

文訊

WORD POWER

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LET'S RUN

Every year in January or February, crowds of people, all wearing running clothes with a number pinned on the front, are seen waiting excitedly in the morning dark at different locations of the city. They are there to take part in the Hong Kong Marathon, one of the city's major sporting events. Over 70,000 runners signed up for its races this year alone.

Marathon running is becoming more and more popular, not only in Hong Kong, but also across the globe. Stories about how couch potatoes catch the "madness" of long-distance running are heard from time to time. Many will probably tell you how running has changed and enhanced their lives, but good things never come easily. Apart from the discomfort of profuse sweating, runners have to put up with intense heat, icy winds, muscle pain, blisters.... But still, people rush to join these daunting races, and go through such sufferings year after year. Where is the magic of running? Let's go into the worlds of two amateur marathoners — Tom Foreman, Emmy Award-winning correspondent, and Haruki Murakami, novelist of *Norwegian Wood* fame — to find out more about the sport.

Foreman was once a marathoner in his 20s. Later, he quit the sport, and eased into a typical life of a middle-aged man, devoting most of his time to work and family. After almost three decades, an unexpected suggestion from his daughter Ronnie — "How would you feel about running a marathon with me?" — prompted him to get back on track. As a veteran journalist who had been to war zones and disaster areas, he admitted that his heart jumped and his pulse raced upon hearing Ronnie's question. Getting back into running was a tall order for him, not only because it was physically demanding, but also because as people get older, life becomes all about playing it safe. Not wanting to let Ronnie down, Foreman accepted the challenge, though reluctantly. So, in the following months leading to the big run — the Publix Georgia Marathon, he jogged down the road with heavy steps, starting the gruelling training with his daughter.

Compared with Foreman, Murakami is a late starter in marathon running. He picked up the sport at the age of 33, and has never stopped. Pushing oneself to one's limits, he believes, is the essence of the sport. Murakami says that he is not a fast runner, but it does not matter. What matters is whether or not he can improve over yesterday. Running day after day, race after race, he raises the bar bit by bit. Every

time he attains a higher level, he elevates himself. For him, running, like writing, helps him to live life to the fullest. While Foreman

picked up ultra-running again because of his daughter, Murakami became a regular marathoner because of the blissful "void", or "cosy silence" as he calls it. When running, he does not need to talk or listen to anybody. With a clear mind, he is all on his own. And that is a wonderful thing to him.

Non-runners may find it hard to understand Murakami's philosophy about running. But Foreman does. Running, he believes, is not simply pounding the pavement. It is about entering the proper state of mind, or "getting into the groove". He runs "for exultation, beauty, joy, and art." To find that delightful slice of Zen from running, runners have to run until they breathe deeply, their thighs burn, and their hearts thunder. But before getting to that level, they have to experience weeks of drudgery, plodding through all sorts of weather and doing myriad loops of the same terrain.

"Pain is inevitable," says Murakami. In his eyes, the physical pain associated with running is like clouds in the sky, which, in varying sizes, just come and go. And it is through the process of enduring pain that runners can get the feeling of being alive. In a much more down-to-earth tone, Foreman also considers the pain of running temporary. During the intensive training, some days his knees hurt, and some days his hips. On bad mornings, his ankles throbbed above his shoes, and his toes cramped inside. Sometimes his arms ached, and his chest felt ripped apart. But after picking up running again, he slept more soundly and hopped out of bed with more vigour. His eyes were brighter, and his face was suffused with a healthy glow. Even as his joints crackled, for most hours of most days he felt good.

Most runners have a few reasons to keep on running, and a truckload of them to quit. Foreman and Murakami are no exception. What makes them different from others is that they simply keep those few reasons nicely polished. In the face of the unnerving obstacles, be they physical or mental, they would not run a mile. Instead, they focus on each stride forward and at the same time take a long-range view, scanning the scenery as far ahead as they could. And perhaps that is where the magic of long-distance running lies.



