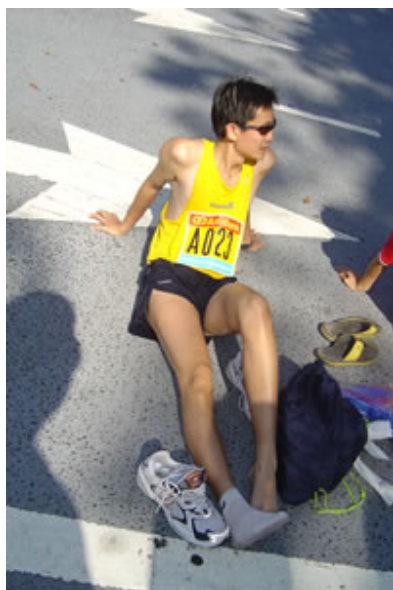


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Saturday's lunch @ Dave's Deli



Time to loosen the legs

KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL MARATHON by Jamie Pang

Will the 4th marathon be another disappointment or will patience win the day?

3:00am

4 alarms were set the night before - PDA, watch, alarm clock, phone. Didn't leave anything to chance. In fact I didn't need any. I had only 3 hours worth of sleep and didn't need any of the alarms to wake up!

3:40am

Reached the carpark behind the court house. Found that many runners were already there and were busy changing into their racing gear. Most of them were chewing on the bars and downing fluids. Parked my car in a nice spot - just yards from the start/finish line. Since it was still early, I leaned back in my seat and tried to relax. Finished my Powerbar.

3:55am

The excitement got to me and after grabbing my shoes, bag and water bottle, I made my way to the gathering tent. Once there I set about Bodygliding my toes, heel, underarms and inner thighs. My nipples had been taped the night before. Sat and chit-chat with Adam and later mingled and shook hands with the other runners.

4:40am

With a blast of the whistle (unlike the method used by the tour guide), the [Club](#) President got the club's full marathoners together for a group photo. There were more than 250 of us! We ignored the irritating MCs and just stood there for an extended photo shoot. I spotted a couple of press photographers cashing in on our large group by getting off a few shots.

4:50am

Joined the queue into the staging area. Hooked up with Martin and later Yong, [Sim](#) and Jason. With the exception of Yong, the 3 were there as debut marathoners! I stood near the back of the pack.

5:00am

The MCs announced that we will be let off when the large clock struck 5am. So with the music muted, there were complete silence as everyone in the staging area waited with bated breath for the alarm. But none was heard and the embarrassed MC apologized by saying that the clock was probably asleep. A few seconds later, the starting gun fired and we were off. Yay, no speeches! It was 1 minute before I stepped on the timing mat. My primary goal was to break 5 hours (so long a barrier to me), secondary goal was to finish in 4:45 and the ultimate was to hit 4:30.

5:10am

Shades down, I moved into ready mode. Observed the weather, the humidity while taking my carry-on fluids.

5:15am

Many were already running helter-skelter, dodging runners to get to the front. These people were crazy, this is a marathon, not a 5K! Anyway, it wasn't my problem. My starting pace was the suggested one advised by seasoned marathoners, "Start slow and then proceed to go slower". That kept my pace in check and my mental health sane.

5:17am

Passed Yong. Breathing well, upper body relaxed.

5:20am

Though I heard someone shouted my name across the Federal Highway. Something like "Go Jamie!". Found out later that it was Justin on his way down for the Half Marathon start.

5:30am

Consistent 6min/K pace. Found out that the markers were out of place. Decided then to track my timing only at every 10K. Even more important then to concentrate and monitor the breathing. Again reminded myself to hold back.

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Azwar, me, MJ and Ronnie

6:01am

10K mark. The first timing mat. Still consistent pacing so even though I was 6 minutes faster than goal pace, I wasn't worried if I kept a stable pace.

6:15am

No problems with highway ramps - scaled them easily. Woo hoo, the Hartamas training route rocks! Managed to put in 2 5-minute surges.

6:17am

My mantra of the day: "The Marathon is a race of attrition. Those who do well are those who are willing to be patient and still be in the race when people are slowing down." I kept muttering these wise words from the start until the 25K mark.

6:30am

What's with the Loke Yew area? It's jam-packed with traffic even this early on weekends! We runners were running side by side with the vehicles (with a comfortable gap between us). The buses spewed fumes. I didn't pay too much attention to the drivers except to try to clear this polluted stretch quickly. I grabbed the cups and drank on the go without stopping.

6:38am

Passed Jason just before the Loke Yew Mall. Told him to maintain focus and keep at it.

