



KOTH Sai Kung Mountain Marathon

28 February 2016. Beautiful blue skies with temperatures of 15-10 degrees.

(Sai Kung, New Territories, Hong Kong)

Best weather of the season

Following a strange season, the weather gods smiled on us today with beautiful, clean blue skies.

This race was the tie breaker for those still fighting for series position and no doubt some of those who had already wrapped up their series position chose not to show up. How else to explain a turnout of only 418 on such a perfect day?

Following lengthy discussions with AFCD, the beloved half marathon course remained unchanged, while the full marathon course was hugely revised. Most people considered the difficulty of the old and the new full marathon courses to be comparable, with the new course having more steep inclines, but also more runnable sections. Conditions did warm up a bit in the sun on the second half so the Bonaqua and Aquarius on offer was particularly welcome and those who did not drink enough early on paid the price later in the race.

Full Marathon – Darren Benson is Back

We hadn't seen Darren Benson on KOTH since the long gone days when he competed in the open category. Then came an email, "Keith, I managed 2:36 in Standard Chartered despite being shattered after North Face. I think I might be able to push the front runners a bit if you let me in." True to his word, Darren pushed the front runners and then left them behind on the way to a 3:49:23 finish and overall victory. Based upon this performance, Darren would be the early favorite to win KOTH in 2016/17.

Baptiste Piyou continues to get stronger and stronger and following a 9th place and a third place finish in his previous two races, Baptiste moved up to second place overall (first open category) and ended up being the only person not named Benson to finish in under four hours (3:58:34). Bravo Baptiste, you won your age group for the series. (Stefano Del Favero was second and Guy Connell third.)

Jeremy Ritcey didn't look like he had much in the tank as he stumbled across the finish line, but by finishing in third (second M40) he secured just enough points to reclaim the King of the Hills crown he last wore 2 years ago. Jeremy has been wildly inconsistent this season, but deserves credit for gutting it out and getting it done. (Jeremy also won the M40 age group overall for the series with Anthony Leung King Yan second and Olivier Joubert third.)

Clement Dumont was 4th across the finish line (second open runner). Clement had made a breakaway after the half way point and at one point had a 90 second lead, but lack of concentration

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once again led him astray as he missed a well-marked turn shortly before the last checkpoint. Clement graciously admitted his own mistake – as a fellow race director he appreciates that the fault rarely rests with the marking. Paul Ridley ran a terrific 4:08:38 to finish fifth overall and third in the open category.

Open runners Mat Leng, Guiseppe Molica and Tommy Wong Hong Hei placed 6th through 8th overall. M45 Yip Chun Fai won his category and placed 9th overall (4:20:12). This fine finish secured Mr. Yip age group victory for the season.

M55 Chan See Kau was 10th overall (4:31:34) and surprised to learn that he had won his category. Chan had grown accustomed to finishing second to Bob Shorrock and did not notice that Bob hadn't started on the day. For the series Chan finished still second in the category to Bob Shorrock, however. Jube Lo Chi Wai finished third overall in the series

M45's Peter Lee and Sean Haggerty were next in and second and third respectively in the age group, but neither completed enough races to qualify for the series title. Those honors went to Barry Hung Fan Tai (2nd) and Alger Cheng Sai Kit (3rd).

Tiger Ho won the M50 race (5:21:29), which allowed him to also lock up the series title. Chan Siu Man was second on the day and for the series with Terrence Lee Ho Chuen third on the day, but not securing enough points to pass Danny Li Ming Tai for third overall in the series.

Christopher Gunns won (5:23:38) his third race out of 3 in the M60 category to lock up the series. Chan Hoi Nam was second on the day and for the series. Nicolas Kaiser was third on the day, but Ma Sheung Yuen was third for the series.

