



KOTH Altra HK Island Mountain Marathon

5 January 2020. Partly sunny, 18-22 degrees and windy.

(Repulse Bay, Hong Kong)

A beautiful start to 2020

Following steam bath conditions for the last KOTH race, we were due for some good weather and today turned out lovely, with partly cloudy skies and a firm, cool breeze. Times were generally fast despite likely holiday season indulgences.

Full Marathon - European International Elites dominate first KOTH of 2020

Pere Aurell (a world top-10 trail runner from Spain) left local hope Jeff Campbell behind on the Twins and broke a fifteen-year record to win the King of the Hills Alta Hong Kong Island Mountain Marathon in a stunning 2:50:51. Jeff finished in second in 2:53:14, with Paul Fournier third (3:01:44). Jeff actually led for much of the race, but could not respond when Pere went charging past on the steepest and hardest section of the course from Repulse Bay Gap over the first Twin.

Pere's wife, Ragna Debats, from the Netherlands, also lived up to her 2018 Ultra Trail Running Champion pedigree to set a new female course record of 3:21:18 in a family sweep. Zein Williams was the first local across the line in 3:41:11, followed by Valerie Lagarde (3:49:13). Ragna led comfortably throughout and could certainly have gone faster if pushed.

Pere and Ragna are visiting Hong Kong for a couple of weeks for the Hong Kong 100 race and were happy to enjoy a tune up race. Both were hugely complementary of our challenging trails and lovely scenery.

Veteran runners tend to do relatively better against the open runners in tougher weather conditions so most of the top positions in today's fine weather were unexpectedly claimed by the open runners. In the age group races, William Davies (M45) was first across the line (3:18:22), just ahead of M40 Jeremy Ritcey (3:19:11). M40 Johann Santer was second in his age group (3:35:07). Peter Bachmann (M50) won his age group (3:36:21). Cheng Sai Kit Alger was the second M45 (3:38:11), and Eric Yum the second M50 (3:40:52).

Wong Tze Wan once again claimed one of the top performances of the day. 3:44:17 is a fine time for anyone, but an amazing time when you are an M60! Fellow M60 Chan See Kau was right behind (3:47:47) so it is good to see these two pushing and challenging each other. Chan Chi Kin (4:44:22) was third in the category.

James Kwok (3:48:10) was the second M45 runner in, followed by Armin Silbernagi (3:55:02). Pang

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Kin Sung grabbed the final M50 podium spot (4:01:27).

The M55 category saw Kwan Ka Po take home first (4:17:17), followed by Fabio Yau (4:44:36) and Lee Sing Kwan (4:54:38).

An interesting feature of the women's race was that the top three, Ragna (F40), Zein (open) and Valerie (open), are all mothers. Fourth place overall (third open), Lau Wing Yan (3:50:34) was the first non-mother across the line, leading her to contemplate the merits of child birth as part of her long-term training.

Justine Clark was the second F40 runner (4:10:30), followed by Tsang Woon Ming (4:35:18), looking far more tired than usual.

Janet Shum ran an excellent 4:35:24 to win the F50 race, with Eva Lo (4:39:28) not far behind. Freda Cheng grabbed the final prize in 5:23:31.

Half Marathon – Spoils to the bold

Marco Mueller and Dan Falconar were neck and neck at Repulse Bay Gap so the winner would be the one who threw caution to the wind on the final, technical downhill. That turned out to be Marco, who won in a very fast (1:43:34) with Dan opting for self-preservation and finishing in 1:44:27. M40 George Gaffney (1:46:13) finished third overall, followed by third-place open runner Richard Kimber (1:46:16).

Veterans did well overall in this race. M40 Giuseppe Mollica was 6th overall and second in the age group. M45 Jan Littlewood was 7th overall and first in his age group and M50 Michael Galligan was eighth overall and first in his age group. Overall, veterans claimed four of the top 10 spots.

Mark Redfern (1:53:44) grabbed second place in the M45 category with Lee Chun Yin (1:54:42) right behind to grab third place in the M40 category. Frank Riehm (1:57:20) finished third in the M45 category.

Olivier Streun was second in the M50 category (2:05:58), followed by Siegfried Verheijke (2:08:28).

Steve Wong was in good form winning the M55 category (2:06:09), followed by Eric To (2:08:58) and Rudei Wildi (2:18:47).



The M60s had quite a battle with Chan Wai Lam (2:11:50) narrowly beating Derek Irwin (2:12:52) with Wong Yung Ming third (2:29:26).

Suzanne Gifford grabbed her first KOTH win in 2:07:37. Suzanne has always been very fast uphill, but has previously lost time on more technical trails so this was an impressive breakthrough win for her. Fresh off her outstanding The North Face 50 result, Lauren Decoff ran well to claim second place (2:10:09), followed closely by Chung Tsz Man (2:10:58).

F40 Tara Perrin (2:18:42) was the first veteran across the line in 7th place overall, followed by evergreen F50 Camilla Fernstrom (2:24:54), who won her category and placed 9th overall.

Sofie Jacobs was the second F40 runner (2:29:22) with Nozomi Gaffney (2:31:04) close behind in third place in the category.

Nathalie Maitre (2:47:52) was the second F50, followed by Leung Shiu Fung (3:06:01).

Once again today we were blessed with super support from the KOTH volunteers. The forerunners corrected several course arrows that had been removed and all the support people provided tireless service. Special thanks to Gone Running and Swire Coca-cola without whom we could not hold these races and to New Life Plastics for their commitment to full plastic bottle recycling.

The KOTH Altra Lantau Mountain Marathon (www.seyonasia.com/koth) will take place on February 9. For those looking for an alternative to road races through tunnels, come join us on the beautiful trails of Lantau.

Keith Noyes
Race Director