



KOTH Sai Kung Mountain Marathon

1 March 2020. Sunny, sweaty and hot, 22-28 degrees, and 80% plus humidity.

(Sai Kung, New Territories, Hong Kong)

In the hot seat

With KOTH one of the few events not cancelled, not even unseasonably warm weather deterred a large crowd hungry for a trail racing fix. Lots of old and new friends came out and with the lack of other races diluting the talent pool, the field was very competitive. And it was also a real roaster of a day marked by the sudden shift to summer running conditions.

Full Marathon – King Campbell the Third

Hot weather frequently leads to more tactical races as racers try to pace themselves and survive to see who will blow up before making a move. Asia Pacific Adventure Team and Philippine star John Ray (Stingray) Onifa went out hard and led through the first 25 km, but then suffered on the first big, exposed climb up to Luk Wu Plateau. Seizing the opportunity, stalkers Jeff Campbell and Michael Skobierski overtook Stingray and raced together until the next big hill where Jeff made his final move, finishing first in 3:49:30 and securing his third consecutive King of the Hills title. “Skobes” finished a strong second (3:51:47) in a welcome return to KOTH.

Ryan Whelan (3:52:30) also caught Stingray on the last section to finish third in the race and secure third place in the series. Stingray finished 4th (3:53:48) in his first KOTH race. We hope he will come back. The top four runners finished with 4 minutes of each other, which is very unusual in a 38-km trail race.

Guillaume Perrot (4:01:22) finished in 5th place and secured just enough points to lock up second place overall for the series. Though missing the podium, Paul Fornier, George Major and Mat Leng all had notably good days and season series placings in the male open category.

Before continuing with the male race narrative, a shout out has to be given to Veronika Vadovicova who finished in 8th place overall (4:15:45) to win the women’s race and set her second course record in a row. Veronika probably could have gone faster, but seemed content to hold hands with her boyfriend, Mat, at every checkpoint and even crossing the finish line. Sadly, Veronika only completed two races and did not qualify for the Queen of the Hills Competition.

Ezra Emerson squeezed into the top ten (4:20:39), winning the M45 race and coming in second in the series. William Davies (4:32:12) despite an ankle sprain was second on the day and first for the series, and Chang Sai Kit Alger (5:01:15) was third on the day and third in the series.



Andrew Graham (4:24:46) won his second consecutive M40 race, but also didn't compete in enough races to qualify for the series. James Pakning Kwok finished second in the race (4:40:01) and second for the series. Third place in the race went to Kwong Hoi Tik (4:49:54). Though not racing on the day, Johann Peter Santer had already accumulated enough points to win the M40 series. Alan Oates finished third in the series despite clearly suffering in the heat today and finishing well below his usual position.

Results in the M50 category exactly mirrored final season podium positions. Peter Bachmann won his third race of the series (4:55:19) and the series title. Eric Yum (5:15:39) was second and second overall in the series and Michael McComb (5:16:10) was third and third overall.

A tightly fought series-long battle between Chan See Kau and Wong Tze Wan in the M60 category came to a final close with Chan See Kau (5:12:05) winning the race and grabbing the series title on the last race tiebreak. Wong (5:13:23) was close behind, but had to settle for second in the race and the series. Both consistently ran impressive age-group times throughout the series. Cheung Wai Lap (5:55:28) finished third in the race, but it was 4th place Wong Hon Wing who finished third for the series.

M55 Hau Ping not only helped to mark the course this past Friday, he also won his category (5:20:28). Hau Ping also won two races in a row, but did not enter enough races to compete for the series crown. Second place Kwan Ka Po (5:48:21) did compete successfully in enough races and won the series. Samson Wong (6:04:54) was third in the race, but it was fourth place Lam Wa who came in second in the series with Lee Sing Kwan third.

Zein Williams finished second in the women's race (4:50:38) to complete an impressive season following the birth of her 5th child and is a deserving Queen of the Hills. Celebrating her recent engagement, Lau Wing Yan finished third in the race (4:54:10) and third in the series. Fredelyn Alberto was a disappointing 5th in the race after an early crash, but amassed enough points to finish second in the series.

Angelika Hahn (5:01:55) won the women's F40 race with Justine Clark (5:33:05) second. However, neither of these ladies competed in enough races for the series. Therefore, it was third place Tsang Woon Ming (5:42:26) who won the series title with Chan Mun Nei second.

The F50 race saw Lo Lan Fa Angel winning in 6:13:58, but second place Eva Lo (6:17:48) capturing the series title and third place Freda Cheng (6:48:46) second in the series.



