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Borneo Ultra Trails

Newsletter



June 2017

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Upcoming Events & News

Registrations for TMBT Ultra-Trail® Marathon closing soon



Normal entries for the 7th edition of The Most Beautiful Thing (TMBT) will close on 16th July, so hurry and enter if you want to be part of the 2017 version of Malaysia's original and premier Ultra-Trail® Marathon. For 2017 we have teamed up with Compressport to provide event and finisher tees as well as complimentary goods and generous discounts on products to all TMBT participants. Read more on Page 2. Refer to <http://www.borneoultra.com/tmbt/> for information and registration.



Super Kerbau – Season Finale, 2017

The 4th and final race in the 2016/17 race series is tentatively scheduled for the first or second weekend in December. We will likely return to the Tambunan area and the format of previous races is maintained with 3 distance categories of 5-10 km, 15 km and 30 km to cater for both beginners and experienced runners looking for new challenges. Refer to <http://www.borneoultra.com> for updates.



Borneo Ultra-Trail® Marathon (BUTM), 2018

The 4th edition of the BUTM has tentatively been scheduled for 10-11 March, 2018. Distance categories will again include a full range for beginners at ~12 km over intermediate at 30 km and 50 km to the full 100 km. A longer race course for ITRA 6 points is under consideration. Entries are expected to open in August. Refer to <http://www.borneoultra.com> for updates.

Refer to www.borneoultra.com for further information

TMBT Ultra-Trail® Marathon Update



The 7th edition of the TMBT is less than 2 ½ months away. A brief update is provided.

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Super Kerbau #3 Race Report

The third race in the series was held in Tambunan on 21st May, 2017. Page 3



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BUTM Perspective

Ryan Farrugia of Malta has kindly provided a story on his experience from the 2017 race. Page 9

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The Most Beautiful Thing (TMBT) - Updates



The 7th edition of Malaysia's original Ultra-Trail® Marathon is rapidly approaching. Normal entries will close on 16th July to facilitate orders of shirts and medals. Late entries may be possible if there are slots available, but with no guarantees of t-shirts and medals.

Course Updates

The course is still being finalised, but the 2016 course will largely be maintained. At this stage, this is expected to include the infamous climb up "Bukit Dallas" to the 30 km and 50 km finish line. If this route is maintained, the trail will be "upgraded" to ensure that it will not be as slippery and challenging to conquer as experienced by the later runners in the 2016 edition where heavy rains turned it into a mudslide that will go into the TMBT legacy as being not only a beautiful but an equally brutal and challenging race 😊.

Teaming Up with COMPRESSPORT

We are pleased to have teamed up with Compressport as name sponsor for the TMBT for 2017.

In addition to compressport event and finisher shirts, this has allowed us to offer all TMBT competitors a complementary Compressport drawstring bag as well as substantial discounts on a wide selection of quality products on the web-shop Qoolmart.com



Event tee and medal design for TMBT 2017

Qoolmart.com **DISCOUNT CODE:**
SPORTS & MORE **32Discount**

Free Shipping Worldwide ✈️ no minimum purchased required

Participating Brands:
30% discount

20% discount

- and all other brands on qoolmart.com....
- This voucher is redeemable only at QOOLMART.COM.
 - This voucher can be used for multiple purchase.
 - This voucher is only applicable on regular priced items.
 - This voucher is not exchangeable for cash.
 - To effectively redeem the voucher, kindly key in Discount Code provided upon checkout.
 - QOOLMART.COM reserves the right to amend or cease these terms & conditions at any time without prior notice.

Discounts are offered for TMBT participants on Qoolmart.com

Race Report: Super Kerbau Race 3

The third race in the Super Kerbau Trail Running Series was held in Tambunan with base at the Tandarason Resort and Country Club (TRCC) on Sunday, 21st May. The race had 3 categories with distances of about 9, 17 and 30 km.



