



A note from the Editor

Jaffar Sidek

Welcome to the very first issue, and I hope the first of many more to come, of "Get Set" - yes, and you'd better believe it, Runninghour's very own newsletter and magazine publication.

This first issue is a newsletter, which highlights articles written by the editorial team, their thoughts on how Runninghour has inspired or influenced their thoughts and perceptions on integration, plus a humorous journalistic flashback on "The Amuzing Race" held earlier this year. Of course we couldn't ignore the founders' – John and Jan's - insights, so we included an interview with John to get his thoughts and ideas. Since this is a seasonal edition of the newsletter, a feature called "Sent-a-Mail" where members, for a 50 cents love token to Runninghour, can send and publish their greetings to loved ones and friends has been added for spice.

So, who are in the publication team?

First, and in no order of preference, we have Siew Ling, someone with a vivacious character, always warm and charming, always chatty; so engage her in conversation at your own risk! Then there is Wai Yee, our Main Com rep, always willing to try, always willing to help, full of dare and vigour. Last and by no means least, Hannah, our only sighted member, always willing to lend a hand, always working hard to make things tick for us. Thank you also to Kelvin Tan and Raymond Tiong who contributed with their technical skills in editing photos and creating the logo, respectively. To all those mentioned above, I would like to extend my thanks because this issue wouldn't have been possible without your contribution.

This is, I hope, a season of goodwill, a season of peace, a season to take, and a season to give. Why did I say "I hope"? Because the world is filled with so much hopelessness and bitterness, which is unfortunate. Yet, amidst all that, there are a few beacons shining, and Runninghour, I firmly believe, is one of them; extending not just hope to runners who are visually, intellectually and physically –challenged; but more than that - friendship and a platform on which to build a healthy physical and social life.

So at this time of year when Santa Claus goes "Ho, Ho, Ho", when lights blink around Christmas trees and Santas kiss moms under mistletoes, all I wanna say is "GO Runninghour, keep running - that's your power." Happy Christmas and a Merry New Year to all, from the editor.



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Hearing It From the Founder - An Interview with John See Toh

By Hannah Ling

Runninghour is an inclusive running club that promotes integration of people with special needs through running. It was started by John See Toh and his wife, Jan, in 2009. We interviewed John to find out a little more about how the club took shape.

Hannah Ling: Can you describe a definitive moment for you in starting up Runninghour?

John See Toh: We initially started the club with a group of intellectually-challenged runners. When the visually-challenged runners started joining us, we found that the club was growing exponentially and, for the first time, we recorded 100 members in attendance! I thought to myself: if a casually-run club like ours could get a hundred members – that really shows there is a need out there and we are meeting that need. That was the time I thought we should keep this club going for as long as possible.

HL: I found out that the idea for an integrated running club started with a project you did when you were studying. What birthed the idea in the first place?

JST: Personally, it is very satisfying for me to help people with special needs. I feel that it is contributing to a really good cause. The social injustices that I saw also motivated me. When I teach my students, I always imagine the different types of lives that people with special needs of the same age are living. My students are well-versed with technology, and have so much going for them – career, travel, hobbies... However when it comes to people who are intellectually-challenged, it's a different story.

HL: When did you decide that you would actually make it happen, considering that it is a big commitment for the long haul?

JST: It was never a decision. It was always meant to be just a Saturday fun run with the boys and the girls. It all started from there – with no expectations and no goals.

HL: What were the two most encouraging moments for you thus far?

JST: Firstly, when Hock Bee said to me one day, "I stopped running for 20 years, but when I found Runninghour, I started running again". Another moment I always remember was when the ICRs started a Runninghour group chat on their phones independently! They like to emulate the adults, and the way they wanted to create a sense of identity and belonging on their own really left an impression on me.



HL: What was the biggest challenge that you and Jan faced as you set up this club together?

JST: The biggest challenge was to keep up with the regular Saturday training amidst our busy schedules.

HL: What gives you the strength to keep on going with it?

JST: We draw strength from each other. There is a lot of positive energy in the club, and no strings attached to any volunteers. What I believe brings people back is the experience of the club. We never asked volunteers to commit to a certain number of hours – and yet it is always the experience that brings them back. Someone once told me, "Whenever I come to your running session, I see happy faces!"



HL: That statement really sums it up and I would totally agree! What are your hopes for the future of Runninghour?

JST: I really hope that Runninghour can be a household name, so that any person with special needs who wants to participate in sports will know who to approach. I also hope that the concept will take on in other parts of the world, so that people in other countries can benefit from this as well.

