



Running For A Cause

by Pravin Rajwani

We run for many reasons. Some of us run so we can fit into our skinny jeans. Some of us do it because we just love running. I have run marathons (full & half) and the reason for doing them is to challenge myself.

This time I ran the Angkor Wat International Half Marathon on 2 December not for self-fulfilment but to help raise money for the Sala Bai Hotel School in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The school provides free education and guaranteed employment for underprivileged Cambodians, with priority given to young women (70%).

I did this marathon along with 40 other individuals through a program run by a Singapore-based non-profit organisation called The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP) run by four very energetic and amazing women.

The journey began two months before the race. As a group we met every Saturday morning (between 7am and 8am) and we were trained by running coaches. We had three weeks of easy running and strength training at Labrador Park.

Being the only person with diabetes there, I had to inform them about my condition and what to do in case of an emergency like a low sugar level. Everybody was very worried the moment I told them. I had to tell them the signs of someone with a low sugar level (pale lips, incoherent responses, walking tipsy). The tricky part is distinguishing a low sugar level from general exhaustion. I had to show them how to use my glucometer.

Prevention is your best defense, so the training helped me figure out how my sugar levels felt at certain distances and paces. I also wrote 'I am a Type 1 Diabetic' on the front of my running bib, just in case. I checked my sugars before and after every training session, taking note of my pace and distance covered. This helped me understand how I was burning up my energy and when the critical levels are.

During the weeks before the race, we had a set running schedule for the week. On average, we clocked between 20km and 36km per week. This is hard to follow because even if you don't have to work late or it is not raining, your sugar levels might be too low and you have to skip running that day.

On the days when you are not running, you feel like eating more and may end up 'carbo-loading'. My doctor warned me about this. As diabetics, we can't 'carbo-load' as our sugars would go up too high.

The evening before the race, I ran about 3km to raise my metabolic rate and loosen my muscles. Then I ate low G.I. (glucose index) foods including oats, foods high in protein, fruits and vegetables. In the morning, I ate a high energy protein bar (40g of carbohydrates), took a salt tablet and drank lots of water and juices. I try not to eat too much before a race so these bars are ideal because they give me the energy I need but do not make me feel uncomfortably full.

During the race, I had a sports gel pack at the 11 km mark and another half at the 18km mark (I shared it with another runner who was having trouble and really needed the boost). These sports gel packs are packed with sugars, so it is good to carry one around in case of emergencies. I had three on me and I only needed two.

While training for the half-marathon, I also had to raise money for the school. Each participant had to raise a minimum of \$1000. This involved asking the people around me and telling them what it is for. Some of us even had to do Dance Dares or shave our heads if we hit a certain amount. I am relieved and delighted to say that all of us exceeded that minimum amount although the official figures are not out yet.

Finally, we arrived in Siem Reap. I finished the race in two hours and 15 minutes and I was happy. But what made this all worthwhile was the day after the race. We went to the Sala Bai Hotel School and met the students we were raising the money for. Every year the school helps 100 impoverished students, and give them an opportunity for a brighter future. With this funding boost, it can expand their reach and help more young Cambodians get an education and earn a living when they graduate. The photo (above, left) was taken with Dek Dornng, a student from the Front Desk Class.

It felt great to be a part of this charitable cause and physically challenging experience. When you do something beyond yourself, you can't define the joy of giving, or feel a need to calculate the cost of commitment. Like the TCRP's slogan says, some things in life should not have to be counted.

For more information about The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP), log onto www.thechainreactionproject.com