明皇擊馬球

中國遼寧省博物館藏有一軸宋代畫卷，題為《明皇擊球圖》。畫中唐明皇（即唐玄宗李隆基）與十數官員、侍從、妃嬪在打馬球。他們騎着駿馬，手持木杖，聚攏到一起，全神貫注盯着地上滾動的小球。各人鬥志昂揚，精神抖擻，有的俯身擊球，有的蓄勢待發，激烈緊湊的氣氛躍然紙上。

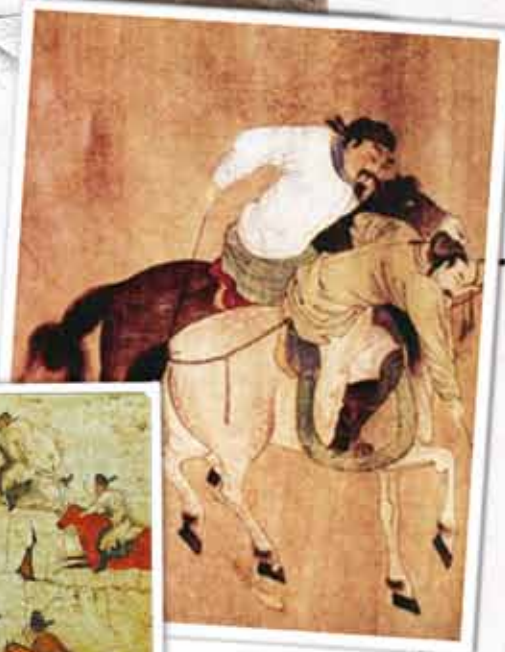
馬球運動古代稱“擊鞠”，又稱“擊毬”，在東漢時期開始流行，到了唐代盛極一時。據說唐朝歷代皇帝中，十居其九都愛打馬球。唐明皇不僅是馬球迷，還是馬球健將，參加不少比賽，其中一場特別惹人注目。

公元七零九年，李隆基只有二十四歲，尚未登基。當年大唐與吐蕃和親，舉辦慶祝大會，其間舉行了一場馬球比賽。賽事展開，吐蕃馬球隊先發制人，強快兼施，勢不可當，大唐隊面對強敵，陣腳大亂，節節敗退。李隆基於是請纓帶領三名隊員迎戰吐蕃的十人隊伍。他重整戰略，沉着應戰，與隊友在場上奮力馳騁，以少敵眾，攻其不備，最終反敗為勝。

唐代另一位皇帝唐昭宗李晔也是瘋狂的馬球迷。唐末各藩鎮擁兵自重，大唐帝國名存實亡，昭宗已淪為宣武節度使朱溫的傀儡。後來，昭宗被迫遷都洛陽，六軍逃散，只剩下數名王爺和宦官追隨左右，境況堪虞，但他仍然把十幾個馬球手帶在身邊，對馬球的沉溺真的是“捨國捨命不捨球”。

史書記載，唐代皇帝為了打馬球，特別在宮廷內修建馬球場，退朝後便和羣臣到場上一展身手。皇室馬球場華麗堂皇，就連球門都精雕細刻。上世紀五十年代，考古人員在陝西西安唐代大明宮含光殿遺址發現一塊石碑，上面刻有“含光殿及毬場等，大唐大和辛亥歲乙未月建”的字樣。經考證，這塊石碑是唐代皇室馬球場的奠基石。

打馬球不僅是唐代帝王貴胄健身強體的運動，還與歷史事件息息相關。現藏故宮博物院的《便橋會盟圖》描繪唐太宗李世民與突厥可汗頡利在長安城西渭水便橋會盟的場面。畫中騎士策馬奔馳，揮杖擊球，場面壯觀。



馬球運動在唐代風靡一時，舉國上下為之着迷，究竟魅力何在？馬球是競爭激烈的運動，參賽者不僅要騎術出色，球技精湛，還要有頑強鬥志。馬球高手在球場上全力拼搏，善攻穩守，體現了唐代人民能文能武、奔放灑脫的氣度和積極進取、奮勇向上的精神。

唐代打馬球的方法極為講究。比賽用的馬球精緻美觀，大小如拳頭，由質輕柔韌的木材所做，中間挖空，外面塗上紅色或彩色花紋。球杖有數尺長，多為木做，一端形如偃月，故亦有“月杖”的雅稱。上陣的馬匹多為爆發力強的健壯大馬，馬尾剪得很短，以免與月杖纏在一起發生意外。比賽形式一般是兩支球隊同場較技，球場兩端設球門，入球多者勝。

