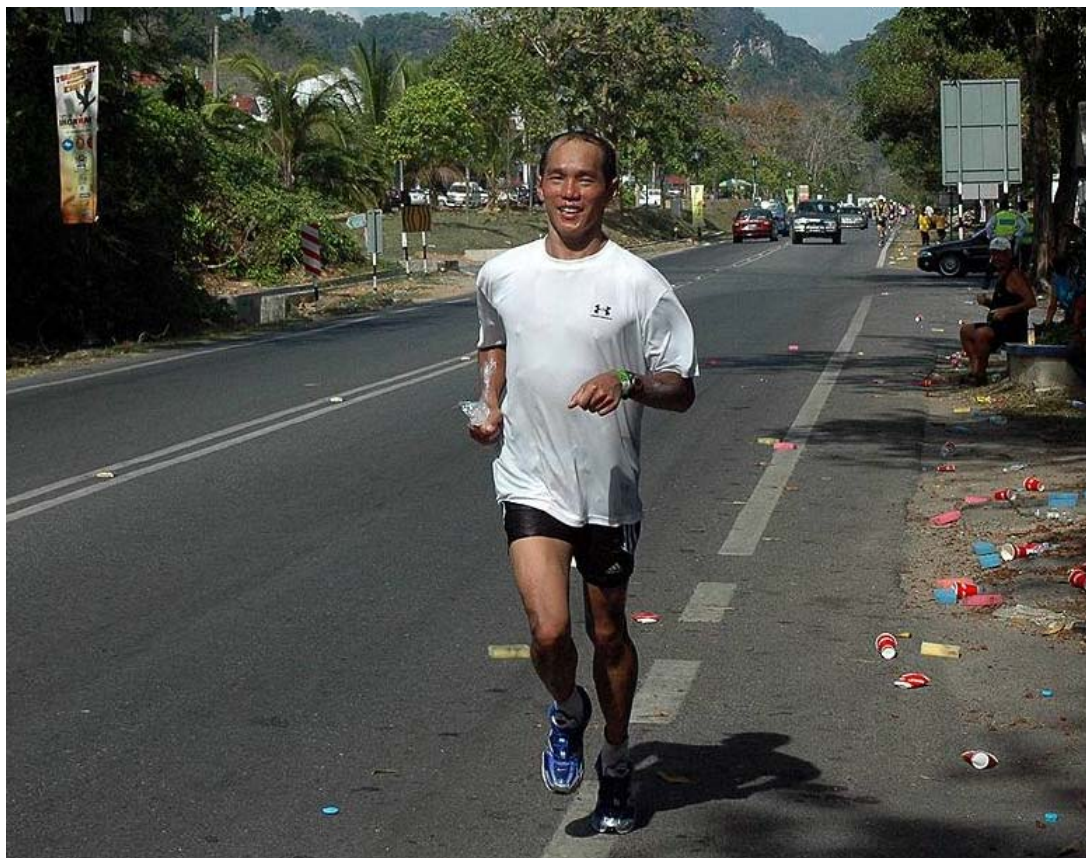


**10 Questions with Bookin' It for Open Books Team Coach and Resident IronMan, Kean Chew with Abigail Szymonik, AB Member and Editor Extraordinaire**



**Coach Chew racing Ironman Langkawi in Malaysia in the 104 degree heat!**

**1. When did you first start racing?**

My friends invited me to visit them in West Lafayette, IN, and to join them in the Indianapolis half-marathon in 2002. At that time I had only one or two 5Ks under my belt. Going into the race I did not know if I could finish the half-marathon. I had no idea how to train or what to do during the race. Somehow, I managed to survive but was quite sore for a few days after the event.

**2. In how many races have you participated?**

Most of my race experience is with triathlons. My preference is to race Ironman triathlon distance (Ironman triathlon a.k.a. M-Dot races are made up of 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, and 26.2-mile run). Those M-Dot races cost a small fortune considering the amount of food consumed during training, number of massages to keep my body healthy, registration fees, travel costs, and swim-bike-run gear! In all, I have completed 7 Ironman triathlons. [Editor's note: Um....wow.]

**3. Of all the races, which was your favorite? Of which race are you the most proud? Which was the most difficult?**

Ironman Florida was my favorite race, so much so that I did that race 3 consecutive years. I like swimming in the ocean (or gulf in this case), and the bike and run courses suit me well. I saw and met up with a lot of friends each time, and that to me, at the end of the day, is what it is all about...a celebration of fitness with friends and family, and a great way to end the season each year.