300 competitors across the 3 categories started together at Tandarason Resort & Country Club in Tambunan

Heavy rain during the week leading up to the race had caused the rivers to flood, forcing a slight route change to the 30 km course as the planned trail alongside the river edge was no longer safe. At this stage of the race, after 3 significant hills, the majority of the 30k competitors seemed more than happy with a slight road detour.

After the mass start and a short run along the river valley, the competitors hit the first hill with a 300m climb to W₁. The front runners made quick progress up the relatively steep trail, reaching W₁ at the newly established viewpoint at Sinurambi in about 30 minutes.



Craig Armstrong of Australia using hands on thighs to propel himself up the steep climb to W₁ at the viewpoint of Sinurambi.

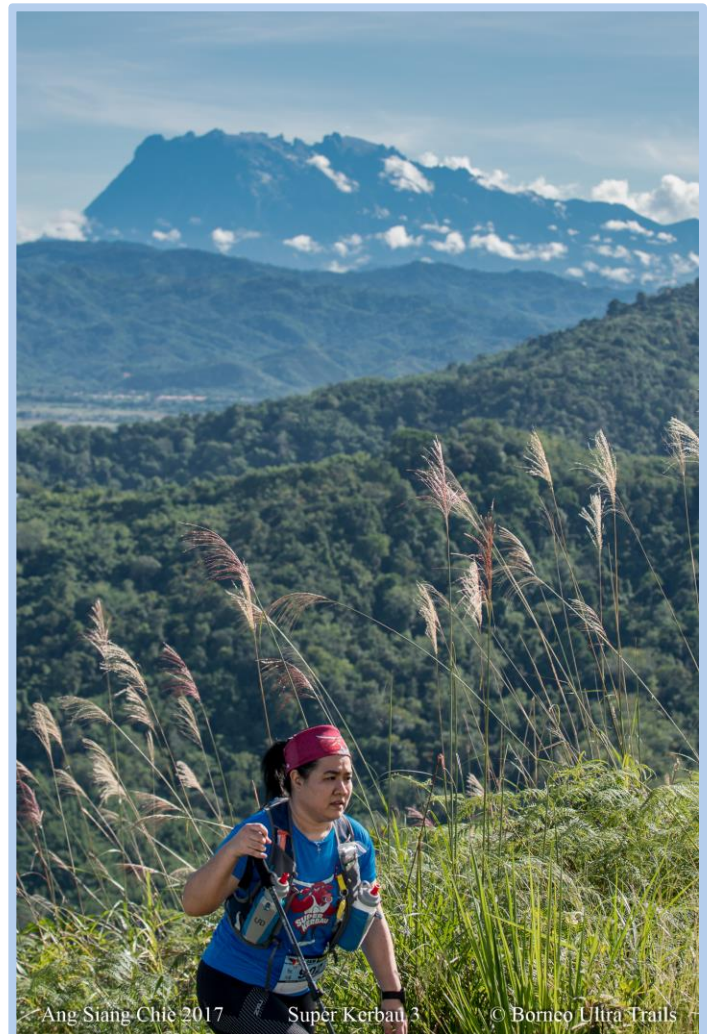
For those who took time to look back, the climb was rewarded with spectacular views over the Tambunan valley and surrounding ridges with Mt. Kinabalu looming in the background.

After a further short climb along the gravel road leading to Sinurambi, the 9 km competitors turned onto a steep downhill track that brought them back to the road to the finish at TRCC.



A tight battle was played out for the podium in the men's 9 km category with Mohd Hasrol Sinol of Malaysia completing the course in 58 minutes to barely beat Craig Armstrong of Australia finishing second in 59 minutes and Eric Tai Man Hiung of Malaysia in 1:02.

In the women's 9 km race, 5 ladies arrived closely together in a time of about 1:50 with Kristy Tai taking the win ahead of Julisah Kuruak and Etila Adtak.