Having already secured first place in the open division for the half marathon, Elsa Jeandedieu ran superbly in her first full distance race to win the ladies event (4:40:28). Interestingly, Elsa was the last female open runner to finish for a couple of hours – the next half dozen plus female finishers were all veterans. F40 Sherrin Loh finished second overall and first in her age category. Sadly she did not complete enough races to compete for the Queen of the Hills title. Nikki Han was the second F40 on the day and the age group winner for the series. Tsang Woon Ming was third on the day and second for the series while Leung Woon Ping finished third.

Queen of the Hills went to Valerie Lagarde, who won without having to race (though she did a great job of fore running) thanks to previously accumulated points. Valerie was also first in the open age category, followed by Hui La Pui.



Malette de la Riva won her third straight race (5:59:55) to secure first place in the F50 series. Tammy Mak King Foon was second for the race and the series. Carolyn Kng was third on the day, with Ceclia Chan third for the series.

Half Marathon – Cale Time

Steve Cale cemented his position as the form half marathoner this year with his third victory out of three races. Crossing the line in 1:36:58, Steve was 99 seconds ahead of second place Kevin Scallan, with Anthony Rocher a further 42 seconds back. It is always hard to tell whether the section after Hoi Ha is bushier than in previous years or not, but for the top three to all finish in under 1:40 is quite good. Steve won the series, followed by David Woo and Anthony Rocher.

M40 Seth Fischer was 4th overall (1:40:19), but did not complete enough races to feature in the series' results. For the age group, Andreas Nessi, Tim Marchant and Frank Riehm finished 2nd, 3rd, and 4th respectively in the race, but 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively for the seires.

M50 Peter Hopper finished 7th overall in the race (1:48:16) for his third consecutive age group win, after finishing second in HK Island race. This secured Peter first overall in the series. Yeung Kwok Keung finished second in the series despite sitting out the last race. Derek Irwin was second across the line, but 4th for the series, while Leung Ping was third across the line and third in the series.

The M50 race saw both Steve Wong and JB Rae-smith having a shot at the title when the race started. Steve Wong turned the tables on JB, who had beaten him the previous year, and ran home the winner of the race (1:54:36) and the series. Things fell apart for JB a bit in the shigg, which allowed both Jon Gilchrist and Olivier Streun to ease past to grab the day's other podium prizes. For the series, JB still managed second, with Jon third.

Having locked up the top three M45 spots already, none of Dwyfor Evans, Peter Bachman or Thomas Hardcastle, bothered to race, though Thomas was kind enough to help with directional marshalling. Instead, Peter Mills won the day (1:58:09), followed by Thomas Carlone and a shocked Eliot Fisk. Proof positive that you can't win if you don't show up.

Law Kwong Chau wrapped up the M60 series with his third victory (2:15:15), ahead of second place Tsui Pak Long and third place Ray Yuen Tak Shing, who also finished in this order for the series.



F40 Iwona Gancarz found the fast course to her liking as she finished 11th overall and won convincingly in 1:53:17. This is Iwona's first year racing KOTH and she ranked first overall for the half marathon series, which is a nice way to begin!

FO Jeannette Wang was second across the line (1:59:51) and also ended up finishing second in the open category for the series behind the above-mentioned Ms. Jeandedieu. F40 Vivian Lee Wing Sze was a further few minutes back and this allowed her claim second in the age category for the race and the series. Ditto for F 40 Kwan Yee Ting who was third for the race and the series.

F50 Leung Siu Fung won both the race (2:47:41) and the series title. Yiu Suk Yin was second in both the race and the series and Icerio Chong Bing Ying was third in the race and for the series.

All prizewinners received coupons from GigaSports and all runners were hydrated thanks to Swire Beverages and served a great post-race snack compliments of East.

The Kin Hang Hiking Club did a fantastic job with the course marking and our great marshals and the supporters from Swire kept everyone's morale high. My thanks go out to all of them both for this race and the entire series

Next up is the annual KOTH Awards Dinner on Thursday, March 10. This is a great chance to share tales of the trail and enjoy a great meal at a reasonable price. See www.seyonasia.com for details. The early bird discount ends on March 3 so best to act quickly.

Keith Noyes
Race Director