

**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE

Tutorial Group No.: (redacted)

Matriculation Number: (redacted)

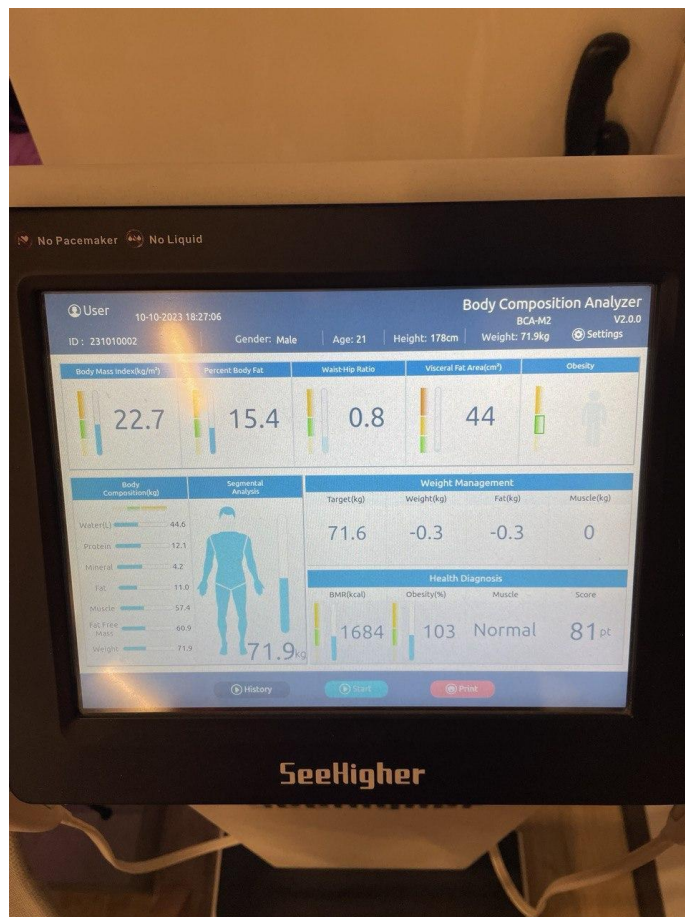
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Name of Current Tutor (Week 13): (redacted)

Number of words: 1197

Introduction

After disrupting my National Service obligations, I struggled with mental challenges as I adjusted back to university life. As a person who used to face depressive-like symptoms during my service, I was eager to find ways to dig out of that hole to improve my mental and physical state. Because of this, I eventually aspired to improve my overall physique, particularly in achieving enhanced running stamina to improve my overall well-being. Despite having a consistent running schedule during my NS days, I found it tough to improve my running stamina, mainly because my body composition needed improvements.



(Figure 1 - Body composition as of 10/10/2023)

One year before I matriculated, I weighed about 72 kg with a height of 178 cm. Before enlisting, I weighed about 62-63 kg, and the primary reason for my weight gain was due to me having an increased body fat percentage. The consistent splurging of high-calorie and nutrient-deficit meals and snacks has heavily contributed to my rapid fat gain.



(Figure 2 - Ultimate Sets from Kranji Camp III) (source: (Jing Ting, 2019))

One notable meal that contributed to my weight gain is the 'Ultimate Set' I had been frequently consuming from the canteen during my NS days. It typically consists of fried chicken, pasta and fries, where all of which are classified as processed food. Additionally, it is constantly splattered with huge amounts of oil, making it even more processed. Hence, the type of calories I was consuming was not sufficient as it lacks the recommended amounts of both macronutrients and micronutrients (Tay, 2021). A shortage in both types of nutrients will eventually lead to reduced amounts of Adenosine triphosphate (ATP), resulting in lower levels of energy (Tay, 2021). According to a study of over 120,000 healthy individuals, weight gain was strongly associated with the ingredients I was consuming - French fries and processed meats (Dariush Mozaffarian, 2011).

My Plan

To speed up the process of achieving my goals of attaining an athletic physique, I came up with a two-pronged approach - enhancing my running stamina with structured training regimens and improving my diet by limiting my fast-food consumption to a maximum of twice a week.

