



## The North Face KOTH Taipo Mountain Marathon

18 December 2011. Sunny and breezy; temperatures between 14-20C.

(Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong)

### Inspirational Start to the New Season

It was great to see so many enthusiastic old and new faces lining up in fine weather conditions for the start of another The North Face KOTH season, my 14<sup>th</sup> holding the stop watch and the 26<sup>th</sup> overall. KOTH has always been about both community spirit and motivational competition over beautiful and – many would say – extreme running terrain. Occasionally runners get injured in such conditions, as can be expected, and yesterday was a case in point with two runners, Anthony Hughes and Rupert Chamberlain, taking tumbles in the early stages. The resulting outpouring of support from fellow runners humbles me. Several people, Nora Senn, Martin Cubbon, and Ann Cheng-Echevarria are the ones I know about, sacrificed their own races to assist Anthony and Rupert to places where they could get medical attention. I salute each of you and also pass on your suggestion that more people consider carrying mobile phones with them on the run and input the race emergency contacts posted at the starting line before the race. This will help us to insure that the injured take the shortest route to medical assistance. Those who did run enjoyed wonderful temperatures and several age/gender course records fell as a result.

### Full Marathon – Back on Top

Lately the buzz amongst the denizen was that Stone Tsang wasn't in top form and that he couldn't train properly with a young family. Wrong! Stone took over on the Ping Feng ridge, annihilated the down hill to Bride's Pool and then cruised to victory, recording the second fastest time ever for the course – just 2 minutes off his own 3:34:47 time in 2007.

Jeremy Ritcey took advantage of some poor directional sense by William Davies and Klayten Smith to finish second. Meanwhile, William and Klayten were crouched over at the waist following hiking ribbons through dense forest in the wrong direction. Afterwards, they told me it could have been a KOTH trail they were following, which I suppose is a complement.

Arnaud Picut ran impressively to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> overall and set a new M-45 course record (3:58:08). Peter Lee was just behind him in M-40 record time (3:58:21), followed by M-45 Michael Maddess. Newcomer Yung Wai Huen was next, followed by Eric LaHaie.

Chan See Kau set an M-50 course record (4:11:11), as did M-55 Ng Chau Yan (4:23:59). Not to be left out in the record setting, Olya Korzh set a new ladies course record (4:29:25) and Aya Noyes set a new F-40 record (4:47:36). Kim Jinhwa was the third lady across the line in a credible 4:54:02 in only her second KOTH race.

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### Half Marathon – King of Siam

Jantaraboon Kiangchaipaiphana is from Thailand and new to Hong Kong. His friends knew he was fast, but none expected that in his very first KOTH race, he would win outright (1:32:24) and come within 76 seconds of Gary Mandy's hallowed course record. Jantaraboon split times suggest that he crushed the field on the up hills and beat them on the down hills as well.

Darren Benson raced strongly for a well deserved second place and still had plenty of energy at the finish to play with his gorgeous son. Darren was followed by Jo Koster who finished third overall while winning the M45 race, a minute ahead of the third open category finisher Bertrand Petit.

Leung Ping took advantage of the fine conditions to set a new M50 record (1:51:27), erasing Mike Watson's name from the record books after nearly 20 years. Before the race Leung confided that he felt good and thought the conditions were right for going for it. Good judgment!

Claire Price not only broke the F40 record, she broke the ladies' course record. Her 1:53:47 put her in 9<sup>th</sup> place overall. Breathing down Claire's neck at the end was Al Chalabi who surprised himself with his first M-40 victory in KOTH. Al credited a major carbo-loading session with his mates on Friday for putting him in the right frame of mind to go for it.

Choi Fu Loi won the M-55 race (2:03:29). Law Kwong Chow won the M-60 race in record fashion (2:06:57) and Lise Harrow won the ladies' open race (2:08:52). Yeung Mei Lun won the F-50 race in yet another course record time of 2:28:36. Yeung described the final descent from Sheung Yung Fung as suicidal, yet the injuries eluded to above all took place on the relatively more straightforward paths on Cloudy Hill and Ping Fung Shan. Go figure.

Podium finishers were pleased with the excellent prizes provided by title sponsor, The North Face, 2XU and Key Sun Zinke. All the racers and I are also grateful to the fabulous marshals who supported and encouraged throughout and for the beverage support provided by Swire Coca-cola.

The next race in the series takes place on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Sai Kung Country Park. See [www.seyonasia.com](http://www.seyonasia.com) for details.

Keith Noyes  
Race Director