On the climb to Sinurambi, competitors were rewarded with excellent views over the Tambunan valley and surrounding ridges with Mt. Kinabalu in the background.

Competitors in the 17 and 30 km courses continued along the undulating gravel road for a couple of kilometres before turning downhill over a mix of trails and dirt tracks to cross the sealed road to Kaingaran. Another downhill on mainly gravel road brought them to W₂, and then via trails down to a river crossing which was originally intended to include wading through the river, but had to be shifted to a rather deteriorated hanging bridge that had to be crossed with care, one person at a time, thus leading to a small involuntary rest for some at the middle and back of the pack who arrived bunched up.



Harry Lai 2017 Super Kerbau 3 © Borneo Ultra Trails

Heavy rains during the week leading up to the race led to rivers in flood and forced the use of a deteriorated hanging bridge, overlooked by safety marshals.

The river crossing was followed by a nice trail section climbing through varied jungle and ending in a short but steep trail cut through the jungle to an overgrown track. Although the steepest part was rope-assisted, the tired competitors at the back of the pack will remember this small section as it got increasingly slippery and challenging with the number of competitors passing by ☺.



Dev Sidhu 2017 Super Kerbau 3 © Borneo Ultra Trails

Fourth place finisher in the men's 30 km category, Mohd. Zul Azuan Suhaili making his way up through a bamboo grove on the last part of the steep jungle section.

Competitors continued uphill first on overgrown tracks and then on a gravel track before dropping down to the valley to the finish/W3 at TRCC for the 17 km and 30 km, respectively.

The men's 17 km competition saw Elias Sius taking an early narrow lead and maintaining it to win in a time of 2:16 ahead of fellow Malaysian Lee Wei Guan, taking second in 2:19. Ross Dennison of Scotland took 3rd place in a time of 2:31 after a hard race with Ian Edwards of the UK.



Third place finisher in the men's 17km category, Ross Dennison, emerging from the overgrown tracks after W2.

It was an equally tight race in the women's 17 km category with only 2 minutes separating the top 3 contenders at W2. Grace Chaw then pulled away to take the honours in a time of 2:46 (5th overall), ahead of fellow Malaysians Lim Pei Yen in second in a time of 2:55 and Nafisa Bonjamin in third in a time of 3:00. The French duo of Julie Brossard and Lydie Michel just missed out on the podium arriving a few minutes later.



A 30 km competitor taking advantage of the spray from a leaking roadside pipeline before the steep climb on the second half of the 30 km route. Photo by Ang Siang Chie

For the second half of the course, the 30 km competitors faced a few kilometers of undulating road before hitting a 1.5 km gravel road with an average incline of more than 20%. This was followed by an almost equally steep downhill section to cross the flooded river. A short detour via road took competitors to W4 at Maras Karas where locals provided a good atmosphere through entertainment with gong playing and dancing as well as local delicacies for sale. Competitors would race to the finish on buffalo tracks across broad padi fields in the river valley.

With temperatures soaring under a relatively clear mid-day sky, many were feeling the heat, and a leaking pipeline along the road section and the river after the steep hill provided welcome chances to cool off.



Fourth place finisher in the women's 30 km race, Jane Leow, feeling the heat on the steep climb after W₃ together with Brandon Justin working hard in the background and still cheerful Jimbaxter Valen Edwin Amir.

The 30 km category was the largest with half the competitors taking the full course. Competition for the podium was tough, while many were facing an equally tough battle at the back of the pack to overcome the steep hills and punishing heat to complete the course.



The last section was on buffalo tracks across overgrown padi fields.

In the men's category, Byron Julanih took an early, slim lead which he maintained and slowly increased through the course to take the win in a total time of 4:01 for the 30.3 km with 1370 m elevation gain and loss. Byron was followed by Tommy Mathew, who managed to pull clear of Justin Lohok after W₃. Tommy finished in 4:13 and Justin in 4:25.