6:40am

Passed Francis soon afterward. Shouted some encouragement. Aside from the traffic, this was a good stretch for me.

6:45am

Passed Choo (Tey's friend) who informed me that he was 1K in front, firing the afterburners! I chanted the mantra once again. Keep the pace even, monitor the breathing and people will drop back. Supporters were far in between. Waved at an Indian chap who was clapping alone by the side near the Siamese Buddhist Temple. Was thankful for the chilled plain water and sponges but had no choice but to ingest the gassy isotonic.

7:09am

20K! Very comfortable. "Will today be the day?" I thought, as I cracked open my first PowerGel. Traded leads with a strong veteran.

7:25am

Passed Wisma Genting where [PACM](#) had a large ensemble of cheerleaders deployed. Lapped up the atmosphere and hammed it up for Ken who was the videographer. The video will be cut into DVD and will be made on sale this Saturday. Glided down the downslope into the *surprise* misting tunnel set up by Nike. I had a hoot running through it - felt like an Olympian at the recent Athens!

After the Midway Point, Within Sight of Dataran

The cops were doing an excellent job so far. Didn't have to stop for the vehicles, just ran on and cleared the junctions easily. In fact, some cops even waited for me when there were no one near me. Reached TAR road relatively unscathed - no exceptional pain and my breathing was still normal. Took the turn around TAR Road into Jalan Raja Laut and ran into another group of cheer team, this time headed by Mrs Kelvin Ng and her Do-Re-Mi! Glad to receive the extra boost of lung power from these girls! I saw a regular runner trudging back to the finish line clutching his race bib - a casualty.

Little Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh

Entering the Chow Kit area, I observed many foreign workers, Indonesians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis gawking at us. Then I spotted Martin 70 meters up ahead and decided that I will keep my pace instead of chasing him. Remember my mantra? OK, let's chant it again.

After a short time shadowing Martin, I passed him just after the former Capitol theater. I advised him to continue focusing - it was also an advice to myself as I knew that my battle would be starting shortly.



Form is still excellent as I pursued Uncle Hooi. Perhaps the best running photo of me. Thanks to Tey!

The Long Stretch

Entering the Raja Muda stretch, I saw Uncle Hooi about 50 meters ahead. I employed the same approach as before and stayed in touch with him. At 67 years old (or so), Uncle Hooi is an exemplary runner. Strong on the hills and consistent to a fault on the flats. If I want to finish in 4:30, this is the man I need to shadow. Latch on, feel the tractor beam pulling me close, I'll be able to achieve my 3rd goal.

Mind Games

Bloody hell, this Raja Muda stretch is darn long! And Uncle Hooi seemed to be slipping away! I thought I was slowing down a tad but he was passing quite a few runners! At that point, I realized that I need to keep up the self-talk.

So to reinforce the positive affirmation, I thought to myself "I've trained well. This is what I've trained to do", "Remember...attrition". And when I passed someone, I'd say "See, my training shows! Here's the proof!" These thoughts kept me going from 28K to 33K. And my 2nd pack of gel too.

Body Check

Time to do a roll-call on the body parts. Hips-OK, quads-OK, arms-swinging nicely, neck & shoulders-OK, lower legs-a little fatigue but no alarms. In between getting myself out of the badly jammed Jalan Tun Razak and my roll-call, I saw [Sim](#) in his trademark yellow vest 100 meters ahead. I tailed him for 10 minutes and bid my time before passed him just as we're climbing up the Mahamehru ramp at the 32K mark. Uncle Hooi was already 200 meters ahead with the gap ever increasing. Wanted to keep this pack of gel distributed by PowerBar for later but they had already opened it, so I just swallowed the whole thing.

The Incredible Mr Tey

I saw Tey more and more from this point and I really welcome his presence during these hard miles. Not only was he wearing his pouch laden with 2 bottles stilled filled with water, he was lugging his usual camera, rolls of film and other knick-knacks, he stopped to help a cramped up runner by the road side by offering the victim some analgesic cream. Some of the photos here were taken by Tey. To cap it all off, I heard that Tey spent the night at the field by the starting line!

Reality Bites

The stiffness and pain on the lower legs were building to a point that I started to have some negative thoughts creeping in. The painted marker on the road read 35K. 7K of pain to go and the Mahamehru climb had cost me. I walked up the remaining slope and continued running down the other side. Thankfully the downslope was long - probably 1.5K, so I could put in an extended run here. On the opposite side of the road, I saw runners trudging up the highway ramp leading to Wisma Tani. The sun was up but it wasn't that hot yet and I was dreading the final miles. I still could not catch up with the elusive Phyllis, whom Tey said was just in front. Maybe he was just trying to motivate me!