唐代打馬球並非男士專利。在《明皇擊球圖》中，一羣身穿華服、頭盤美髻的妃嬪與唐明皇打馬球。她們英姿颯爽，身手矯健，真的是巾幗不讓鬚眉。據說，唐明皇寵妃楊貴妃也精於馬球，還常常與宮中妃嬪、宮女組成隊伍，與李隆基和大臣對壘。五代十國時期，花蕊夫人曾以“自教宮娥學打球，玉鞍初跨柳腰柔”形容女子打馬球柔中帶剛的美態。

唐代以後，馬球運動時興時衰，到了清代後期日漸式微，輝煌年代已不復再。



調和筋骨，有運動之方；均齊勞逸，有作息之則。
葛洪《抱樸子》



疑問逐一解

執筆為文，有否遇到配詞、語法、格式等讓人困惑的疑難？現列舉一些常見的語文問題，逐一解答，希望有助釋疑去惑：

1. 問：“小量”還是“少量”？

答：“小”解作“細、微”，與“大”相對；“少”解作“為數不多”，與“多”相對。“小量”和“少量”的意思相同，只是說法有別，前者指“量不大”，後者指“量不多”。不過，表示“數量多”或“數量少”的意思時，習慣上只說“大量”，不說“多量”，因此，如要表達與“大量”相反的意思，用與“大量”相對的“小量”，才符合語用習慣。

2. 問：以下哪句符合現代漢語語法：

(1) 隧道長約三公里／隧道約長三公里

(2) 約有300人入場觀賽／有約300人入場觀賽？

答：“約”字可用作副詞，解作“大概”。副詞不能修飾名詞，只修飾動詞、形容詞或短語，以表示程度、範圍和時間等。在第一組句子中，“長”是名詞，“三公里”是短語，所以“隧道長約三公里”才是正確。

在第二組句子中，“有”是動詞，“300人”是短語，所以“約有300人”和“有約300人”兩句都正確。

3. 問：政府部門致函私營機構主管，信末祝頌語可否寫“敬候金安”？

答：“金安”中的“金”字指“金玉般貴重的身體”，“金安”只可用作晚輩向族中長輩（特別是父母、祖父母）的祝頌語，不可用於機構的書信往來。

政府部門致私營機構主管的函件如屬酬酢性質，信末祝頌語可用“順頌時祺”、“敬候鈞安”等。

4. 問：“恭送”還是“躬送”？

答：兩者均可，視乎要表達的意思而定。“恭送”表示恭敬地送別，“躬送”則指親身送別。如果配搭“候”或“迎”，一般用“恭候”和“恭迎”。

Word for Word



Have you ever watched a football game and heard the commentator use words or phrases you don't understand? Well, you are not alone. This is quite common among people who are not football fans. But to fully appreciate the game, you need to speak its language. Below is a list of words and phrases that may help you understand the game better:

a. **Against the run of the play** — This is to describe a situation where a team scores even when the opposing side has been playing better or has more chances to score.

River Plate scored against the run of the play just before half time.

b. **Back pass** — To pass the ball to one's own goalkeeper, a tactic often used to consume time or to preserve possession of the ball.

Dickins had had nothing more than a back pass and a free-kick to deal with in the first 30 minutes of the game.

c. **Caught in possession** — A player who is “caught in possession” is someone who loses the ball to an opponent.

Arsenal were caught in possession in midfield with players determined to attack.

d. **Dribble** — To move and control the ball with the feet while it remains on the ground.

Tommy Johnson dribbled past the Oxford keeper, and shot towards an empty net.

e. **Header** — The act of striking the ball with one's head.

Brian Kilcline got the ball in the net with a header after 80 minutes but the referee disallowed it for pushing.

f. **Offside** — A player is offside when he is nearer to the opponent's goal line than the second-to-last opponent, ahead of the ball.

Alberto Moreno should have been celebrating one of the goals of the season, but his effort was ruled offside in controversial fashion.

g. **Nutmeg** — a trick or technique in which a player passes the ball through an opponent's legs and then collects it from the other side.

