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IPOH MARATHON RACE REPORT by Jamie Pang

I've never slept this well the night prior to a marathon. This was probably due my son wearing us out what with his fever (we found out later that it was due to a throat infection). As a result our fish and chips dinner at the Ipoh Parade mall was also hurried. I was informed by Yaziz that the race organizers had put together a bus tour of the marathon route. Something unheard of in this country's race management. My impression of the organizers went up a notch. On our way back to the Syuen Hotel which ws just opposite the mall, we bumped into Penguins 1, 2, 3 and 6. All looked to be in a jolly mood, obviously ready for the task ahead.

More on Ipoh Marathon:

- [Ipoh Officials Out-Do Themselves](#)
- [The Penguins' Reports](#)
- [Runwitme's 21K Report](#)



Team Pacemakers (L-R): PM1 - Ronnie See, PM2 - Kelvin, PM5 - Jamie, PM14 - Ah Toh

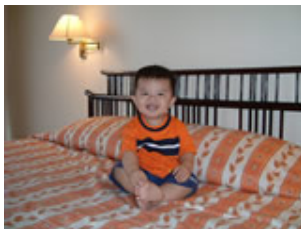


Team Penguins (L-R): P1 - Leong KC, P2 - Tan KM, P6 - Terence Leong



Team Pacesetters (Back Row): Bruce, Sarjit, PM14
(Front Row): PM5, Julian Chan, PM2, P6, P1 and PM1

We had taken a leisurely drive from KL that Saturday morning. Weather was superb for anything. Slightly overcast, breezy and cool. Weather reports from Ipoh and Penang were encouraging - it has been drizzling and days have been cloudy. The haze surrounding the country as a result of the Sumatra forest clearing had lifted.



"Daddy, I hope to be well enough to cheer you ya?"

After putting Wei Ming to bed, I pre-mix the post-race protein drink, had a good shower, stretched a bit and pinned the bib to the vest. Finally, I ran through the race kit - 5 PowerGels, 1 cereal bar and RM5 in cash (in case there are no drink stations). Bananas and PowerBars were also laid on the table and I downed 1 bottle of carb drink before dozing off to the MP3 player. Hopefully my good food and fluid intake routine over the last 2 weeks will pull me through. Of course there's a certain help from a fellow called Galloway as well.

I woke up at 4:45am and while lubing all my toes (paying special attention to the in-betweens) and inner thighs I downed a PowerBar - more like I gagged it down with a bottle of water as I've never got used to it. Then the nipples were taped over and I sprayed on some sunblock. I was ready. Other racers were already there and a rough count was about 500 odd runners for the full marathon, with most of the participants coming from the junior and senior veteran age group. There weren't many women though. Chen came over to say hi. Our wrists were then tagged with the plastic flex-cuff and before long we were ushered around the City Council Building to the starting line. A simple ceremony later (no speeches!) we were off. The plan was to run with P2 and P6 using the Galloway but they took off like a shot! I was determined to stick to my conservative pace, so I ran alone.

In the first 2Ks I bumped into David Lee who was pacing his son Barry, Bruce and Francis who were running slightly ahead but moving up the pack and Ngae also running steadily pushing ahead. I very consciously reminded myself to go slow and my time over the first 10K confirmed that I did a pretty good job, averaging a 6:34 pace. My 10K split was 1:08.20.

A few dark roads later (including a smelly and winding stretch) I hit an intersection that pointed to Tanjung Rambutan. I chuckled inside as I thought that marathoners are indeed certifiable nuts. I was a little apprehensive that I've yet to come across any 100Plus isotonic. I didn't think too much of it - perhaps they're provided only after the halfway mark. Up to this point I was running really well. Very comfortable, relaxed and with a calm demeanour. I made a few new friends including a fit-looking Thai who was running slow but steadily. In the early miles he would overtake me each time I take my walking breaks but I would always catch up during my running phase. Then there's the Barefoot Runner from the Kuantan Pacesetters group whom I dropped at the 5K mark. I could only drop the Thai at the 13K mark.

It was only at the 21K mark that the non-existence of 100Plus was real. A few runners at that station were making their dissatisfaction known and I joined in. Only the cups and parasols were 100Plus. There were no isotonic as well. Getting electrolytes will be a problem and cramps would be a factor. Even though PowerGels provide a certain level of salt and minerals, they may not be enough over 42K. I made sure that I sipped regularly on my water bottle, which I constantly refilled, to stay hydrated.