The podium in the men's 30 km category: Byron Julanih in the centre flanked by runner up Tommy Mathew (second from the right) and 3rd place finisher Justin Lohok (second from the left). Presented by race director Aileen Yong (far right) and Tony Chiffings (far left).

In the women's 30 km race, Rejlen James kept her impressive winning streak going with the third win out of 3 in the series. Rejlen completed the course in 4:18, coming third overall. She was pushed hard by Katarina Andersen of Sweden who was never more than a few minutes behind and always within striking distance throughout the race. Katarina took second in 4:21, and Salley Vendy Law completed the podium in a time of 5:41.



The podium finishers in the women's 30 km category: Winner Rejlen James in the centre flanked by runner up Katarina Andersen (second from the right) and 3rd place finisher Salley Vendy Law (second from the left). Presented by race director Aileen Yong (far right) and Nannette Andersson-Steel (far left).

Full results from the race can be downloaded from:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qqbxg3j30ahj8ry/AADY3eol29lbyLHsF89-3oTaa?dl=0>

A small video and photos from the race course can be found at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/148519785@No3/albums/72157681671695083>

We would like to thank all participants and volunteers making this an enjoyable and fun Sunday and our volunteer photographers and videographers for their professional documentation.

The 4th and final race in the 2016/17 race series is tentatively scheduled for the first or second weekend in December. We will likely return to the Tambunan area and the format of previous races is maintained with 3 distance categories of 5-10 km, 15 km and 30 km to cater for both beginners and experienced runners looking for new challenges.

Refer to <http://www.borneoultra.com> for updates in the coming months.

Borneo Ultra-Trail® Marathon (BUTM), 18-19 February, 2017

The 3rd Borneo Ultra-Trail® Marathon (BUTM) with 1400 competitors of 28 different nationalities competing across 4 race categories was held in the Kiulu Valley on 18th and 19th February, 2017. We would like to thank all participants, officials and volunteers as well as the local communities for making this another memorable and successful event.



The 100k and 50k categories lining up in Kiulu in the early morning for the start of the 3rd edition of the Borneo Ultra-Trail® Marathon.

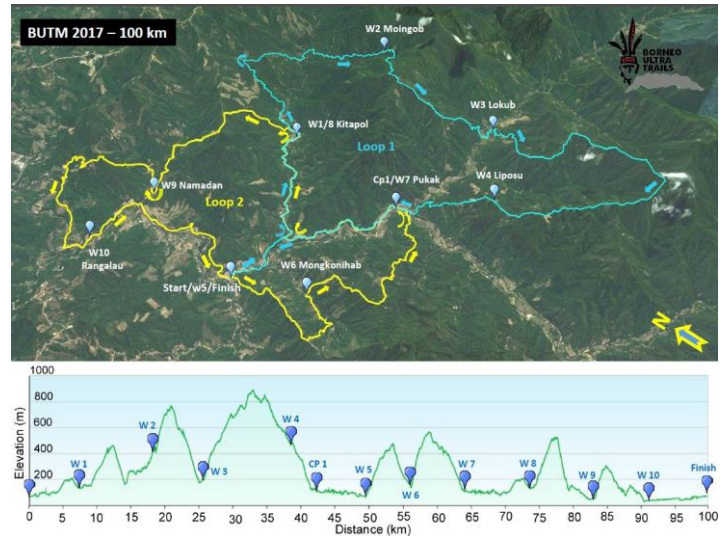
We have drawn up a race report and a few observations from the race organisers' perspective. Ryan Farrugia of Malta has further provided a race report from his perspective which is included on Page 9.

Race Report

Similar to the 2016 race, the race course for the 2017 version of the BUTM was sited within the Kiulu Valley, but with the race base shifted into the valley to Kiulu Township and significant course changes that has done away with most of the sealed road sections from 2016 and allowed the shorter 12 km and 30 km courses to experience more trails. The race base worked as start/finish for all categories as well as the half-way point for the 100 km race.



