



Home

Life

Running

Photos

Musings

[Home](#) > [Running](#) > [Race Reports](#)

RUNNING WITH THE PENGUINS

Bored with running the usual 20K Hartamas route, the author decided to tempt fate with a new training route...

[More race reports!](#)

Take it to the "Extreme"

To be classified as an "extreme sport", the activity usually needs to involve some measure of death defying acts, such as jumping off a plane, climbing a vertical rock face, performing inhuman tricks on the bike/skateboard.

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Therefore it is uncommon for running to be grouped under the "extreme" category. I mean, how deadly can the act of running be? I had the opportunity to test this notion out when I ran with the Penguins last Sunday when they tackled part of the KL International Marathon (KLIM) route.

"Don't do it, Jamie!"

My colleague had asked me not to risk my precious life in this run after I told him of the training route. Granted, the run will take me into some untested roads, read: dangerous highways, but I wanted to see if it was going to be as dangerous as it was made out to be - we won't know for a fact less we try. After all, there will be a group of us, so there will be safety in numbers.

Only the day before the run, I had my haircut. I gave instructions to the lady I wanted the cut to this way and that, to which she replied that rather than taking the customers' instructions as final, it was her policy to give a cut that suits the shape of head and that she will give me a "fashioned" styling. I think by "fashioned", she meant "hip". At that point I was already thinking up excuses to use at the office for the hairy disaster that was sure to come. Fortunately the end result wasn't so bad and I was ready for the morning out with the Penguins the next day.

A Few Crazy Men

As usual there were only a handful of people at the car park that morning at 4:45am. After a short wait, our posse set off at 5am. All in all there were 4 adults and 1 teenager in the group and 2 of the Penguins came equipped with blinkers to warn approaching cars. I suspected that nearly everyone carried pepper sprays to ward off dogs.

With Penguin-3 the designated leader, our journey was to take us from the Bukit Aman car park, down to the National Mosque, pass the KTM building, connecting to the Istana Highway, veering off to the Mirama Hotel, then the Loke Yew traffic lights, along Jalan Loke Yew until the Cheras/Tun Razak roundabout, the Badminton Stadium, turning right to Jalan Tun Razak, straight to the Bukit Bintang area, then running along Sultan Ismail to Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman (TAR), to City Hall, and then some way more. I doubted that I could do the entire 26K route as I hadn't been working on my mileage (since I will be tackling only the 10K event in KLIM) and I needed to be home by 8am.

The start of the run was uneventful, with a slow pace. In fact, I found it hard to maintain the pace. Nevertheless, I kept close to the group. There were bikers who shouted at us (something that sounded that "All right!") and nearly all cars were doing at least 100km/h. So I was damn alert as we moved into a single file formation.

A Few Stupid Youngsters

When I reached the start of Loke Yew I jumped to avoid a few vomits which I presume were party leftovers from last night. So far the threats from the dogs were non-event. I was running point when Terence pulled next to me. He was Gallowalking nicely. Before long we passed a group of youngsters whom I guessed were not even 18, whom just got off the disco at E-Mall. They looked positively high on something and one of the more cocky ones shouted at me in Cantonese "Wah, Uncle, up running so early?!". This was the first time I was addressed as "Uncle". I sped up to overtake this group of delinquents and waved my hand inviting them to follow, if they can. Cocky Idiot (CI) took my

invitation, ignored his friends' shouts to stop and sprinted in front of me while I kept a firm and steady pace. I reigned in my desire to unleash my pepper spray on him. After about 150 meters, CI could run no more and just sat by the roadside. Passing him, I remarked sarcastically, "Young man, no energy left?". From here there was no turning back and I maintained my point position till the end of the run. Needed to keep up the pace to make it back on time.

May The Shit Not Be On Me

The rest of the route was pretty normal. Besides passing a trio of transvestites along Jalan Tun Razak, no dogs or anymore pesky teens harassed me. One patrol car just gave me a passing look and I mainly encountered road sweepers going about their chores. Approaching the final stretch, I decided to run along Jalan Raja Laut in front of City Hall rather than TAR Road as the Raja Laut stretch has wider pavements. Bad idea, because the the huge trees there were hosts to thousands of crows, meaning not only had I to coax my tiring self to the finish line, I now had to dodge crow droppings. If it can be plotted onto a 3D chart, my movement resembled that of Luke Skywalker's bombing run of the Death Star. I was jinking left and right and hopping every few steps or so. To add to the problem, the road sweepers were agitating the birds by banging on the lamp posts with their brooms. Once I cleared that stretch, I immediately checked myself for hits. None - how lucky can one get?

All in all, it was an eye-opening run for me. No doubt, the route was dangerous and we needed to be alert. Nevertheless, this route is a refreshing change from the usual Sunday route and I'd recommend that runners try it out just for experience - in a group, of course! **Timing:** 2:11.22.

The journey continues...
Jamie Pang, Feb 1st, 2004

NB. You may want to also check out the Penguin's report [here](#).