This routine continued until the 23rd K when I finally caught up with P6. I stayed with him a few yards and then continued on my routine. My consistent running continued until the 26th K when I started to tire a little and took longer walk breaks. That was the start of the battle. My lack of mileage work would be the cause but I was confident that if I got to the 30K mark, I'd get a second wind and would be able to cover the next 2K non-stop.

I then laboured on, trading leads with the girl - a regular Sunday runner who had at least a few 30Ks under her belt. So it was no surprise that she left me for dead a short while later. Passing Bercham Village, then the Makro Hypermart, I spotted the familiar yellow PowerBar umbrellas. A familiar person was sitting on a stool. I asked "Mr. Muthiah?" to which he nodded and smiled somewhat amusedly that someone should recognise him. I knew him because I once ran a few laps behind him in his pet event - the InterBank 1500m ages ago. He handed me a PowerGel.

At this point I need to mention about the deteriorating traffic control. The traffic marshalls, including the traffic police, were clearly inexperienced, standing at the wrong sections of the junctions. One of the official was heard commenting on this to the marshalls at one of the later part of the route.



"Hang in there, Daddy! The cavalry's here!"

The anticipated second wind didn't arrive. My legs were taking a bashing, especially my left knee. I had been having some niggling ITBS for about a month before this race and the marathon miles were giving the already troubled spot a good whacking. The Uphamol didn't work. To compound the problem, my right calf was tightening up near the back of the knee area. I had the St. John's Ambulance crews massage Flanil to my calves whenever I ran into them. At one of these spots, one inexperienced volunteer nearly ruined my blister-free plan by running a soaked sponge down my calf. Luckily I stopped her just in time telling her that wet socks equals painful blisters.

So onwards I struggled until I walked into Penguin 3 at the 32K water station. To my surprise, there were 100Plus there. Without waiting I quickly downed 4 cups while P3 similarly replenished his body and water bottle. I had chucked my bottle so there wasn't going to be any take-aways for me. I had also finished my Uncle Toby bar.

After a quick chat, P3 took off. Like me, he was struggling too. The sun was blazing hot and the sound of 2 ambulances snapped us back into reality from the haze of exhaustion. The ambulances must be carrying race casualties and if the causes of the emergencies were due to dehydration and heat exhaustion, the race officials could be liable.

I caught up with P3 a short while later and we decided to walk and jog together. Having some company at this stage really helped, especially when the road terrain became even more undulating, going up ramps and flyovers. We'd walk up and jog down and limped our way towards the Greentown area (where the finish area was). P3 and I had targeted a 5:15 finish. Some mental arithmetics later I realized that even at that point I could have finished in sub-5. I only had to run 6-minute pace for the rest of the 6K. Unfortunately lack of race fitness put paid to those thoughts. This is certainly a case where the mind was willing but the body just wasn't! After a few more Ks, I was afraid that even 5:15 may not be possible if I didn't cut down on the walk breaks. So I left P3 and went ahead.

With less than 1K to go, I met Rohaizad. He was already in his car heading back to KL, after finishing his 21K earlier. He shouted encouragement to me and I ran on towards the finish line where Chan Wing Kai, the club photographer was standing. Crossing the line in 5:14.58, I was at once perplexed at the fact that there were no race officials at the finish line! Nor was there anyone to record my timing! Confused I asked around and was directed to collect my certificate from one of the booths and discovered that I had to log down my details so that the medals can be sent to me! Disappointed I wandered around looking for familiar faces but only managed to run into P3 who finished just behind me, Wan and his wife, Uncle Sonny and his wife and Francis. All were disappointed and Uncle Sonny was especially distressed as he was at the launch where the organizers were promising to deliver.

What's my judgment? I'm still confused. The event had started off so well and how did it end up so wrong? Whatever it is, I'm certain that this event will lose many participants next year, especially those from neighbouring Singapore and Thailand who went home empty handed despite being promised finishers' medals. It's all looking pretty grim here, the [state of affairs](#). Perhaps it's time for the Sports Ministry to step into the picture?

Positives:

- A 17-minute improvement - 5:14.58 (a PR!!)
- No blisters!! Great pair of socks (Dri-FIT)
- Great pair of shoes (Wave Rider 6)
- Cool and breezy weather (The sun stayed hidden up to about 9am)
- Good location for start/finish
- Chilled water at the drink and sponging stations (adequate)
- Reasonably good distance markers (I accounted for all except one)

Negatives:

- No medals, no isotonic ([conspiracy??](#)), no officials at the finish line. Misrepresentation/false advertising (on brochure and event launch) and failure to provide a reasonable amount of "Duty to Care"?
- Poor traffic management at some spots. Many stretches were also unmanned

Jamie Pang
July 6th, 2004