

Club Balance

Victoria to Peak Challenge

1st October 2009, 7:30am

Central Ferry Pier No.9 (next to Star Ferry)



Inaugural Victoria to Peak Challenge 2009 a running success

October 1st 2009, Hong Kong – They came, they ran, some stumbled, but in the end, they all conquered. 250 professionals traded in their office attire for running gear as they celebrated the importance of work-life balance by taking up the Victoria to Peak (VTP) Challenge 2009.

The inaugural 10 kilometre race kicked off on a beautiful National Day morning at the Star Ferry Terminal in Central. There was a sense of determination as the men and women ran past some of Hong Kong's most famous and historical landmarks like the Legislative Council Building, Rawlinson House in Hong Kong Park and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, before crossing the finishing line at the most breathtaking site of all, the Peak.

“We believe the route is one of the main attractions of the VTP Challenge 2009 and why it’s considered a premium event. It has all the makings of an exciting race. You have your scenic stretch and towards the end, it’s 400 metres uphill, which is already a challenge to walk, what more, running,” said Edward Yuen, a co-founder of Club Balance, the organiser of the VTP Challenge 2009, who is in private equity.

Unlike the other races held in Hong Kong, the VTP Challenge is an event by professionals for professionals to live a more balanced and healthier lifestyle. “A survey done by CSR Asia last year showed that 75% of the working professionals in Hong Kong do not exercise because of long working hours. And the financial sector scored a measly 1 out of 5 in terms of work-life balance. This is a very unhealthy trend and we at Club Balance are hoping to change the mindsets of our peers. We want to let them know that you can work hard and you can also play hard. It's all about making the time and prioritising one's life,” said Andrew Sum, Head of China at RBS Coutts and co-founder of Club Balance, the organizer of the VTP Challenge 2009.

62 year old lawyer, St John Flaherty, and a runner at the VTP Challenge 2009, couldn't agree more. “Being a lawyer, I have a very busy schedule. But I make it a point to go for a run early in the morning before I go into the office. I find running clears my head. You'll be amazed at the number of times I've come up with various ways to argue a case when I'm on the trails,” said Flaherty.

Melody Lo, an assistant professor at Hong Kong University and the second runner-up in the overall female category, runs and hikes to keep fit. “The trick is to get out of the door. Once you've put on your running shoes and you're outdoors, it's easier. And once you start doing it regularly, it becomes almost a routine. It's also a great way to relieve stress,” Lo says.

Another unique aspect of the VTP Challenge is building a sense of camaraderie. Where runners usually disperse at the end of a race, there was a decidedly festive and fun atmosphere as the VTP runners reminisced about the race over a hearty and sumptuous buffet breakfast at the Peak Zen Restaurant. “The whole idea behind providing breakfast for the runners is bringing people with similar interest together. We find it's easier to exercise when you're among friends,” said Sum.

Jeff Wong, a financial analyst and a runner at the VTP Challenge, concurred, “I normally go running with my buddies. There's a push factor involved where you're constantly under pressure to go faster or do better. That is also a good way to take up running. Run with a group and start with short distances and gradually build up over time.”

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Following the tremendous success of the VTP Challenge 2009, Club Balance is already looking ahead to the next event. “We’re going to make the VTP Challenge an annual affair and we’re also looking at various activities that we can organise for people to have a more active lifestyle. There’re definitely an increasing number of professionals looking for more work-life balance. All they need is some encouragement. And we at Club Balance are hoping to get our peers out of the office and hit the trails as often as they can,” Sum added.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Tow from Manifesto at jennifer@manifesto.co.hk or +852 2526 1972.

About Club Balance

Club Balance is a non-profit, volunteer-based organisation founded in 2009 by a group of professionals who are also sports enthusiasts. Our members come from a wide range of professions, from dentistry to banking and law. The founders’ informal weekly runs, which started as early as 1995, eventually evolved into a broader effort to promote work-life balance within the professional communities in Hong Kong.

Club Balance events provide a platform for participants to engage their family and friends through fun activities and/or meals. Participants are also encouraged to invite their loved ones to help out and provide moral support at Club Balance events they participate in.

Club Balance is open to professionals from all levels. Those interested in signing up, please visit www.clubbalance.org