HL: Lastly, what is your favourite thing to do?

JST: Going for a solo run in a park!

Tried the Tri!

By Wan Wai Yee

"Life is strange: when you want something badly enough, and try your utmost to achieve that goal whether you fail or succeed, the seemingly huge barriers become stepping-stones."



Wai Yee and David tandem-cycling during their triathlon.

I felt Christmas had arrived early as I crossed the finishing line of my first Olympic-distance triathlon with David, my guide and swim coach. It had been an arduous but fulfilling journey – the kind that involves countless hours of training and self-discovery. It is a journey that requires making changes in your life to fit your goals but promises a rewarding ride into the next chapter of your life.

My first dip into the waters of tri training began last year when Runninghour was given slots for the Cold Storage triathlon. I decided to take up the sprint category and all of us taking part had just 5 weeks to train for it.

I remember the first time our trainer, John, instructed us to attempt all 3 disciplines, on a very bright and sunny Saturday morning. We had to do this so we would know how it felt in a triathlon, though it would not be the full sprint distance. Together with our guides, we swam, cycled and ran throughout the morning at Yio Chu Kang Swimming Complex and Stadium. Meanwhile, the other Runninghour members were enjoying running, cycling and playing games at a carnival organised by the Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC). Little did I understand then, what I had gotten myself into.

My swimming was slow, but it went alright. We had a good session of cycling, though I felt I lacked power in my legs. Immediately after biking, I started running. NOTHING felt right. With legs as heavy as lead; a wet swimming costume underneath my tee; the hot and humid midday sun, coupled with a badly bruised heart after the boyfriend left, the 5K run felt like forever. I wanted to give up.

Midway through, my guide, Emily, and I grabbed a drink. Oh!!! What a godsend that drink was! I then had a change of guides, and Aniket guided and motivated me through the rest of that memorable hurdle.

Flushed with the feeling of completion, I happily told my friend Ivni that it would be good to swim the next morning at 8am.

7am rolled by the next day and the soreness and tiredness that invaded my body was nothing like I had ever felt before. So much for being gung-ho the previous day!

After my first tri, I swore to myself that I would never do another triathlon! The countless hours of running-cycling-swimming; wet, sandy socks and shoes from beach training; the many small details that you have to take care of because the multi-sport affair gives you a headache till the next century... And how about extra laundry from your two sessions of workouts a day? Simply 'mafam' (meaning 'troublesome' in Chinese). Oops!!! Didn't mean to air my dirty laundry in public.

But curiosity does kill the cat. I wondered, "Did I really do it? Could I have been faster?"

So, nearing the next training for the sprint event, I jumped. Never mind the afore-mentioned obstacles. It had to be done. But as soon as that decision was made, another set of challenges presented itself.

Firstly, how was my training going to take place? And...who was going to help me? Most of the training I went through before was with separate guides for each discipline. Now I had to find ways to do most of that training on my own.

Life is strange: when you want something badly enough, and try your utmost to achieve that goal whether you fail or succeed, the seemingly huge barriers become stepping-stones. The uncomfortable becomes comfortable. You begin to work your goals around your lifestyle daily, to better suit what you want to achieve.

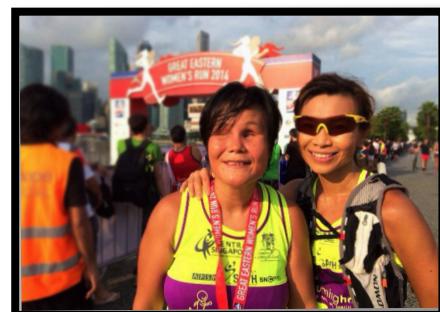


Wai Yee and Agnes at North East Passion Run

I found a mobility teacher from the blind association to teach me to get to and into the pool, lockers and changing area. That way, I could go for a swim on my own terms and arrangements. I had to do A LOT of the cycling and running on the treadmill and bike at home. A big thanks to Mike for helping me get a spin bike! Similarly, I practised transitioning from cycling to running - a crucial part of a triathlon – in the same way. With most of my training executed in that fashion, coupled with the regular Saturday runs, I was also able to meet Hai Yen, my guide for the second triathlon, to train weekly or fortnightly.

The process of working towards a triathlon has given me many lessons for life. I learnt to manage my time more efficiently, and organise myself more sensibly. (Well, I wasn't called the "Queen of Procrastination" for nothing!) There were times when only half of the items on my to-do list got crossed out, and training fell by the wayside because chores that were supposed to have been done yesterday, got pushed to an already overflowing today.

