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[THAI RUNNERS DAY RACE REPORT](#) by Jamie Pang

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Also known as the Visakha Bucha Day Run, this series of runs across Thailand was held in the many provinces to celebrate the Tri-Sacred Day (the Birth, Enlightenment and Passing Away of the Buddha) and also to promote a healthy lifestyle. The Thai government is promoting an anti-smoking campaign when I was there.

I was in Bangkok for the second time with my colleagues as part of a departmental outing ([Notes from Bangkok plus pictures here](#)) but with Tey's international connection, I managed to secure an entry to the above 5K race. Different provinces had different race distances but the one closest to my hotel offered only 5K. No matter. Some running is better than no running! The fact that I've never run a race in Thailand provided the catalyst to sign up. Fee was 100 Baht but as I found out, 100 Baht can get you lot of goodies in Thailand. After checking in at the hotel I received an SMS (thanks to global roaming!) from Lawrence Leong who told me that he will be in Bangkok for his company trip as well and would like to run. Tey later helped fix him up as well.

I was to be picked up by Narumol (Tey's friend) from the hotel lobby at 4am BKK time. That meant sleeping early which was to pose no problem to me given the tiring excursions to the Chatuchak Market and the MBK-Siam Centre-Siam Discovery areas during the day. When my colleagues left for dinner, I opted to stay in and ordered a room service instead. It was lights out by 9:30pm. I woke up a couple of hours later and watched the depressing final 30 minutes of the FA Cup Final.

I was up by 3:30 the next morning and had a light breakfast of bread washed down with coffee. While I waiting for my transport, I was hit with a bad case of stomach ache - really bad. Even after taking a dump, it was not good. No choice then, I harboured the pain all the way to the starting venue. And that was a long way from the hotel.

I was picked up by Narumol's friend in a van which was full of runners. The fast looking ones that terrorize the Malaysian races to put the local Malaysian runners to shame. You know the type? Yup, for that van ride, I was going to be a fierce runner myself, at least mentally. Anyway, they proved to be friendly and a few of them had close race PRs as I. A few even run as races every other weekend and had raced as far as China, Malaysia and Singapore. Ms Neng was my guide in the van and we picked up more runners along the way.



After nearly 50 minutes of commute, we finally arrived at the race spot and I helped the folks to unload the watermelons to the food stalls. There was going to be post-race breakfast! Then I saw Lawrence's friendly face. He was accompanied by Narumol. Together we headed to register. Registration was done by notching the edge of the bib (by a Mandarin speaking lady) and marking it with my category number. The bib was made with the type of synthetic material that lines embroideries and nicely printed. You can see from the picture that a bib need not be large to contain the logos of 6 sponsors! Take note you short-sighted Malaysian organizers! Then we were passed The Medal, even before the race. Fully expecting a nicely made (Thai medals have a great reputation of being nicely designed), I was surprised to receive a small Buddha amulet. Double surprise!



Pretending to understand Thai



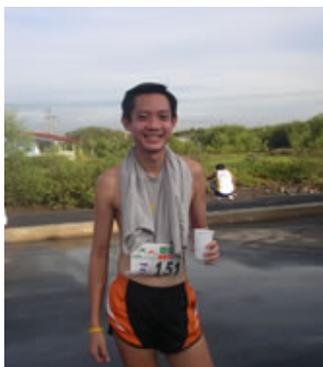
Just before the start. Relax-lah!

As we walked to the starting area, I observed a number of serious runners doing their warmup strides. Fierce competitors these fellas. The race were to start from a pier fronting the Gulf of Thailand (imagine how far we travelled from the city!) and the runners to proceed two loops around a marshland. After a brief speech which we didn't understand naturally, the gong surprised us and off we went. After the usual jam at the start, I slowly gain speed, with Lawrence running just behind me. Not even 300m from the start was the water station - most runners skipped this and so did we. The fast runners had already disappeared while the two of us slowly reeled in the rest.

Completing the first loop, we were given small rubber bands with ribbons. So far, I was impressed with the organization. There were plenty of volunteers, ranging from course marshalls to video/cameramen. Narumol was like Tey just after the start when she ran in front just to capture our photo! It was really fun to run in a foreign place and though I picked up my pace, I was enjoying the experience.



Enjoying myself! [Click to enlarge](#)



On the wrist is the Livestrong band I got from Chatuchak

Towards the end, there was the usual battle to kick for the finish and I crossed the line in 24:22 for an average of 4:52 pace and top 30 placing. Too bad the trophies were only awarded to the top 5 in each events because they were 8-inch tall white plaster Buddhas! How unique can that be? Hitting the refreshment stalls, I was hit by the variety of food offered. The spread was so good I thought we had to pay for them. There was beef noodles, tom yam, ice-cream, watermelons, century egg porridge and a few others. Everyone queued but I settled only for water. The locals must have stomachs of steel because they can hit the spicy food immediately after a race! Undaunted, once I've cooled down but still sweating pints of sweat due to the hot weather, I attacked an ice-cream cone and a bowl of fantastic beef noodles.

By 8:15 we were heading back to our hotels, with Lawrence ready to hit the shopping trail with his colleagues and me, the bed! I'm really thankful to have had the chance to run in Thailand and the new friends, all gracious hosts, I've made. It had served to broaden my experience of the social and running culture in Thailand and suddenly the Bangkok

Marathon seemed a mouth watering option than it was one year ago. I'd like to thank Narumol, Neng and many others, including Tey, for facilitating this experience for me.

**Note:** To put my timing into perspective, the 3rd place finisher in the men's 20-29 category crossed the line in 19 odd minutes.



Hanging out



Post race with Neng and Narumol (beside Lawrence)



The trophy!



The medal! [Click to enlarge.](#)

*Jamie Pang*  
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