Messi's perfect nutmeg sent his fans wild.

h. **Play-off** — an extra match to decide which of two or more teams should go through to the next round.

Australia beat Uruguay on penalties in a play-off to qualify for the World Cup 2006.





武術



清早時分走過公園，總會看見許多人在耍太極拳。他們輕輕揮動雙臂，緩緩移動兩腿，拳法一張一弛，虛中帶實，動中有靜。現代運動科學研究發現，勤習太極拳裨益甚多，不僅可提升心肺功能，還可舒緩緊張情緒，難怪男女老少競相研習，蔚然成風。

太極拳着重吐納之法，呼吸要深、長、細、勻，通暢自然，所謂“有氣則生，無氣則死”。練拳時要氣沉丹田，再讓氣周流全身。出拳要從容不迫，動作勁柔有度，一俯一仰、一進一退，徐疾有致，如行雲流水，圓轉自如，從起至收，一氣呵成。耍完一套太極拳，會感到渾身舒暢，心境平靜，勤加鍛鍊，可收強身健體之效。

早上的公園宛如武林，好不熱鬧。除了打太極拳，習練其他武術者大不乏人，當中不少是詠春門徒。習詠春拳須練“小念頭”、“尋橋”、“標指”這三套路，拳法俐

落、簡潔，不著重形式，講求步法靈活，馬步札實，出拳隨機應變，崇尚“寸勁”，拳頭在貼近對手身體時才會爆發動力。詠春拳高手無論立身不動，揮動雙拳，還是凌空踢腿，都渾身是勁。這套拳法實而不華，不僅是抗敵自保的功夫，而且是上佳的健身之法，持之以恆，可舒筋活絡，強化腰背。

公園內還有人舞劍。中國傳統劍術與太極拳類似，講求身法矯捷，飄逸瀟灑。出色的劍者運劍自如，能做到內外協調，形神相隨，人劍合一。據說唐代有女子叫公孫大娘，劍藝非凡，詩聖杜甫觀其表演後印象深刻，在《觀公孫大娘弟子舞劍器行》一詩中形容公孫氏的劍舞“瀏灠頓挫，獨出冠時”。劍舞剛柔兼備，可粗獷雄壯，驚魂動魄，也可輕柔如水，優美動人，經常鍛鍊，既陶冶情操，又益壽延年。

中國武術博大精深，蘊含強身奧義，攝養生之精髓，集技擊之大成，亦融匯中醫智慧與運動之美，誠為華夏文化瑰寶。

THE NAKED OLYMPICS

As the first ray of sunlight struck the Stadium at Olympia, thousands of spectators crowded into the cavernous arena. They were the sport fans of ancient Greece who had come from

different parts of the land to attend the first Olympic Games. Everyone, young and old, rich and poor, had their eyes fixed on the running track. In a booth half way from the track stood a number of judges in indigo robes. Before them, on a table of ivory and gold, were olive-wreath crowns cut from Olympia's sacred tree. This was the opening of the first Olympic Games, as described by Tony Perrottet in *The Naked Olympics: The True Story of the Ancient Games*.

A wave of excited murmur wafted over the stadium. With the blast of the trumpet, the athletes began to march onto the field. They appeared one by one — entirely unclothed and unadorned, dripping from head to toe in perfumed oils. Competing nude was a time-honoured tradition of ancient Greek athletics, a practice that symbolically stripped away social rank.

The Games were a packed programme, with athletes competing in 18 core events in five days, starting with the chariot race in the Hippodrome, a vast venue for hosting public events. Before a gigantic gate, the charioteers lined up with their horses. When the gate's lever was pulled, as many as 40 chariots burst onto the track, shooting forth like javelins. What a breathtaking sight!

One of the audience's favourite events was the *pankration*, a savage all-out brawl, where only eye gouging was banned. The sport was ferocious, vicious and dangerous, regularly

causing injuries and even fatalities. The athletes violently tossed and strangled one another, usually ending up with cauliflower ears and broken bones.

