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It's 12 days to go to the Ipoh Marathon (IM). From the discussion amongst us runners here, everyone is to be looking forward to meeting up in Ipoh. Incidentally Ipoh, with it's strategic location (halfway between the central and northern region of the peninsular), the IM presents a congregation of sorts for us running folks. There'll be a handful travelling down from Kedah and Penang while more than 50 will be making their way up from KL. This number includes those from the club and also from our usual running friends. A large number of us will be meeting up for the first time - having got acquainted online.

Most of them will be hitting the 21K while the Penguins and I will be tackling the full. At this juncture, my feeling is one of trepidation mixed with hint of excitement. My fitness is a complete mystery with the marathon jinx striking at every opportunity. I've already laid waste to all the training programs out there and breaking all the rules because I've only managed to complete a handful of 20K training runs! I read somewhere that one needs to do at least 3 28Ks to complete a marathon comfortably while doing only 1 28K will ensure that the experience can be expected to be a painful one. I wonder what 3 20Ks will lead me into?

My gameplan, if you can call it that, is simple - stick to 6/1 and drag my carcass over the finish line and claim that medal.

Just 2 days ago, I completed my 3rd or 4th 20K with some difficulty. I thought I had recovered from the stomach muscle strain and would be ready for a 35K but it was not to be. The pain returned at about the 3K mark. I had reached the starting point at 5am and intended to run with Bruce. To my surprise Yaziz was there as well. The 3 of us will be doing the full and IM is to be Bruce's 30th marathon! I was glad for their company despite knowing that I could only go slow and easy. Along the way Bruce shared some anecdotes with us and 1 event he related piqued my interest - the 24-hour walk in Genting next August.

At this point of the run, I was feeling uncomfortable but I persisted. At 6K mark, the pain was such that I had to walk and even then it was very uncomfortable. Bruce was kind enough to walk with me while I urged Yaziz ahead as I believed he was doing 25-30K that morning. When Ngae passed us a little while later, I insisted that Bruce went along which he did and then I found myself alone.

The demons of negativity struck right about then (anything to do with idle mind?) and I was toying with the idea of turning back. Luckily I didn't cave in to the temptation but just continued with my 6/1 routine. The pain came and went away and returned. But I trudged on and I was glad I persisted as in the end I managed to complete the 20K with a reasonable time of slightly over 2:15.

I tested the stomach again yesterday and I couldn't continue beyond 4K. I then decided not to run until this Sunday's 7K Olympic Day Run. I'll be able to gauge my stomach again then.

Jamie Pang, June 22nd, 2004

