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[NILAI 3 HALF MARATHON RACE REPORT](#) by Jamie Pang

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For a race that I didn't prepare specifically for, I did pretty OK. The day started with my wife waking me up at 4:50am. Somehow, I didn't hear my watch's and clock's alarms! I must've been pretty whacked I guess. Anyway, I'd put together my race kit the night before and all I needed to do was to freshen up and ingest some carbs. After packing 5 slices of peanut butter sandwiches (for consumption along the way), downing a cup of coffee and mixing up a bottle of Endurox, I was out of the apartment.



The pacer and "pacee" postrace



By the time I reached the rendezvous point at Sri Petaling and Justin and Chen were already there. A couple of minutes later we were on the way to the remote town of Nilai where the morning's battle was to take place. 30 minutes later, we arrived at the Nilai toll plaza where the gang was supposed to meet up. Within 10 minutes, 7 cars were lined up by the road side. CM the Psychotary who handled the registration and collection distributed the bibs and all of us promptly got down to pinning them on. I got Karim's bib.

Runners being runners, we had no qualms getting out of our T-Shirts into our vests at the side of an increasingly busy toll - more runners were passing the area. No inhibitions here. With things sorted out, the convoy proceeded to the start line which was quite a distance away from the toll plaza. On the way in, I checked out the race route, part of which we will be running a short while later. True enough, there were plenty of inclines. The entire journey was over undulating roads. It was no doubt going to be a tough race. [Read the Race Prelude here.](#)

&lt; &lt; Handsome Chen aka Lillian Chen aka Macho Chen pinning the bib to vest

If the roads going in seemed daunting, nothing prepared us for the 800 metres of 30 degree climb that greeted us entering the staging area. Coming down soon after the start will burden the knees and hamstrings while tackling it this near the finish will tax most quads and lungs. Nevertheless I stayed cool - no pressure as I don't have a time goal.

After dropping off the registration card, I spotted many familiar faces, most notably, the former [PACM](#) President Wan Yew Leong, [John and wife](#), Jerry and Jessica, [Haris](#) and [Rohaizad](#). Looks like we'll have plenty of friends along the way. After chatting up Jerry and Jessica and Wan, I finished off my bottle of Endurox and readied myself for the start.



The Toll Gang. Click to enlarge!

I had Rohaizad's company at the start and the both of us enjoyed very much Kelvin's jokes about the Vision 4 cameraman. Ajeep and Haris had zoomed ahead but I was just contented to cruise along with Rohaizad. We cleared the early ups and downs without any issues and it was at the 5K mark that I realized that Jessica was just behind me. After a quick chat, she said that she wanted me to pace her - which would be nice, I thought. Afterall, I was running



My 2nd medal in a month

without any pressure and it would be great to pace her for her 2nd half marathon (in a month!). Indeed, on our last Sunday's run, we found out that our training pace were quite close over 20K. She didn't want to run alongside, preferring to draft behind me. Along the way, I encouraged her and gave her a few tips including how to drink on the run - hopefully she didn't end up with too much water up her nostrils! I was surprised to run into [Sim](#), who is a much faster runner than I, near the 10K mark. He was walking and in pain from the knee up to the hips. Sounded like an ITB injury. Read his short account [here](#).

The race organizers had done a good job so far, ensuring the water stops were there. If there was anything, it was that all but the last checkpoint was manned by folks unclear of the race distance run. I asked "What's the distance run so far?" only to have my question replied "I'm sorry, I don't know". There was even a guy who added, albeit unintentionally demoralizing "I don't know but it must still be a long way to go". To a rookie who had struggled over the numerous route climbs, that would have killed any confidence left. To an intermediate runner, that would have delayed the timely surge in pace. However I was confident enough to estimate my pace and therefore distance run. I THOUGHT to myself "Oh yeah? Distance is relative! It may be far for you but not to me!" It may appear arrogant but I was not being that. I've simply grown to be mentally stronger during the leadup to the [recent KLIM](#). These mind games are crucial in a race when pushing the pace and surging towards the finish line.

