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TEAM CHALLENGE 36

MEICOM alumni are extraordinary men and women: we embrace challenges, both intellectual and physical. Having commanded the Programme, a challenge in itself and one of the utmost difficulty in balancing the competing demands of studies with family and job, many of us have set ourselves new goals. Taking part in sports such as cycling, diving and marathon races has become a new challenge for some of our desk-bound members, with Professor Paul Cheung joining us enthusiastically.

Individually, we participate in many running and hiking races year after year. In 2006, however, a 39-member marathon team was assembled for the Hong Kong Marathon. This initiative inspired the rest of the University community to join us, and the HKU team competing in the 2006 grew in size to number 1,102. In the summer of 2006, five of us from different cohorts went one step further: we formed a “HKU MEICOM” team to compete in a very challenging and marathon races has become an adventure-based race promoting team spirit and problem solving ability. Participating teams have to complete such tasks as promoting team spirit and problem solving ability. Individually, we take part in a number of challenges, both intellectual and physical. Participating teams have to complete such tasks as

We came together in March and started training in April. Things were somehow not as smooth as expected. It was difficult to arrange full team training because one member had just moved to a new job, another one was on frequent business trips, and the rest were engaged in some other activities. One member even had a surgical operation four weeks before the start of the race. However, we managed perfectly. But somehow we overcame all these hurdles, and a number of MEICOM alumni also volunteered to be our supporters. Everything was ready at last.

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It was cool and wet on the day of the race, yet not too bad for hiking. We started at 8:30am as the last one among the 63 teams. 11 hours later, we were the 27th when we met up with our lovely support team. After a delicious dinner and in a better shape, we continued our journey to Tai Mo Shan. The higher we climbed, the thicker the mist became. We could see nothing and no one else except ourselves. At the hilltop, we were greeted by a downpour of rain and had to force our way through the fierce gale. The hour we spent there could possibly be the most difficult time in our days of hiking. Finally we managed 20th place when we reached the checkpoint at the foothills. We were delighted because the wind had stopped, the sky had cleared, and there were no more steep slopes to be climbed. An hour later, we overtook another team before reaching the next checkpoint. When we were doing orienteering, mother nature showed us her power again. Thunderstorm was non-stop, and the mountain torrent was ankle deep. The race was then terminated due to a black rainstorm warning, one that broke the Hong Kong record of the last 14 years. We would be lying if we told you we had no regret.

At that point, we were ranked the 19th and were only 10km away from the finish point. Should the race not have been terminated, we would definitely be able to finish it in 24 hours. But the experience of climbing down the Tai Mo Shan rocky trail in zero visibility and amidst strong winds, doing orienteering at midnight in a forest under thunderstorm, absailing down a dam, pushing a bike uphill for 3km, etc. are all unforgettable. Our joy had also come from the sense of being supported, being members of a close-knit alumni community, and being able to share. This is what we want to share with you, a story of “Successful Failure” in a race emphasizing “team” and “challenge”.

A member said after the race: “It is great to be able to demonstrate how very good team-work kept us together and helping one another, in particular during the Tai Mo Shan rocky trail under extremely bad weather conditions. All of us were confident right from the start that we could complete this tough race! Our thanks to the wonderful support team. In return, I will definitely volunteer to support any one joining this race in 2007.”

If you are interested in taking part in the 2007 race, please emailing us at sig_sports@meicom.hku.hk as we will have to start training early in the year.

by Vins Fong (2004 Graduate)