

jamie's loft > running


[Home](#)
[Life](#)
[Running](#)
[Photos](#)
[Musings](#)
[Home](#) > [Running](#) > [Articles](#)
More articles:

- [20K wisdom](#)
- [A fitting stage for heroism](#)
- [Cheers to you](#)
- [Durian Power](#)
- [Gear for Cold Weather Running](#)
- [Happily ever after](#)
- [Harvest of hope](#)
- [Hill training](#)
- [Marathon muse](#)
- [The other side of the fence](#)
- [Penang revisited](#)
- [Performance review](#)
- [Running again](#)
- [Running resolutions](#)
- [Running in the movies](#)
- [State of road running in Malaysia](#)
- [Sunscreen](#)
- [To marathon or not to marathon?](#)
- [Stride Length](#)
- [3 Phases of The Marathon](#)
- [Marathon Packing List](#)
- [Dubious Races & Incompetent Officials](#)
- [A Matter of Attitude](#)
- [adidas Tech Training '04](#)
- [Principles of Training & Lessons in Life](#)
- [2005: Year In Review](#)
- [My Bookcase](#)

A Matter Of Attitude by Jamie Pang

On August 18th The Star, a local daily, ran an article "[Boonchoo pips Arulthevar to the title](#)" in its Metro section about the recent MPAJ run. The entire article got me worked up enough to respond with a reply to the daily.

My reply:

I refer to your article "[Boonchoo pips Arulthevar to the title](#)" in Star MetroKL dated August 18th 2004 (<http://metro.thestar.com.my/news/2004/8/8674348.html>) with some disappointment.

The remarks by the local elite runners who were outrun by the foreign participants show that whilst the local elites may stand strong in a "protected environment", they are weak (mentally and physically) when actual competition steps in.

This further serves to underline the immaturity and the unwillingness to seek challenges outside their comfort level that we see prevailing in the local sports scene. After winning 4 years in a row in the MPAJ run, the top local finisher should relish some challenge - how else to improve? Even world class athletes relish challengers. Likewise, the local top runners should change their mindset. If they want to continue winning (at whichever level, then they have to strive for excellence rather than whining about missed/deprived chances. Local runners in the country respect local runners like Arulthevar but if he demonstrates such a defeatist attitude, what would be the consequence to the future generation of younger runners? Top runners have the responsibility to perform well and give it their best at all times but they must also remember that they have a role to play in the development of the sport of distance running in this country.

The racing circuit in the US at one stage, went through a similar phase where African and South American runners were sweeping the road races, one after another. In many races, the top 10 finishers were all non-Americans.

As a result, 2 camps appeared. The first group comprising of many American elites complained that they were being deprived of winning and placing top. The second viewed it as a wakeup call - "What's happening to the American athletes?" Former greats and legends came out to offer ideas and opinions. And this is where I think the local folks can learn something from.

The general consensus resulting from this mini-debate was that whilst the number of participants in local races have increased tremendously (thousands in shorter distances to tens of thousands in mega-marathons like New York, Boston and Chicago), the standard of the American runners have dropped. Not as many are hitting the elite levels and returning great results. And this happening at this age where sports science have improved by leaps and bounds.

So where is the problem? One word: Grassroots. Schools in the US are focusing their energies more into the money sports such as basketball, football (American version, that is) and baseball more than distance running.

Prefontaine, Kardong, Ryun, Rodgers, Shorter, Salazar, Moore who were fierce competitors in the golden era, all honed their skills in their collegiate days. And they were all passionate about the sport, were respected and loved by the American public and feared by competitors.

This is where local top runners can be role models to the younger set of runners - those in schools and colleges, be seen to be progressive, compete aggressively and always seeking to improve.



Rather than restrict foreigners to run in this country, race directors and state AAAs must instead strive to raise the level of race organisation and promote the events overseas.

Without some of these measures, we can continue being in the backwaters of distance running while watching upcoming world class athletes like Alan Webb (US miler who recently broke the American Mile Record running 3:50.83) and Kenenisa Bekele (Ethiopian world record holder of 10,000m and indoor 5,000m) competing for glory among other world class runners in Athens. Both of whom are only 21 years old.

The journey continues...

Jamie Pang
Aug 23rd, 2004