I urged Jessica to up the tempo when told by the last (ribbon) checkpoint that there were only 4K to go. I knew if she kept it up, she'd PR big time. She did 2:06 (if I remembered correctly) in KLIM earlier this month and she'd dip below 2 hours if she kept it up. I sensed a good performance from myself too and I switched my focus back to my breathing and form and just about where the half marathoners merged with the 10K runners, comprising mostly of students, I opened up my pace. I looked back periodically at my "pacee" as I upped my tempo. Being too far in front, I couldn't shout encouragements back to her, so I merely waved my arms. Seeing that she too was deeply focused, I pushed ahead, passing Wan who stopped to drink and a few more familiar club runners. I must've passed 50 runners and my strides lengthened and arms powered. In my mind, I was picturing myself as one of the elites powering through the crowd.

Then I noticed 2 runners from the same category about 30 meters ahead and proceeded to reel them in. Mustn't let them beat me to the 300 medals on offer in my category! Rohaizad and I observed earlier that the bib range for our category maxed at 420 or so. So we had to beat over 100 runners in our category to return with a medal. In any case, I passed the first of the two runners with no problems. The other sensed that I was bearing down on him and bolted. It was to be my first head to head race to the finish in a long time. And we had yet to scale the 800 meter steep climb! No time to think. Everything was instinctive. We matched each other stride for stride passing many more runners. He refused to give up and we were breathing hard. I passed Jason along the way but didn't greet him. The "leech" was still hanging on but I could sense that he was already maxing out and there were distinct hesitancy in his breathing - as if he wanted to opt out of the battle. We were still 300 meters to the summit. Evidently whoever hung on longer will win this contest. Just about then The Leech dropped off pace and I immediately sensed personal victory and ramped up the pace further to ensure that there was no chance of him coming back.

At the summit, there were another 200 meters of flat land to cover to the finish line. The officials were shouting at us to push on and as I entered the finishing chute, I spotted Tey with what else but his camera. [Justin](#) and [Ronnie](#) were there too to cheer me on and I crossed the line in 1:50.09, position no.84. A good time considering this was a last minute race for me. The time would've been sweeter had it not for the slightly under 21K distance. We estimated the route to be about 19.5K. I went back to cheer my "pacee" Jessica who cleared the line in 1:57 for a placing finish, which was her PR. I've said previously that she has potential. Just into 2 half marathons, she had improved. With longer runs coupled with tempo runs, she will definitely improve much more. Some track work will elevate her even higher.

After the customary congratulatory chitchats and drinks, we bundled up and left the area. Most of us were hungry and no amount of hunting would reveal an eatery. So we drove further away to Bandar Baru Nilai where we finally located 1 Malay shop serving rice and noodles. Stomachs satiated we departed Nilai for home.



Breakfast at Bandar Baru Nilai (with the Psychotary - right foreground)  
Click to enlarge!



Breakfast at Bandar Baru Nilai (without the Psychotary)  
Click to enlarge!

I can't pinpoint a particular reason why I did reasonably well by my standards but I think the following could be the reasons why the initially feared terrain proven to be a non-event for me:

1. Improved aerobic fitness after the recent marathon. Research says that aerobic peak is achieved 2 to 3 weeks (hence the recommended tapering period) after the longest run. My longest run was the KL marathon 3 weeks ago
2. The weather was fine. The heavy rain on Saturday helped.
3. The 2 weeks of training post marathon, of which 3 tempo sessions were put in.
4. I ran relaxed and without expectations. Pacing Jessica too reigned me in from going too fast, which I may or may not last. It was nevertheless an enjoyable experience running with her.
5. Sunday morning training at the hilly Hartamas route
6. Endurox, perhaps? I was testing out the new research that said taking a mix of carbs and protein may delay the onset of fatigue

The new sense of confidence will hopefully allow me to challenge those gang members gifted with more fast twitched muscles in the near future.

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