

Chemist fights against himself in marathon

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Pak Chongpin, a chemist at the Far East District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, participated in the 2004 Boston Marathon, which is one of the world's most prestigious annual road races. He not only participated in it, but ran the whole course, which is 26.2 miles. Pak started running about three and a half years ago. "Actually I didn't like running before. I liked soccer and other sports, but running was very boring to me. However, I met some nice friends in a runner's club and realized that running with good friends is something that anyone can really enjoy, he says. Pak is a race coordinator at an international running club called Seoul Synergy.

He has run full-course marathons 13 times and joined numerous half-course marathons, five and ten kilometer races. To qualify to run the Boston Marathon, Pak had to have a qualifying time at a certified marathon course. So, he took part in the Seoul International Marathon in 2003 at which he made the qualifying time enabling him to register for this year's Boston Marathon. However he made his personal best record in this year's Seoul International Marathon held in March: 3 hours, 5 minutes, 31 seconds. "Everything was so perfect for running at that day. Weather was fine and the course was very beautiful and plain. Plus, I was in my best condition. I ran 10 minutes faster than the qualifying time of my age group, Pak says. After the Seoul marathon, he flew to Boston in mid-April. "Edward Primeau helped me a lot on the trip, said Pak. "He is a friend of mine who worked in the FED Safety Office between 2000 and 2003 as an industrial hygienist. He is a good runner. He has run in the Boston Marathon a few times, so he gave me good tips about the marathon race while driving me through the course.

The Boston Marathon takes place on the third Monday in April. It is a holiday in Massachusetts called "Patriots Day. From 1897-1968, it was celebrated on April 19,

commemorating the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. This day was only recognized in Massachusetts and Maine. The holiday was officially moved to the third Monday in April in 1969. Most people don't know exactly what this holiday celebrates, but they see it is just a good excuse to take a day off and go out to watch this long road racing event on Marathon Monday. The race begins in Hopkinton at noon, stretching for 26.2 miles through Ashland, Wellesley College and Brookline, and finishes at Boston's Copley Square. "There were many people cheering out there along the whole course. Especially at the Wellesley College area, Female students came out in droves and supported runners. They really enjoyed the event, Pak says.

Although the race was a hilarious event for the locals, it was a punishment for the runners when they passed uphill near the Boston College. "It was a fight against heat and an uphill climb, said Pak. The temperature was about 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Furthermore, the Boston Marathon is notorious for its hilly course. I became very exhausted after only 5 miles, he continued. "I didn't expect a good record and just struggled to finish the whole course. I'm happy that I made it. Pak's official record was 3:56:26. Even though it took way longer than his personal record, he says he is satisfied with finishing the race. After the long struggling race, Pak received a commemorative medallion given to all finishers. However, the rush of exhilaration at the moment he passed the finish line is the best reward, which makes him forget the pain and want to run again. Now that he is back home, Pak said his next goal is to finish the full Boston Marathon course within three hours.

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