

## **My “SMART” Goal**

I joined the Half-Marathon (21-km) run on 28 February this year.

Two years ago, I joined the 10-km run as my first challenge in long-distance run and this year I want to give myself another challenge, i.e., to participate in the 21-km run. When I registered for the run last November, I set up a “SMART” goal for myself, i.e. I’d finish the Half-Marathon run within 3 hours. There were about 4 months for me to prepare for the run, so I designed a training schedule aiming at increasing the time of running practice each week. It turned out that I could only arrange for 3 evenings of 10-km running practice a week at the maximum. Hence before the Marathon Day I had never run more than 10 kilometers at a time and I was not sure whether I could finish the 21-km or not, not to say about the time of finishing.

On the Marathon Day, it was hot and humid. The run started at Tsim Sha Tsui at 6:30 a.m. After the start, I ran leisurely and many runners took over me. The sky turned gradually from dark to bright. I enjoyed the running and nice views and I could even see our school on my way. At every 2.5 km interval, water was supplied to runners and at each water point I drank a cup of water to replenish the water loss on such a hot and humid day. It was not difficult for me to finish the first 10 kilometers and I continued to run slowly.

Beyond these 10 kilometers, I knew I was making my own new record. At the Kowloon entrance of the West Cross-Harbour Tunnel, I had already run 14 kilometers and I found many runners were walking instead of running. At that time I was also quite tired but I kept on running very slowly. On exiting the Tunnel, it was the hardest time for me because I had to run upslope to the Tunnel exit and then to the top of the flyover. Indeed at that time, I was very tired but I had no intention to give up the running. I ran very slowly but still I could pass the walkers. I just kept on running.

When I reached the top of the flyover in the Western District, the time was 8:55 a.m. I had already run nearly 2.5 hours and there were about 5 kilometers to the finishing point. Although I was very tired, I decided to increase my speed in order to get to the finishing point before 9:30 a.m. I quickened my paces and that was my fastest run in the whole morning. When I reached the Convention Centre in Wan Chai, I was extremely tired and there were signs that my legs were going to cramp very soon. In order to avoid spasm, the only thing that I could do was to stop running and let my leg muscles relax. So I slowed down and walked for a short time. I resumed running afterwards and it seemed that all my strength had gone and I could only run very slowly to the finishing point. It was 13 minutes past the 3-hour time-limit for record-keeping when I reached Victoria Park. I was totally exhausted but with great satisfaction -- I had run from Tsim Sha Tsui to Lai King and then to Causeway Bay! What a long journey and a breakthrough to me!

I could only achieve my “SMART” goal partially because my pre-Marathon practice was not enough. Nevertheless, I am very happy and most satisfied. It was my first time in my life to finish a 21-km run at one time. I can do it!

I plan to join the Half-Marathon run again next year and I will set the same “SMART” goal, i.e., I shall finish the Half-Marathon run within 3 hours. Yes, I’ll carry on .....