I am proud of completing 4 Ironman races in 14 months. I am proud of running a marathon a week after my first Ironman triathlon. I am proud to train through a Chicago winter for an Ironman race in the tropics (i.e., Langkawi, Malaysia)...though it was not pretty. When I first ventured into marathon and Ironman triathlon distances, doing more than one a year is considered hard core by many especially for weekend warriors like me. I was quite curious what the actual boundaries were. In other words, I am proud to be able to test my limits and push the boundaries.

The most difficult race - mentally and physically -- was Ironman Wisconsin 2005. I broke my ankle in a freak accident during training, did not know it, and continued to train on it for a week. I got it looked at when the pain got to be unbearable, and was told by my podiatrist that I had to refrain from putting weight on it for at least one month. For the rest

of the season, my ankle remained compromised. Training was, at best, subpar. One week prior to the race, I sprained that same darn ankle. It swelled up to the size of a grapefruit, and many a friend suggested that I “DNS” [race lingo for Do Not Start]. Considering how much I had paid for the race, I wanted to see how far I could go. Till this day, I am not the only one who is surprised that I actually finished the race. Aside note...on race day, it was quite hot, and many participants dropped out. I was in my own world of pain and did not realize the carnage that was going on...thankfully, or I might have “DNF” [race lingo for Did Not Finish – aren’t we learning so much??] in the name of self-pity.

#### **4. Aside from your Iron Man abilities, of what life accomplishment are you the most proud?**

I am most proud that I get along well with (most of) my family. I am also proud that I have made many life-long friends, and continue to do so.

#### **5. Do you run with an iPod/MP3 player? If so, what kind of music is on the playlist?**

I do not run with an iPod/MP3 player lest that I start to sing and dance instead of running. [I was sort of hoping he broke down to JT in the middle of the sidewalk, just to bring him down a little from Ironman superhuman status. Sadly, no.]

I like to run “naked” and use my internal rhythm to guide me. Besides, sometimes I am amused by the ongoing debate between my brain and body...wondering which one will convince me to go further and longer, and which one will convince me to throw in the towel. The battle wages on each time I don my goggles, hop on the bike, or lace up my running shoes.

Having said that, I have quite a varied playlist on my iPhone including The Killers (my fave!), The Decemberists, The Samples, Spoon, techno trance, classical music, and some foreign stuff [Hey, Renaissance Man!].

#### **6. What keeps you motivated when running long distances?**

A few things...having a nice “bod” is one of them...yes, I know this is quite shallow. Knowing that I get to eat as much chocolate chip ice cream as I want is another motivator. The fear of not being able to cross the finish line is another great motivator.

#### **7. Do you have any pre-race superstitions? Lucky charms? Mantras? Any special pre-race meals?**

Not really. To have my game face I try to have about 9-hours of good quality sleep two to three nights before the race. [Guess that means I have to lay off the bottle of wine a night routine that week.]

#### **8. What’s your best advice to someone who has never raced before?**

I have a few...Have fun preparing for the race. Trust yourself and your own abilities. And if you break a bone, know that there will be other races. Know what is within your control (e.g., nutrition, pace, and rest) and try not to fret over things that are outside your control (e.g., weather and race distance).

Half-marathon is a very doable distance. Unlike 5K or 10K, you do not have to and should not go anaerobic the whole race. Unlike the marathon distance, you should not have to worry about the “wall.”

#### **9. Anything you would like to share with us about yourself? What do you do when you are not racing around the world and basking in your overall awesomeness?**

I am quite a private person, and I can’t believe I have spilled so much about myself. [I have that effect on people.] My friends think I work for the CIA, and nicknamed me “International Man of Mystery.”

When I am not racing, I like to travel, hang out with friends and family, listen to music, read, and catch a flick or two.

#### **10. And because we are Open Books, we have to know, what is your favorite book and why?**

That’s a tough question to answer...the first book that comes to mind is “Video Night in Kathmandu” by Pico Iyer. With his keen insights and observations from his travels, the author opened my eyes to how much smaller the world is. Thanks to Iyer, I like to think that I now travel a little more observantly.

Another book that I highly recommend -- for an extra dose of motivation -- is “Gold in the Water” by P.H. Mullen. It’s about a group of swimmers from the Santa Clara Swim Club preparing for the 2000 Olympic trials. It is an amazingly well-written book that still sends shivers down my spine each time I read it again.

[Thanks to Kean for his time in answering Team Bookin’ It’s burning questions! I think we can all agree he’s the right man for the job!

Want to know more? Ask Coach Chew by logging on to our Team Bookin’ It blog (link) and posting your questions.]