Mondays	8-10km easy-moderate intensity
Tuesdays	8-10km moderate-high intensity
Wednesdays	10 km easy-moderate intensity
Thursdays	Hill Running CCA - intervals and time trials (total \approx 3-5 km)
Fridays	Rest or 5 km recovery run
Saturdays	10-15 km long run (easy-moderate intensity)
Sundays	10-15 km long run (easy-moderate intensity)

★ Might be subject to changes from day to day

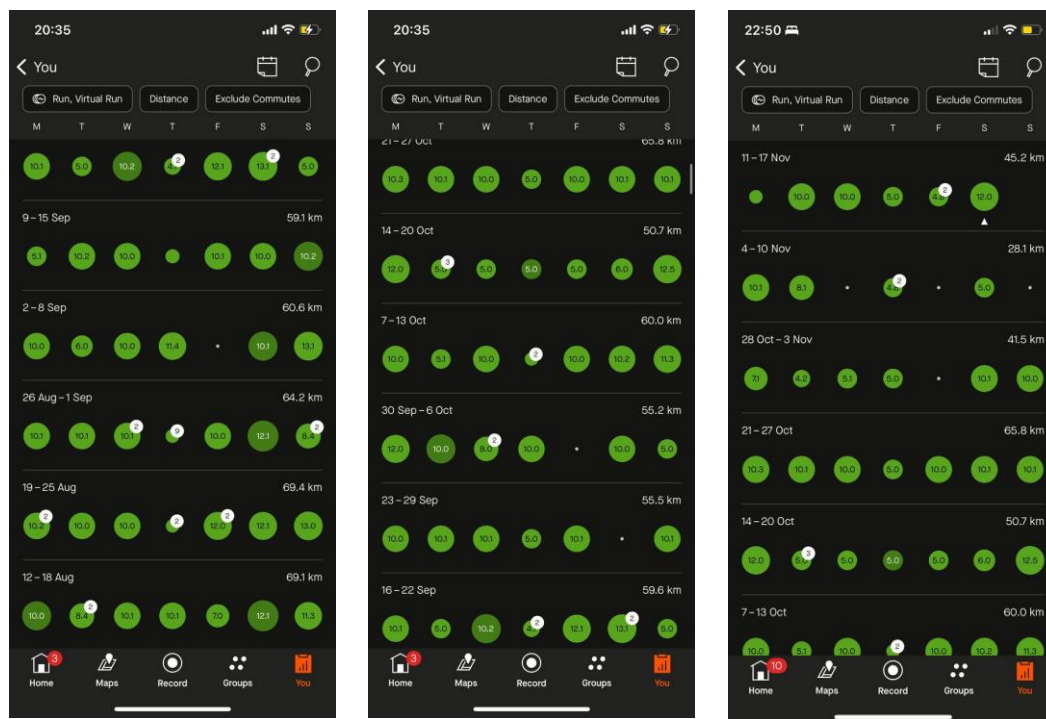
(Figure 3 - Written Proposed Running Plan)

For running, I came up with a plan that aligns with the 80/20 training principle, where about 80% of training is done at low-intensity, and the remaining 20% is done at high-intensity (James Witts, 2023). Research has proven that this approach improves running endurance for most of its participants and top-tier elite athletes like Eliud Kipchoge typically stick to this plan (James Witts, 2023).

My plan consists of easy to moderate running from Monday to Wednesdays, followed by speed work and interval training during my CCAs on Thursday, Friday for a rest day or recovery 5km run and the weekends for slow long runs between 10-15km. This brings to an estimated total mileage of around 50-70km per week.

Dietary wise, I came up with a plan of limiting my consumption of fried and processed food to a maximum of 2 times per week. The reduced consumption of fast food, which are typically high in saturated and trans fats, is essential for lowering the risk of sickness and diseases, such as high blood pressure (Jones, 2023).

