my mind and the thoughts I already had were given a new dimension. The relaxing nature of running became a form of escapism. And I was improving. Each week I was noticeably covering more ground within 10 minutes, yet expending no extra energy.

Perhaps I wasn't overly talented as an athlete, but one of this endurance sport's greatest qualities is that talent has little bearing on who will be successful. To be a great sprinter, for example, your muscles must be predominantly

made up of fast-twitch fibers — a trait determined by genetics. For endurance pursuits, you just have to do your chosen sport over and over. The training effect will take hold and performance will improve. Without fail, slowly and methodically chipping away will forge the lean, efficient muscularity and cardiovascular system of a high-level athlete. The greatest determining factor for success is simply "putting in the miles." And since I enjoyed doing that, the odds shifted in my favor.

The more I ran, the more it became obvious that I actually did have a talent of sorts — the ability to recognize that I was average at best and would have to work harder and smarter than others to achieve any level of success. I accepted that I would have to put in thousands of hours of endurance training to have a chance to race professionally.

And it worked. I turned my "talent" into a career. Graduating from high school in 1993, I began my professional Ironman triathlon career in 1998. Having raced pro for seven years, in the autumn of 2003 I was hit by a car while cycling. Though I wasn't injured badly, I wasn't able to race the following year. Having been completely immersed in full-time training and racing since high school, the only people I kept company with were like-minded high-level endurance athletes, so, to me, we were "normal." As I began to meet people outside of my athletes-only circle of friends, I started to realize how fortunate I was to be highly fit. I got a glimpse of its value in a real-world setting and started to appreciate what higher-level fitness could offer in terms of high-quality living. I noticed significant differences from those who were of average or below-average fitness: I had no cravings for sugary, starchy foods or caffeine-containing drinks. I didn't require much sleep — seven hours a night was plenty— since I slept deeply and woke up feeling completely revitalized and ready to go. My energy level was always high without reliance on stimulants. My thoughts were clear from early morning to late at night. I was viewed as a bit of an oddity by my new circle of friends.

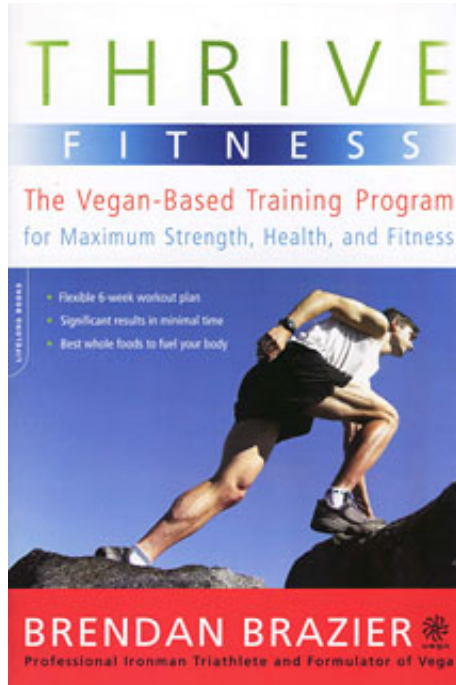
Once you become fit, you accumulate what I call "fitness capital." While fitness alone offers many benefits, its greatest attribute is the platform it provides on which to build peak performance in any facet of life. It's what *you* do with your fitness that's most valuable. Capitalizing on an abundance of

energy, mental clarity, and the necessary drive to maintain fitness will lead to significant life-improving results. Fitness will improve the odds of success in your chosen pursuit. I now view fitness as the development of something much bigger, something far more important than athletic success.

Nutrition has also proved to be an integral part of my athletic program when training full-time and I truly appreciate the synergy between high-quality whole food and exercise. Since training breaks down muscle tissue and food rebuilds it, exercise and nutrition were the two chief elements of my successful bid to become a professional athlete. Having adopted a completely plant-based diet at the age of 15, I had refined its subtleties over the years to synergistically complement my training for quick and lasting results.

Having had some success with my first book, *Thrive* (Da Capo Press, 2008), I developed a small following. Initially, my approach attracted only athletes who ate a plant-based diet. As interest spread, however, my diet program eventually garnered mainstream appeal. Why, I'm not exactly sure, but I would guess it had to do with the fact that our health as a society was on a steady decline and conventional medicine was not providing all the answers. The general public was gradually beginning to appreciate that the combination of regular exercise and sound nutrition was a form of preventative medicine significantly bolstering quality of life and preventing the need for symptom-treating drugs later in life. I also believe that the increased focus on environmental issues and bids for preservation created a shift in consciousness and therefore interest. The understanding that we are dependent on our food-producing earth for sustenance was a new concept to some, but became relevant to all.

In the spring of 2006, on behalf of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), I was invited to speak at a congressional briefing on Capitol Hill. The plan was to present information about nutrition and its relationship to general health. Pretty simple. We needed to get the U.S. Congress to understand the parallel between what we as a society eat and the decline of our physical and mental health. Of course, since we were presenting to the government, we also needed to tie in the economy and relay how better health could translate into improved economic conditions.



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for Maximum Strength, Health, and Fitness

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