Around noon on Day Two of the Games, a herald blew a trumpet, alerting the spectators to the start of the first track-and-field event — the pentathlon. In the baking heat, the all-rounders had to compete in discus, javelin, long jump, running and wrestling. The winning pentathlete was always admired above all others for his display of agility, speed and strength.

The climax of the Games was Day Four. The events started with the footraces. In the purple light before dawn, the sprinters waited impatiently before the starting line. Instead of assuming a crouch, they stood upright, leaning forward slightly, arms outstretched. At the cry of *apete*, meaning “go”, they dashed away. On Day Five, the Olympic Games ended with a solemn award ceremony. Champions accepted their wreaths from judges, with victory fillets around their heads, or ribbons hanging from their arms.

Over the centuries, the Olympic Games have gone through many ups and downs. However, though much has changed, the spirit is still the same — to bring out the best of human abilities. Like ancient sport fans, spectators of today, over 2,500 years later, still admire the athletes' skills, strength, unwavering determination and unstoppable passion for victory.



Run when you can, walk if you have to, crawl if you must; just never give up.

Dean Karnazes





談運動



名作家梁實秋的散文集《雅舍小品》有兩篇談論體育的文章，妙趣橫生，字字珠璣。在《運動》一文中，他說了一個故事：晚清重臣李鴻章出使英國時受到熱情款待，有位皇族成員興致勃勃，特地為貴賓打了一場網球賽。賽後，該皇族成員汗流浹背，氣喘吁吁地跑來問李鴻章覺得他表現如何。大使面有難色，答說：“好是好，只是太辛苦，為什麼不僱用兩個人來打呢？”

傳聞是否屬實，無從稽考，但現代人聽了李鴻章這番話，大都丈八金剛，摸不着頭腦。梁實秋卻幽了李大使一默，讚他答得好，充分反映當時士大夫對運動的看法。士大夫生活安逸，不喜歡體力勞動，認為在旁觀賞球賽，就像看鬥蟋蟀、鬥鷄一樣，誠一樂也，犯不着親自參賽，“累一身大汗，何苦來哉？”在他們眼裏，運動選手與比武的、摔跤的均屬“江湖賣藝者之流，士君子所不取。”不過，梁實秋諷刺他們只看不動，四體不勤，總有一天會“肩不能挑擔，手不能提籃”，變成廢物。

梁實秋認為，中國人似乎不太熱衷運動。相傳上古已有類似足球的“蹴鞠”遊戲，但漢唐以後的史書，並無記載任何蹴鞠名將，直至《水滸傳》始記述宋代有個“浮浪破落戶子弟”高俅“最是踢得好腳氣球”。梁氏又說縱然國民自古以來積極追求養生之法，但做運動卻講求“有分寸”，適可而止，充其量也只會仿效陶侃“日運百磚”，或輕柔柔的耍耍八段錦，不會把身體練得壯健如牛。梁實秋這番話雖有商榷之處，但或多或少能夠反映中國人的傳統運動觀。

在《球賽》一篇中，梁實秋指任何球賽都帶點兒戰鬥意味，球員施展渾身解數，鬥智鬥力，務要克敵制勝。他還說，好鬥是人的本能，隊員按照規則在指定時間內爭奪一球，時間一到立即鳴金收兵，堂堂皇皇

的在球場上對決，總比窮兵黷武、掠地攻城為好，至少大家“好來好散，不傷和氣。”

談到披掛上陣，最讓梁實秋難忘的是念書時參加的足球賽。念小學時，體育課都在踢足球，場地設施十分簡陋：一班同學分成兩隊，用粉灰劃出球場的界線，兩根竹竿插地便是球門，皮球是要吹氣的，沒有正規的球衣、球鞋，能穿的便算了。除了守門的，也沒有所謂前鋒後衛，隊員總是一窩蜂追着皮球。下課後雖然每人都筋疲力竭，但還是樂不可支。

進入清華大學後，梁實秋再沒有在球場上爭鋒，改在觀眾席上為校友吶喊助威，但同樣令他興奮莫名。校際比賽關乎校譽，非同小可。他看得十分投入，緊張得握緊雙拳，冷汗直冒。他記得有次來了一支南方足球勁旅，過往曾與清華在球場上較量，互有勝負。這回舊敵重逢，清華派出最優秀的球員，擺出最強的陣式，經過一番激戰，最終打敗宿敵，但最讓清華學生高興的莫過於贏了球賽，全校放假一天。