My Running Progress



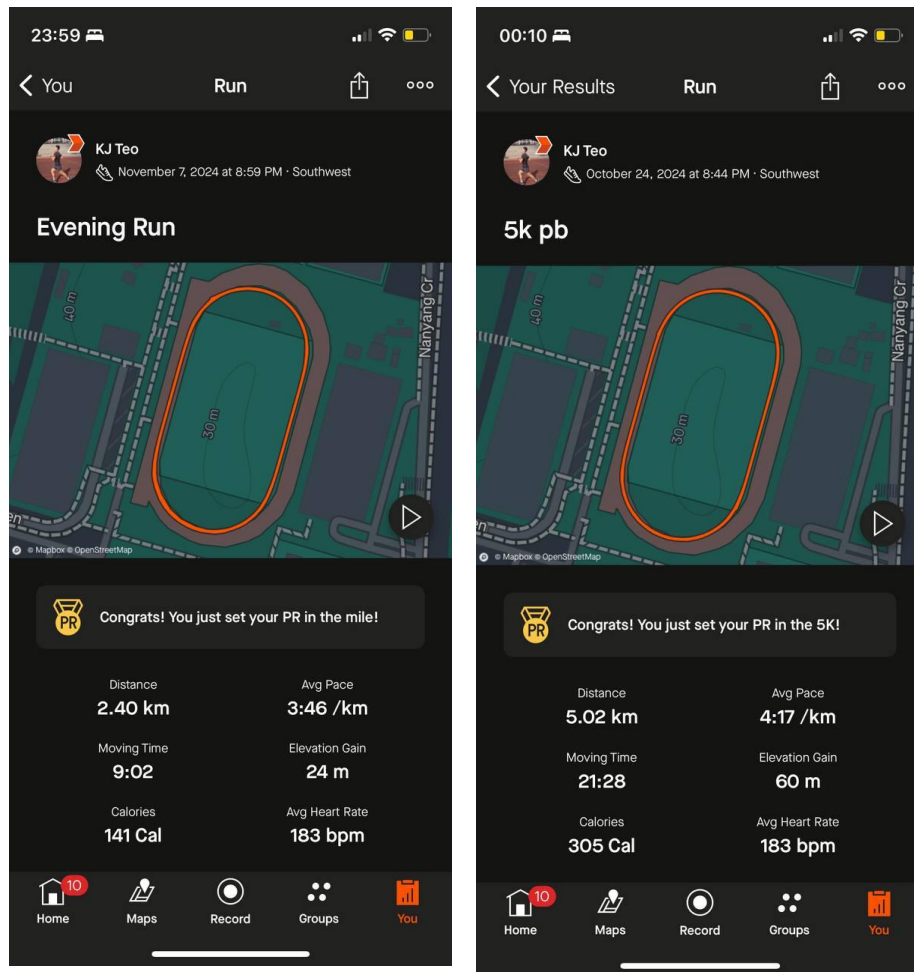
(Figure 5 - Strava Running Process)

To digitally log my workouts, I use Strava, a popular fitness app that allows me to upload exercise activities and share with others. I managed to clock a weekly mileage between 50-70 km from weeks 1-10, however, the mileage decreased from weeks 11-12, as I had numerous assignment and project deadlines to catch up.



(Figure 6 – Written Running Progress (with legends))

Additionally, I have also tracked my workouts using a written running progress report, which also includes the type of running intensity levels. The constant weekly intervals and time trials during my hall's running CCA have also contributed significantly to my overall progress, where I have improved my base pace by about 1 km/h.



(Figure 7 - 2.4 km and 5 km Time Trial Personal Bests Activities)

During my running CCA, I did not expect myself to break several personal bests, most notably a 2.4 km time of 9 minutes and 6 seconds and a 5 km time of 21 minutes and 25 seconds. The sudden surprise of breaking personal bests also further provided me immense intrinsic motivation to carry on running further (Ho, 2021). Additionally, I am eternally grateful that joining the CCA has fostered healthy interpersonal connections with people who share the same interests in running, which improved my overall well-being (Ho, 2021).