I reached the final checkpoint and dunked several cups of water over my head. The support crew there were very friendly. In fact all of them were in the earlier stations. They addressed me as "Sir" and were pretty efficient in their duties. This particular one even clapped and encouraged me to keep it up. To these people, I say "Thanks!". If only we have more of you in the other local races!



At the Mahamehru stretch. Leaning forward to avoid wetting the shoes



Time to move on. The cold water helped to ease the tiredness a bit

Flight Of The Phoenix

I walked and run from here to the Wisma Tani where the final cheer team was located. Spotted Amier, Tomoko and their kids and rode their wave of energy a bit. Beyond the curve of the road was an uphill climb again and at the 40K mark, the official read out the time - 4:28. No 4:30 for me then! I was determined to make it within 4:45.

OK, the movie sucks and I sure as hell didn't look as graceful as a Phoenix. But somehow, I found my second wind just about this time. There's no stopping then! I covered the final 2Ks in 13 minutes. At the Central Bank junction, I saw Ajeep by the roadside cheering "selective" (if you catch my drift!) runners. No time to stop and chit-chat. Rounding the Dataran junction, I saw so many friends cheering me on! On the left were the groupies - [Ronnie](#), Justin, Kenneth, [Rohaizad](#), [Kwok Foo](#) and [Mei Jyn](#). On the right were Newton, Cheong and [Penguin 2](#). And sitting in the shade of the A-boards were people I didn't even know!



Exhausted just after finishing.

I gained momentum and kicked past Penguin 5. I raised my arms as I crossed the line. I thought he had finished earlier as I saw him on the opposite side of Jalan Duta (37K). Just past the finish line Gerard snapped a shot of me and I shook hands with [Haris](#), a first time marathoner (I thought he'd finished earlier as I spotted him about the same time as Penguin 5). Haris did very well and together with Tey finished 1 minute ahead of me.

Then I collected my medal from the polite official, who made really sure that I didn't forget it. Paused for awhile to catch my breath and caught up on the latest updates from Newton, Cheong and Kwok Foo. Then it was off to return the chips and to join Ronnie. After witnessing Sim and Martin finished side by side and Yong coming in with a cramped thigh, I decided to call it a day.

I didn't feel as bad as after the recent Singapore. Perhaps this was due to the elevated state of fitness as well as the weather, which though sunny, wasn't scorching.

Results

The event website listed my results and splits as:

Overall Ranking-393

Category Ranking-165/298

Gun Time - 04:41:34

Chip Time - 04:40:25

10K - 01:02:53

20K - 02:16:10

30K - 03:13:37

The timings were about a minute more than my watch time and tallies with the 1 minute walk over the starting mat. My splits were about the same as Uncle Hooi's (who did 4:33), which means my last 7K could've been run better.

Post-race

As I'm writing this a day after the race, it's still a great feeling to finally break the 5 hour barrier. If it feels this fantastic, imagine what it would feel like, say breaking 4 hours, 3 hours and the World Record? But I'm just an ordinary runner who has other worries in this world on how to make ends meet, how to keep the family happy and keep the boss off my back. I'm thankful first and foremost to my wife who has been shoring up the kid raising portion while I sneaked off in the darkness during the Sunday long runs. It was also she who covered my portion of ironing and mopping whenever I slacked a bit owing to my post-run fatigue. For all that I'm thankful. Indeed training and running a good marathon is not easy. Many challenges to the time, other commitments and personal demons (eg. tendencies to slack, starting too fast, unheeded advice...) that need to be overcome. Which all the more makes the marathon a wonderful event to attempt and to continue running for normal person like me - not impossible (as ultra-marathon balls-busting difficult) yet not easy (as a 2-hr 21K).

Positives

- Focus and concentration was good, my best ever
- The cops, support crew at the refreshment stations, the cheerleading teams and other volunteers
- No blisters (I think I've nailed this, going into my 4th marathon)
- Nice shoes in the NB753. Even though they were a little firm in training, it was just fine on race day
- Sense of pacing has improved
- A new-found level of confidence to try for 4:25 - 4:30
- A 33-min PR?

Needs Improvement

- The bib and chip collection, mini expo
- Lack of goodie bag. Some local smaller races had better offerings
- Hardiness to last the full distance. Needs some beefing up on the 35K+ runs
- To work on the lower leg strength

Jamie Pang, Mar 7th, 2005