至於體育精神，梁實秋認為要求運動員公平競技，即使輸了也不失風度是崇高理想，但知易行難。球員為爭球大動肝火、互揮拳頭的場面屢見不鮮，球迷因追捧的球隊落敗而到處搗亂也時有聽聞。他又以孔子射禮詮釋“勝不驕、敗不餒”的精神。《禮記·射義》說：“射求正諸己，己正而後發，發而不中，則不怨勝己者，反求諸己而已矣。”他認為，球員輸了比賽若能“不怨勝己者”，只怪技不如人，就不會有球員打鬥、球迷生事之類的胡鬧事情。

梁實秋以生花妙筆剖析舊時代中國人不愛參與、只愛觀賞的運動觀，又以求學時期的經驗，道出當球員和當觀眾不同的樂趣，還引經據典闡明體育精神，見解一針見血，言簡意賅，讀後令人對運動有新的看法。

養身莫善於習動。
顏元《顏李遺書》



Heaven is a Playground



Sport is not really all about competing. Nor is it just limited to physical movements. For some, it is a hope, a dream, and also a path to grow up. Back in the 1970's, before the gentrification of New York, it was a common saying in Brooklyn that "if a boy is bad he joins a gang; if he is good he plays basketball." But what future was there in basketball?

On a scorching summer night in 1974, a group of boys was playing basketball at Foster Park, Brooklyn. They were all bony and tall, six foot something on average. On the sidelines stood a man in his mid-thirties, shouting and throwing commands left and right, while the boys moved, drifting in and out in response to his orders. This man was Rodney Parker, a ticket scalper who spent most of his free time scouting young playground stars. Next to him was a twenty-something young man — Rick Telander, a photojournalist who came to this haven of basketball prodigies to cover street basketball.

Rodney, whose education ended in ninth grade and whose basketball abilities were never better than average, was dedicated to finding a way out for the gifted basketball players in Brooklyn. Keeping them tied to the game, he believed, would help them avoid the inevitable fate of joining a gang. With Rodney's help, Rick stayed in Brooklyn the whole summer, sleeping on the floor of a park regular's apartment, observing, questioning and playing with a ragtag group of local boys. He even formed and coached a basketball team named the Subway Stars.

Soon after taking up the coaching job, Rick realised that he was unable to get the boys to sit down and listen. Practices were often filled with fights. The players taunted one another, elbowed, pushed, refused to pass, and moped when they did not get the ball. They acted baffled when Rick demonstrated to them the basic pick and roll. Though highly disorganised and lacking discipline, they all had a dream — to make their mark in this difficult sport.



Sadly, however, in a community ravaged by crime, drug abuse and gang violence, not everyone was able to fulfil their dreams, not even the gifted ones. Fly Williams, the real deal of Rodney's players and the elusive playground legend, was among them. Bow-legged, skinny and six foot five in stature, the 21-year-old player stood out, in Rick's words, "like a peacock among pigeons". A super-scorer, he

floated to the basket during lay-ups, and threw down one dunk after another, capturing the attention of the spectators with his every move and every gesture. He was, however, unpredictable and temperamental. His antics and self-destructive behaviour cost him opportunity after opportunity for lucrative contracts and a bigger spotlight. Though blacklisted by many college programmes and professional teams, he was happy to be a big fish in a small basketball pond.



Albert King, a 14-year-old basketball prodigy, was a different but encouraging story. Six feet six inches tall, the teenager could block shots harder than anyone, and moved so fast that his fakes were frequently missed by defenders. He was also adroit at dribbling and snagging rebounds. Playing with a combination of grace and muscle, he was expected to be a real superstar one day. Nevertheless, he agonised over his talent, which brought him attention and exaltation that embarrassed him, and sometimes made him angry and withdrawn. Noticing Albert's anxiety, Rodney helped the boy steer through his troubles and secure a scholarship to one of the most prestigious prep schools in the country. Albert was disciplined and industrious. His stellar performance on the basketball court and in the classroom later earned him a variety of scholarships to several top colleges.