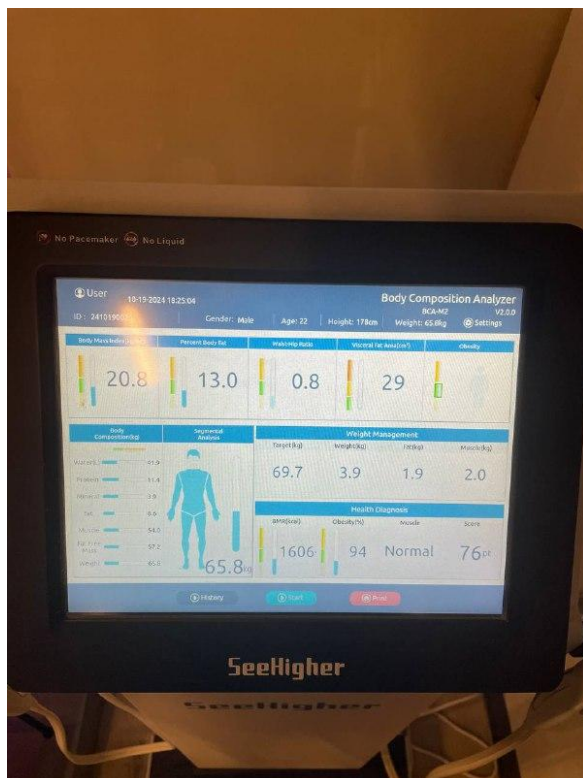
(Figure 8 - My Hall's Track CCA Photo (furthest on right))

My Dietary Progress:

Fast Food Consumption Record:								Total	Met Goal (≤ 2 days/week)
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun			
Week 1		✓		✓			2 days	✓	
Week 2		✓				✓	2 days	✓	
Week 3			✓	✓			2 days	✓	
Week 4	✓	✓	✓	✓			4 days	✗	
Week 5	✓	✓					2 days	✓	
Week 6		✓					1 day	✓	
Week 7		✓					1 day	✓	
Recess Week			✓			✓	2 days	✓	
Week 8	✓						1 day	✓	
Week 9		✓					1 day	✓	
Week 10	✓						1 day	✓	
Week 11		✓	✓	✓			3 days	✗	
Week 12		✓		✓			2 days	✓	
Week 13				✓	✓		2 days	✓	

(Figure 9 - My dietary progress)

In terms of monitoring my diet, I successfully limited my fast-food consumption to a maximum of 2 days for most weeks. Additionally, I have reduced my overall amount of food consumption in my meals for both healthy and non-healthy meals. However, in weeks 4 and 11, I faced setbacks, where I could not control the urge to consume fast food, as I was primarily driven by the external motivation of deals and attractive promotions from fast food branches (Ho, 2021). From Fridays to Sundays, I mostly eat home cooked food that is generally full of both macronutrients and micronutrients, both of which aim to support body functions and health (Tay, 2021). Approaching the middle between the first and second term, I managed to improve my habits to consume an average of once a week on most weeks. Therefore, I believe that these changes have made a positive impact on my body composition, where I successfully managed to lose about 7kg and reduced my body fat percentage by about 2-3%.



(Figure 10 - Body Composition as of 19/10/2024)

Challenges and Reflections

One major challenge included properly safeguarding my mental health and maintaining a positive mood. On rest days, I felt gloomy and unproductive, as my brain was too used to the endorphins gained after completing my runs. Additionally, I experienced anxiety attacks during tests and presentations, where I fumbled over my words and became easily distracted during tests. To further improve my mental state, I should have strongly considered incorporating meditation and box breathing techniques on a regular basis, which was typically practiced in the beginning of classes. These techniques are essentially crucial to managing the stresses and the demands of my course, Computer Science, as it is known for its high levels of competitiveness (Stinson, 2024).

As a person who is diagnosed with ADHD, I frequently struggle with time-blindness, making it difficult for me to schedule my time. I often overprioritized running at the expense of dealing with my academic responsibilities. The high frequency in running led me to have no rest days in many weeks, where I was at an elevated risk of getting overuse injuries on my legs (Tay, 2021). Therefore, I should have used those days to catch up with my academic pursuits, where I can also simultaneously hasten the regeneration of muscle tissue after exercising (Nunez, 2019).

Conclusion

Throughout this journey, it has taught me that it is not impossible to balance a rigorous exercise routine, while simultaneously dealing with high-stress academic responsibilities. Adhering to principles like the 80/20 training rule and making healthier dietary choices has allowed me to make significant progress towards my goals. I have also learned that small changes, such as reducing fast food consumption, can have an incredible impact on my physical performance and overall well-being.

Additionally, taking a step outside my comfort zone to join a running CCA not only improved my stamina but also fostered meaningful social connections. These experiences have strongly motivated me to maintain my habits of running and eating healthier as I 'graduate' from this semester. Therefore, I strive to maintain this healthy habit from now on, with more fun and interesting challenges yet to come.

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