Flag-off by the Chairman of Sabah Tourism Board, YB Datuk Joniston Lumai @ Bangkuai, here cheering the 30k runners on after start.



The BUTM 2017 courses were set within the Kiulu Valley with race centre at Kiulu Township. The largest hills are on the first part of the 100k course.

A week's dry weather was broken by rain the night before the race, but skies cleared in the morning and dry weather during the race led to favourable trail conditions, although somewhat hot in the middle of the day. Numerous stream and river crossings offered ample opportunities for competitors to cool off and avoid heat exhaustion.

The 100 km competitors started out with an undulating run for 4 km before hitting a series of progressively larger hills with elevation gains up to 800 m before negotiating a 900 m descent to the valley floor to follow a trail along the river valley to the half-way station back at Kiulu. The second half of the 100 km course had smaller hills, but included some very steep inclines and descents which were tough on tired legs.



3rd place finisher in the men's 100 km category, Hj Saifullah Hj Ramli, emerging from the narrow trail section between W2 and W3.

All other distance categories started out on what would be the second loop for the 100 km competitors. After a short run of about 500 m through town, a 4 km long climb quickly cured any morning chills and got competitors warmed up for the day ahead. The first climb was followed by a steeper descent to the first water station at W6, followed by another steep ascent over 3 km narrow, technical trail with an average incline of 15%. The categories then split with the 12 km returning to the start/finish area via a long descent, while the 30 km and 50 km continued through a series of hills before returning to the finish area via a trail section along the river valley.



After a short run through town, a 400 m climb over 4 km warmed up the 12, 30, and 50 km competitors despite the morning mist hanging over the hills.

Whereas a good proportion of the participants were more than happy to complete the challenging course within the cut-off times, an intense battle for the top places was played out in all categories.



The first climb for the 12, 30, and 50 km competitors was followed by a steeper descent on a dirt track to W6.

At the front of the pack in the 100 km course, local runner Milton Amat and Michael Collins of the UK were racing neck-to-neck for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the race, taking turns in leading, until they teamed up and finished together in a time of 16 hours and 54 minutes. Haji Saifullah Haji Ramli of Brunei produced a strong finish to take the last podium place, coming within 14 minutes of the winners.



Disappearing back into the jungle after CP1



Michael Collins and Milton Amat were racing neck-to-neck at the front of the 100 km race, here on the section along the river leading to the half-way station.

In the women's 100 km category, Nathalie Cochet of France took the lead from the start with local top girl Rejlen James never far behind during the first half of the course. Nathalie took a strong win in a time of 17 hours 50 minutes, coming 5th overall, with Rejlen securing 2nd place and 6th overall, followed by fellow Malaysian Elvina Jimin who secured the last podium place in the women's category.



Winner of the women's 100 km category, Nathalie Cochet of France at Kg. Sinansag after a tough section of small trails.

In the 50 km category, a fierce battle saw an all Malaysian podium in the men's category. Joon Kien Liew took the win in a time of 6 hours 45 minutes, overtaking Joeythine Musin, who had been leading most of the race, on the last section to the finish. Joeythine finished second in 6 hours 54 minutes with Muhamad Huzain Harto taking the third podium place in 7 hours 13 minutes.

Margaret Rait of the UK was leading the women's 50 km from start to finish, though tightly followed initially by local girl Mailin Salungin and Kazumi Kinoshita of Japan. Margaret took the win and came 4th overall in a time of 7:57, followed by Kazumi in 2nd in 8 hours 10 minutes and Mailin in 8 hours 15 minutes.