Years passed. Rick returned to Brooklyn and found that many of his friends had disappeared from the scene: Rodney had moved to Los Angeles; a small boy who was eager to join the Subway Stars but was rejected because of his height was killed in a drug-related deal; and a member of the Subway Stars was put behind bars. Where was Fly? Rick learnt that he had played for semi-professional leagues for a while, but rapidly fell out. Later, Fly was gunned down and charged with attempted robbery, but he survived, with scars. Not everything was tragic with Rodney's cast, however. Albert, for one, made it to the NBA, though he did not become a superstar as everyone had expected.

Rick was sad to see that many of the young men he had met at Foster Park were unable to achieve their dreams through basketball. But he never doubted, not even four decades on, the boys' talent, fully convinced that the playgrounds there, through all the changes, are still heaven for the ghetto boys. Out there, they can shoot happily in the warm night air, basking in friendship, with their future lying before them like the bright city streets.

Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records.

William Arthur Ward





Into Thin Air



Standing at 29,029 feet, the peak of Mount Everest has only one-third as much oxygen as there is at sea level. It is nature's way of saying, "Go away!" Curiously though, as soon as Everest was crowned the world's highest mountain in 1856, the race to climb it was afoot. But why? "Because it is there," George Mallory, a member of early British expeditions to Everest, famously said. For challenge seekers like him, scaling Everest is a calling. But Everest would not yield easily. It was not until 1953 that it was finally conquered.

Nowadays, climbing Everest is a sport for anyone with money, time and ambition. In 1996, Jon Krakauer, an acclaimed journalist, was contracted by *Outside* magazine to write about the booming business of guided expeditions to Everest. The original plan was for him to station in Base Camp. But Krakauer, an accomplished climber himself, insisted that he could not do a proper job without having a taste of the guided ascent. He signed up with Rob Hall, the legendary New Zealand mountaineer with four Everest summits under his belt, only to find himself in a front row seat to one of the worst Everest accidents in history. He lives to tell the story in his book *Into Thin Air*.

Conquering Everest is a perilous undertaking, a point Krakauer tries very hard to drive home to his readers. For instance, the Khumbu Icefall is a huge, slow-moving frozen waterfall, constantly reshaping the terrain and creating deep crevasses, while the Hillary Step is a vertical stretch of rock that can only be traversed with ropes, one person at a time. Besides, there are the looming threats of hypoxia, hypothermia and high-altitude sicknesses.

Before the ascent, Hall has his clients spend weeks hiking between the camps en route to the top, each a few thousand feet above the other, to acclimatise them to the paucity of oxygen at higher elevations. He also hires Sherpas, ethnic people in eastern Nepal, to install ropes and ladders, and stock up oxygen canisters and other supplies along the way. Co-ordinating with other agencies and teams crowding the slopes of Everest — a thankless job — is yet another item on Hall's to-do list.

Shortly after midnight on 10 May 1996, the group makes a push for the summit. Hall sets the turn-around time at 2 pm. Krakauer and a few other stronger climbers reach the peak before the deadline. Instead of being washed over by a flood

of euphoria, he is overcome by fatigue and violent coughing, every breath burning his lungs like cold fire. He hastens down after staying less than five minutes at the apex of the planet.

On his way down, Krakauer sees clouds gathering to the south and snow beginning to fall. He looks up and makes out a few climbers taking pictures and planting flags at the summit, blissfully unaware of the changing weather. Barrelling down the mountain, the rogue storm abruptly turns into a hurricane as Krakauer is trudging through the treacherous path. By the time he stumbles into camp, the storm is raging all around him. Ragtag rescue parties are hastily organised. But it is too late.

Among the stranded is Hall. Refusing to abandon a client who has run out of supplemental oxygen, he misses his chance to descend before the storm hits. Base Camp patches his radio call to his pregnant wife in New Zealand. He comforts her and names his unborn child before signing off. He is never heard from again.