I remember once when I had guests coming to stay for the weekend, but by Thursday, I still had not completed my chores! The picture of an unhappy Wai Yee slogging away, missing my training because of the lack of time, was a sight you would not want to behold.



Wai Yee and Hai Yen at the Great Eastern Women's Run.



Wai Yee with Hai Yen at the triathlon



Wai Yee with Richard, Royce and Agnes at the Cold Storage Triathlon 2013

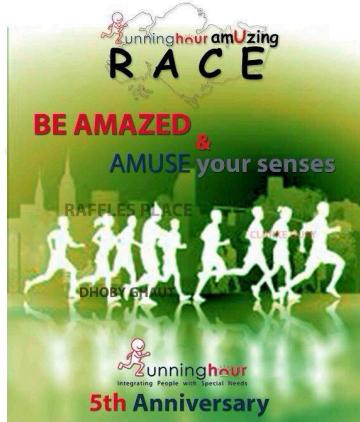
A very important part of doing a tri is the numerous guides and supporters that I wish to mention here but cannot, because of the lack of space. I will never forget the many times and ways in which friends and well-wishers have helped me and been with me along my journey.

Let me share one memorable moment that will always be imprinted in my memory. On the day of my second triathlon, Agnes, my running guide in my first tri, came to run beside me and encouraged me throughout the last leg of the race, though she didn't have to. Together with my guide Hai Yen, the three of us finished to the applause of friends like Ivni, Susan, Peck Lin and Royce. What a glorious moment that was!

Then there was Royce, one of my swim guides for the first tri. I was on the bike with David, and each time we finished a lap and started a new one, we would find Royce there cheering us on. "How on earth did she do that??!!!" I wondered.

This past year has been a life-changing, scary, fulfilling and bittersweet one. I never would have thought that a triathlon would be within my grasp some day. And it all started when, on one wet, rainy Saturday morning in June 2012, six of us joined Runninghour to do our first lap around the stadium.

For those of you who have never swum, cycled, run, or done all 3 before, just remember: **the first lap is what it takes to start your journey to wherever you want to go**. There will always be people along your pathway to help and encourage you. And you will never walk alone.



Journalising the Amuzing Race

By Tan Siew Ling

On the 12th of April 2014, Runninghour organised a team bonding race game for our members to discover and learn about iconic places around the city. In various groups, they worked together to accomplish tasks involving their sense of sight, touch and taste.

Here is Siew Ling's personal feel of the Amuzing Race.

I met Ain at Paya Lebar Station and we took the train to the gathering point. While Wai Yee was setting up her amplifier, I realised there were many little caterpillars crawling around us. Eeks!! Luckily, Mei Ching came and shoo-ed them all away!

There was a briefing for the leaders of the different groups. The organiser, Paola, asked us to 'go over there' but we were confused because we could not see where 'there' was. Haha... After a few rounds of asking, she finally gave up and came to bring us to the spot.

Everyone got into our individual groups and stood in a row. Paola noticed the dark gloomy clouds and jokingly suggested an anti-rain dance to chase away the rain. We had to pretend we were holding the sky with our palms and then push our palms upwards. We did as she instructed.

The ironic thing was – the very next instant, it started to pour! =P

All of us were divided into groups to visit one of three zones – labelled pink, yellow and purple. My group was deliciously named 'Roti Prata'. The teams Roti Prata, Laksa, Mee Rebus, Nasi Lemak and Bat Kut Teh headed to Raffles Place Station (the pink zone). Each team was given a survival pack, which contained food and drinks. We were also given \$20 as emergency money.

First, we had to get to Raffles Place. After some discussion with Farah, we decided to take the train to Marina Bay station. However, when we arrived there, Kheng Hong tried to throw us off by saying that we have gotten off the wrong stop.

Then, we started joking about Uncle Jackie from the Mee Rebus team. We called him "Mee Rebus boy". So I asked them, "Oh you mean like in the 60s and 70s, when you say "Mee Rebus boy!" and lower down a basket with the money inside - they will send up the basket to you with the Mee Rebus inside?"

Auntie Irene was surprised that I could still remember such things about the past. Erm... Actually I wasn't born then, but stories do get passed down and I do have an amazing memory. Haha... ☺

Stop 1: Taste test

We were given 3 pieces of flavoured chocolate, and had to correctly identify the flavours. Since Mike said they were all fruit flavours, I started listing all the fruit I could think of. But the three correct answers were: orange, strawberry and durian!

Stop 2: Fat Bird Structure at UOB Plaza

Here we did a "jump shot" of us trying to touch the tail of this fat bird structure, which was actually beyond everybody's reach!