In the 30 km category, many of the runners were more than happy to just survive and complete the challenge with the last 400 m high hill

with an average descent rate of 25% being particularly (in-)famous. But a smaller proportion of the competitors were racing all out for honours, with Sweden being strongly represented. In the men's 30 km category, Jimmie Johansson of Sweden started out strongly and was leading until the halfway station, before being overtaken by Sabdin Safree of Malaysia, who produced a steady run to take the win in a time of 3 hours and 23 minutes for the 30.6 km course with 1525 m elevation gain and loss. An impressive time considering the technical trail sections which made running all but impossible in some areas. Ryan Farrugia of Malta produced a strong finish to overtake Jimmie on the last section towards the finish and take second place in a time of 3 hours 38 minutes, ahead of Jimmie who finished third in 3 hours 39 minutes.



Grooming the next generation of runners

In the women's 30 km category, Katarina Andersen of Sweden took the early lead and never looked back, overtaking many male competitors along the way who had started out in stronger pace than they could maintain. Katarina took first place in a time of 4 hours and 44 minutes. Fellow swede Emelie Åström started more moderately, but quickly made her way through the field to second position, which she held to the finish in a time of 5 hours. She was followed by Dyziny Daulin of Malaysia, who with a strong effort on the monster hill between W8 and W9 moved into third position to finish in a time of 5 hours 14 minutes.



No this is not a commercial for Coca Cola, but it can be heavenly on a hot day during a 100 km run

The 12 km course was set with two significant hills, close to 800 m elevation gain and some technical trail sections that provided ample challenge to new-comers to trail running.

In the men's 12 km category, Ian Deeth of UK took the win in a time of 1:36 ahead of Robbny Safar of Malaysia in a time of 1:41 and Quentin Cloarec of France in a time of 1:45.

The women's 12 km category saw a close race with Tze Wee Chan of Malaysia taking the win in 1:49 just ahead of Solenne Roleau of France and with half-way leader Shoihi Gandihan of Malaysia taking third in a time of 1:54.



The river at the finish line provided an excellent opportunity to cool off.

Full results for all categories can be found at:

<https://www.racematix.com/site/#results:grp/Borneo-Ultra-Trail-Marathon-2017>

Photos and a video from the race can be found at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/148519785@No3/albums>

Organiser's Observations

The race overall went well with only minor incidents that will always occur when 1400 people are pushing themselves to their respective limits in the outdoor environment.

A few lost their way slightly, and we can only keep stressing the need to stay focussed and do your own navigation - follow the markers and signboards rather than the person in front.

We had a disturbing incident where a section of markers were removed and placed in a different direction with ill intent to mislead participants. This was fortunately quickly discovered and rectified, and only a small group of competitors towards the rear end of the race were affected. We do apologize to the few affected, but this kind of sabotage is unfortunately something that we cannot completely safeguard against. Bringing and reading map and course descriptions will help navigation.

Next BUTM

The 4th edition of the BUTM has tentatively been **scheduled for 10-11 March 2018**, so block this date in your calendar if completing the BUTM is on your trail running bucket list.

Distance categories will again include a full range for beginners at ~12 km over intermediate at 30 km and 50 km to the full 100 km. A longer race course for ITRA 6 points is also under consideration. Entries are expected to open in August.

Refer to <http://www.borneoultra.com> for updates.

Borneo Ultra-Trail® Marathon from a runner's perspective

Ryan Farrugia of Malta has kindly provided a perspective on his experience joining and completing the race



Ryan at the finish line with the Maltese flag after taking 2nd in the 30 km race.

As a Maltese trail runner, racing overseas has become second nature and my racing calendar is dotted with races around Europe. Having said that, it never crossed my imagination that I would be racing in Asia, moreover in the BUTM in Borneo!

Hailing from a tiny Mediterranean island of just 360km squared, my homeland could hardly be called the mountain running mecca. In fact, Malta does not have any mountainous terrain- with the highest point on the island at 260metres above sea level. Therefore, trail and mountain running is unpopular to say the least. I would say, the trail running community in Malta consists of around 60 people - which makes the odds of a Maltese runner participate in BUTM fairly low. Having said that, it was a major surprise when I tried to enrol for BUTM while on a 6 month backpacking trip across Asia, and the race organizers happily accepted my request.