Full marathon results:

<https://results.racetimingolutions.com/results.aspx?CI=16387&RI=6333&EI=2>

Half Marathon – Stone Cold

In a glorious return to action following 1.5 years injury lay off, Stone Tsang ran tactically at the start and then all out at the end to punctuate his comeback with outright victory (1:37:09) in a closely fought race. It was about 17 years ago that Stone first started running KOTH and made a name for himself as a young King so it is fitting that he chose the KOTH stage to launch his return in the M40 category.

Simon Brouwer (1:37:27) was second overall by not much and the first open runner. Hopefully next year Simon will do more KOTH races following this impressive performance.

Marco Mueller (1:39:10) came in third overall, second in the open age group and first in the age group for the series. Andrea Cloarec (1:41:19) finished third in the open age group, but also did not compete in enough races for the series. This left it to 5th place Rudy Botin to claim second in the series and 7th place Thomas Kitwood to claim third place for the series.

In his first KOTH race, Reto Merazzi (1:45:14) was an impressive winner of the M45 category and 6th overall. This pushed Tim Marchant (1:52:03) down to second in the category, but first for the series. Jeremy Sutch (1:55:02) finished third in the race, but also lacked enough races for the series title. Instead, 6th place Mark Redfearn claimed second overall for the series in the category, with Frank Riehm 5th on the day and third for the series.

Michael Galligan closed a dominant M50 season with another win (1:54:01) for a clean sweep of the series and the overall title. Olivier Streun (2:05:28) was second on the day and second for the series, with Frederick Thierry D'argenlieu (2:15:07) third and third.

Returning to the M40s, second after Stone was Lee Chun Yin (1:58:53) securing enough points to lock up the series title. Pascal Laroumanie (2:09:06) was third on the day, but it was Maxime Vanhollebeke finishing second in the series with Sze Chun Chun third.

Steve Wong (2:07:07) won the M55 race again, his third in a row since finding his form and locked up first in the series. Jon Gilchrist (2:09:57) finished second in the race and third in the series, with Eric To (2:10:13) third in the race and second in the series.



M60 Peter Hopper returned to KOTH in fast form (2:09:15) to pick up where he left off a few years ago. Chan Wai Lam (2:14:40) was second and first for the series. Yau Kwok Tong (2:15:49) finished third in the race, but it was 4th place Derek Irwin who placed second in the series and 5th place Lee Chi Ming who placed third in the series.

Another old friend of KOTH, Elsa Jeandedieu, returned on the day professing to be out of shape, but still winning the ladies' race in 2:05:36. (Is there a French word for "sandbagger"?) Fan Ngon Sin (2:07:22) was second, followed by Suzanne Gifford (2:07:50).

Having wrapped up the series already, Lauren Decoff was content to come in 5th overall and 4th in the open category. Suzanne Gifford managed second for the series, with race no-show Emma Pipkin third.

Another old friend of KOTH, Rachel Sproston, made her first appearance in over ten years. Normally to be found racing the pavement, Rachel won the F40 race (2:08:22), coming in 4th overall. Like fine wine, she even improved on her previous course PB back in her open days.

Vivian Lee (2:20:01) was another returnee to the F40 category following knee injury recovery and looked in good form. Skydiver Natalie Webster (2:23:05) was third and won the category for the series. Sofie Jacobs was 4th on the day and second for the series and Jennifer Pollock was third for the series.

Camilla Fernstrom (2:21:22) won the F50 race both on the day and for the series. Toshie Noda (2:21:45) was the second F50 lady on the day, but did not hang around long enough to collect her prize (Ms. Noda, if reading this, please contact me for your prize). Kate Martin (2:28:04) finished third on the day and second for the series. Nathalie Maitre was 4th on the day and 3rd for the series.

Half marathon results: <https://raceresults.com.hk/event/143/results?round=1001>

This has been an interesting season for KOTH. We are proud to have persevered with all 4 races despite the dual challenges of political protests and Coronavirus. This just seemed like the right thing to do for Asia's oldest trail racing series and we are grateful for the support from the community of runners who came out to race. We are also thankful to Altra and Swire Coca-cola who provided sponsorship for the races and supported our decisions to hold them.

I also cannot say enough good things about our support team. Kin Hang did an amazing job on the course marking. The fore runners corrected every act of sabotage and the sweeps removed every



sign on race day. The registration team did a seamless job and the on course marshals were enthusiastic and efficient.

The last event of the season is the annual KOTH Awards Dinner on Thursday, 19 March. This year we are changing format to serve bento boxes instead of a buffet due to Coronavirus concerns. Please do sign up for this fun evening that affords the chance to swap tales of the trail and cheer the prize winners. First, second and third in each category will receive a personal, name-engraved KOTH coffee mug. Please see www.seyonasia.com for further details.

Keith Noyes
Race Director