Stop 3: Maybank Tower

Jarran climbed onto the bullock cart outside the tower and we took a group photo around it. Next, we took a group photo with the three merchants sculpture, pretending that we were having a meeting with them. We put on our serious faces and looked like we were deep in discussion. I counted the number of spokes on the bullock cart and we continued our journey.

Stop 4: Cavenagh Bridge

Our task here was to count the total number of sets of rings on both sides of the bridge. When we told Mike the answer, he tried to throw us off by doubting our answer. Next, we counted how many lunges we could do from one end of the bridge to the other end.

We are the serious sort! When we reached the other side, Mike remarked that we were exceptional, as we did real lunges, where we bent very low.

To make things difficult for us, Kheng Hong asked us to do it again to let him see it! Auntie Irene demonstrated it again to prove it to him. Bonus points!! A group photo of us doing star jumps to end off this task.

Stop 6: Off to Satay Club

We ran past the Merlion and both Jarran and I pretended to be Merlions. Auntie Irene took a photo of us "Merlioning" with the Merlion in the centre. There was a passing-out parade for an army event somewhere and the path was very congested!

Finally, we came to the end of our race. What did we want to do for the last 20m of the journey? I suggested we change the lyrics of "The Satay Man" song to "The Prata Man", with actions!

We sang like marching army boys, with gusto and prata flips as we kneaded our way to the finishing line:

"Do you know the Prata Man (Patting the dough)
The Prata Man (Patting the dough)
The Prata Man (Patting the dough)
Do you know the Prata Man (Patting the dough)
Who walks down Satay Club. (Flips over the dough)"

Roti Prata was the first team to reach the destination! We went to the top of Marina Barrage and were presented with medals, towels, and T-shirts!!!

While waiting for the other teams to arrive, I went to say "Hello" to Melba, Dennis' four-legged friend from Australia! Kelvin's charm was so irresistible and Melba immediately warmed up to him! Steady then came walking towards us, speaking to Melba in Mandarin. "Eh, I tell you ah. That day, I was walking up the stairs, your friend ah, barked at me you know!" Melba just frowned at him. Ah... Poor thing la... Think Melba is quite ok with me. She kept licking my palm! =)

My team received Swensen's vouchers for being the first to arrive! We all gathered and did a mass dance. The moves were: "Knee", "Backstroke", "Star" and "Pointer". Lastly, the most important instruction was given. "Eat!" I had extremely spicy Bee Hoon (with water to wash it down), sandwiches and Siew Mais.

Thanks to everyone who made all this possible. Thanks to my team Roti Prata, my guide, Auntie Irene, the demon trainer. Wuhahahahaha... Happy 5th Anniversary to Runninghour!

Stop 5: Sir Stamford Raffles

To pass the test for this station, I had to write the year 1819 in Chinese script, which was like no sweat for me. We took a group photo of us pretending to be Sir Stamford Raffles - folding our arms, putting our right foot forward. We were thinking to ourselves - CONTROL!! Cannot smile ok!!



A Different Kind of Bonding – My Experience with Special Runners

By Hannah Ling

How do you bond with a new friend? Do you chat about your jobs, your interests or your family? Perhaps what you both have in common?

When you first meet a special runner – someone who lives with intellectual challenges – your conversation topic may not start in any of those places. All you need to do is run alongside them, and let the relationship take its course.

But I assure you these relationships are far from the ones you're used to – nor are they boring! Allow me to share my fair share of surprises...

Surprised by STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS



I have come across special runners who are very upfront about their emotions. They say it as they think it.

"I'm afraid, I need to hold on to you."

"Why haven't you been coming?"

"I miss you so much."

"You've grown fatter." (Thank you very much...)

Others are fixated on specific areas of interest, not realising they are asking personal questions – then asking them repetitively, whether it be about birthdays, addresses, which buses I take home, or which MRT line I like most.

Call me weird, but I find that innocent honesty refreshing! Occasions when honesty becomes socially inappropriate can be turned into teaching moments, where we guide them away from those fixations to other interesting topics for dialogue.

Of course, there are souls who are more shy and tend to avoid eye contact, answer my questions with short replies and walk away in the middle of our conversation, leaving me in mad pursuit - "Hey, don't walk away! I haven't finished yet!"

They can be straightforward even with one another, poking fun and teasing without mercy, in a way only the best of friends would act. ☺

Surprised by SINCERITY



I have often been touched by my special friends' concern for others.