While backpacking, it was close to impossible to run daily and up the mileage. We ran occasionally, topping some peaks in the highlands of Kyrgyzstan, under the shadows of the Himalayas outside Kathmandu, along the Ganges river in Varanasi, around tiny Maldivian islands - or anywhere we fancied to explore. I was missing racing and competition, so while reading trail running blogs, I did a quick search of trail races in Asia and to my bewilderment I came across a trail run in the Sabah jungles- the BUTM.

I had hardly finished reading the race description that my mouse was hovering on the Contact Us of the BUTM website, already geared up without even having flights or any plans to visit Borneo. Thankfully, the race organizers are really well set, and in less than 24 hours I got the go ahead from race director Claus Pedersen. Game on!

Due to the lack of a constant training schedule, the main motif for the race was the pure fun of it. In Europe we don't have rainforests, which

made a completely new experience to run in the jungle's high humidity. We arrived in Kota Kinabalu a week before race day, in order to acclimatize with the hot and sticky weather. This would probably be the hardest set back of the race, so good hydration had been my priority days in advance. Race day approached and with it a steep gradient of curiosity - how would the terrain be like? Would the weather hold? Could I be hit by a freak thunderstorm? Would I be able to see a spectating orang utan? How's the competition like? Will the course be well signed? What if I inhaled Rafflesia while gasping for breath on a steep incline?

A little apprehension started to build as we drove the highway from KK to Kiulu on our rented scooter. I didn't wish to get lost before I even get to the race venue. Thankfully, a steady line of coaches were heading our direction and that meant only one thing - BUTMers en route. We reached Kiulu, found the gym, got the bibs - everything running in smooth order, and only then I could relax and start mentally preparing for the race.

The vibe on race day early morning was electric! So many people of all backgrounds clad in the latest trail apparel cheered. I will never forget the noise of the excitement building up - it still makes my stomach flip just like it did that morning. One last banana, check for the third time shoe laces, double check equipment, Garmin connected, warm up and before I knew it was time to line up.

At those final moments, I speculated that although I am a minority culturally, I was still part of a majority of trail running enthusiasts eager for the challenge ahead. That moment was special - the energy of hundreds of people awaiting for the race drama to unfold. That feeling is bliss. I was already thinking which race to do next.

The race went off, and like a loaded spring just released I darted ahead. 400metres later I discovered there is no one in front, and I had left too fast, or rather the field in general had a leisurely start. This took me off guard, as in Europe most of the field are really stoked up to race, with meticulous planning and strategies, nailing it from the very first metres. A good sized group always leaves at an astonishingly fast pace where I would wonder if they will finish so strong, yet it is mostly the case where these athletes are incredibly fast throughout and they are the ones who smash course records year in year out.

My strategy was to keep an even, steady pace for the first hilly 20km, and then push hard for the remaining 10k which was relatively downhill, flat and fast. By the first kms, I had settled in the third position and worked hard to keep the podium place. It baffled me when 2km from the finish, I ran past Jimmie Johansson, who was in second place. It took me by surprise to be now in 2nd position - yet I felt strong and the race strategy to start steady and finish fast did work out.

Towards the end, you start to hear the loud cheering, and I bet that is the climax of most runners, anticipating the sweet satisfaction of making it to the finish. Crossing the final suspension bridge with the finish line in sight, a flood of emotions took over and I clenched the Maltese flag to the finish teary eyed with a big smile. Although I didn't get a glimpse of any orang utans, the Bornean jungles were good to me.

The finisher medal, I have to admit, is the most authentic, vibrant memorabilia in my collection of race medals. Kudos also for the wacky T- shirts, I proudly wear them for my local runs to the astonishment of other Maltese running buddies, who wide- eyed enquire if a trail run in Borneo actually exists. Then I relate to them this story.