Another batch of climbers lose their way in the blinding blizzard. When rescuers find them later that evening, Beck Weathers, a doctor from Texas, is seriously debilitated and considered too far gone. So they leave him and take those who have a fighting chance. Feeling like a raft in high seas, Weathers almost gives in to the agony of despair but for the loving thoughts of his family. Miraculously, he gets up the next day and finds his way back into camp. Frostbite has taken his nose and reduced his right hand to a gangrenous stump. He is considered lucky, as the storm eventually takes eight lives.

The pain Krakauer endured in recounting the mistakes that he thought he and others might have committed there and then is so palpable that writing the book cannot be just about quelling his survivor's guilt, least of all assigning blame. He simply needed to make sense of everything. Why didn't Hall stick to the turn-around time? Maybe the journalist's presence spurred Hall to take bigger risks, or maybe it was difficult to tell the clients that for USD 65,000, they only got to have a glimpse of the peak. Could Krakauer himself have done more to help those in need? And, more importantly, is chasing glory above the clouds really worth the outsized risk? All hard questions with perhaps unattainable answers. Read it if not for the nail-biting adventures, then at least for Krakauer's sharp prose and visceral honesty.



體育常識知多少?



觀賞體育賽事，如了解比賽規則，會看得更投入，更覺有趣。大家對體育運動認識有多深？可有興趣接受以下小小挑戰？

- 以下哪項並非國術？
(A)北拳 (B)南拳 (C)八極拳 (D)柔術
- 正式羽毛球比賽採用幾局幾勝制？
(A)五局三勝 (B)三局兩勝
(C)兩局兩勝 (D)四局三勝
- 男子體操項目共有六項，下列哪項不是其中之一？
(A)吊環 (B)鞍馬 (C)平衡木 (D)雙槓
- 推鉛球有效的扇形投擲區角度為：
(A) 30.48° (B) 34.92° (C) 40.25° (D) 50.45°
- 下列何者不是單槓動作？
(A)浮撐迴環 (B)蹬足上 (C)前手翻 (D)後擺下
- 在跆拳道比賽中，擊中對手身軀得幾分？
(A)一分 (B)兩分 (C)三分 (D)四分
- 國際田徑總會把全馬的賽程定為：
(A) 41.3公里 (B) 42.195公里
(C) 43.2公里 (D) 44.1公里
- 一場40分鐘的籃球比賽，容許每位球員犯規多少次？
(A)兩次 (B)三次 (C)五次 (D)六次
- 排球攻擊線是在雙方網前多少公尺？
(A)兩公尺 (B)三公尺 (C)四公尺 (D)五公尺
- 關於田徑接力跑，以下哪句不對？
(A) 接力區前後共20公尺
(B) 接棒應在接力區界線內完成
(C) 用拋擲方式交棒會被取消資格
(D) 接棒時掉棒，任何接力隊員均可撿起棒子



請在二零一六年五月十六日前，把答案連同下列個人資料寄回“香港金鐘道66號金鐘道政府合署高座2310室公務員事務局法定語文事務部《文訊》編輯委員會”。答對問題者可獲書券一張，名額五個。答案及得獎者名單將於下期公布(答案以《文訊》公布者為準)。

姓名：_____ 先生／女士 (請刪去不適用者)
 部門：_____
 職位：_____ 電話：_____
 辦事處地址：_____



Not-a-Mindboggler

Solution of Issue No. 62

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. play by ear | 6. a broken record |
| 2. face the music | 7. blow the whistle |
| 3. out of tune | 8. singing the blues |
| 4. playing second fiddle | 9. swan song |
| 5. for a song | 10. fiddling while Rome burns |

The following winners will be notified individually by post:

Name	Department
Lui Wai-shan	Hong Kong Police Force
Yeung Yee-wan	Judiciary
Tsui Tik-wei, Iris	Immigration Department
Chan Wan-ting, Winnie	Social Welfare Department
Chan Wing-yan	Highways Department

勘誤：上期“游藝”指“萬佛朝宗”為如來神掌第十式，查為第九式。

Issue No. 64 (June 2016) : Memories

二零一六年六月第六十四期主題：回憶

Issue No. 65 (September 2016) : Fun of Science

二零一六年九月第六十五期主題：科學拾趣

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 42 for details.

歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第四十二期。

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