Once, we went out for breakfast after running and a few of them gathered around Siew Ling like an entourage guiding their 'princess' to the destination. That kind of overwhelming helpfulness puts a smile on anyone's face.

Another time, a precious one came to me, excited like a little child, and showed me the medal he attained after a 10km run. "Hannah jiejie, my friend cannot run today but he really wanted this medal so I ran for him. I am so happy I can give it to him."

When was the last time a friend truly knew what you desired and worked to help you achieve it?



Surprised by PERSISTENCE

I was paired with a special runner during my first time at Runninghour for vertical training and sprinting. I was tasked with encouraging her to persevere as we ran up – and up – the twenty flights of stairs. When we finally made it, she muttered two words of gratitude and looked at me with eyes so full of pride and joy that it made me realise what a little encouragement can do in the department of persistence. Later, she spurred me on with her supersonic sprinting ability when I lagged behind her.

Sometimes you have to help them keep pace so they don't expend most of their energy too quickly and find themselves breathless down the track.

Here's another example of quiet persistence I love. Check out the photos below. I have never ever heard J W say a single word, but I know he enjoys running! I was glad to capture the joy on his face as he ran steadily with his friend toward the finish line.



Surprised by MAD SKILLS

J W is more than a seasoned runner. I was amazed when a PowerPoint presentation entirely prepared by him was shared with us during our volunteer forum last year. Don't be deceived by their quiet exterior!

It helps to think of ourselves as pirates hunting for the treasure hidden within these wonderful friends. There is always something they excel at.

We went to Pulau Ubin for a sensory trail last year and my special friend could easily identify most of the plants and name what the herbs can do! Diligent A-star horticulture student, Wei Keong!

If I had to share the most important lesson I've learnt 'on the job', it's definitely that a good running buddy needs to be firm yet sensitive, possessing the ability to guide, yet having the humility to be taught reciprocally.

I've learnt so much from these friends.

Come join us for a run to experience a few surprises for yourself!





October 25, 2014
Bishan Stadium
7.45 am to 10.00 am



LAUNCH OF
RUNNINGHOUR
CO-OPERATIVE





Hi everyone,
Happy Christmas!
Wish all Runninghour
friends happiness forever!!

From:
Wei Keong, Jia Ming and
Jarran

A Merry Christmas
and a Happy New
Year to you Ken Hua!

From: Wai Yee



Hi everyone,

Selamat Hari Natal!
I'm getting married
next year. Hehe...

From:
Badrul Hisham



Dear Badrul,

Happy holidays to
you and a happy new
year!

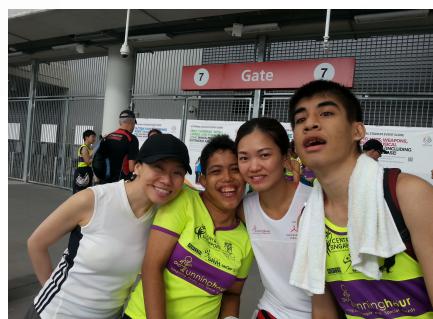
From: Wai Yee



Dear Ms Jan and Mr John,

Thank you for organising
Runninghour. I have fun
everytime I come!
Happy holidays!

From: Sharifah



Hey Liling,
It's nice to know you
as a friend. A Merry
Christmas and a
Happy New Year to
you!

From: Wai Yee

Dear Meng Hong,

Thank you for running
with me.

You gave me happiness
in the Green Corridor
Run.

From: Wei Keong





Runninghour represents the one hour when all runners in Singapore come together for one single purpose: to run so others can.

BE PART OF OUR HISTORY
RUN SO OTHERS CAN
22 MARCH 2015 | 7AM
REGISTER NOW

In that one hour on 22nd March 2015, you will run alongside more than 200 visually, intellectually and physically-challenged runners.

The Blind Run is an inaugural and unique event where participants will run in pairs, for up to 1km, to experience what running will be like for someone with a visual impairment. You will take turns to run blindfolded for 500m each, while your partner guides you with a connecting band.

Join the race and help Runninghour break the Singapore record for the "Largest Blindfolded Mass Run"! Be part of something meaningful today.

Run So Others Can.



So you have sampled our first publication, read its contents, seen the pictures. This is but just a sample of what we will be publishing in the future.

Of course, we will make every effort to improve our output so that you can enjoy a more pleasant experience when reading subsequent issues of "Get Set". In the meantime, we hope to work on the forthcoming inaugural Runninghour magazine due to come to print sometime next year.

As you crossover to the new year, stay physically and socially healthy!

That's all, folks!



Jaffar