

Swire KOTH Taipo Mountain Marathon
Sunday, 9 March 2014. Rain turning to overcast, 16-20 degrees.
Race Report

A day of superlatives

It was the wettest start to a KOTH race in recent memory. Judging by the Facebook pictures of running above the clouds on Ping Feng Shan Ridge, it was one of the most beautiful days to be trail running. It was certainly one of the slipperiest days out on the course. It was also a day for securing category titles and setting some new course records. About 550 runners braved the horrible morning weather and were treated to the aforementioned views and conditions that improved steadily throughout the day. Sometimes just showing up truly is the hardest part.

Full marathon: The man who would be king

Jeremy Ritcey already had two series victories and wasn't going to be denied the chance to regain the King of the Hills title. Jeremy led from the outset and finished in 3:42:03 to bring home the bacon and regain the title he last won in the 2011/12 season.

Jeremy's closest challenger was once again "Super" Bob Shorrocks, who finished less than 2 minutes behind and obliterated the M50 course record in the process. Bob was undefeated in his category in four races this season and got fitter and faster as the season went along. Based upon this trajectory he's a legitimate threat to be the oldest ever King of the Hills next season.

Nicol Boyd ran his best ever KOTH race to finish third overall and second in the open category. Nicol's 3:47:36 also marks him as someone to watch next season. William Davies eased past Jacky Leung in the last kilometer to finish 4th overall and third in the open category. For the series, William finished second and Jacky third in the open category and both can look forward to prizes at the awards dinner on March 20th. Leung Chun Keung, Ng Kwok Lun and John Ellis all had great races to finish 5th through 7th respectively.

Ezra Emerson finished eighth overall and first in the M40 category. This result allowed him to win the category for the series based upon the tie breaker as he and Rupert Chamberlain finished with the same number of points for the series after Rupert crossed the line second M40 on the day. AJ Silbernagi finished third in the category on the day and for the series.

M45 Rob Parks finished in the top ten (4:10:50), won his category and locked up the series victory in a successful day by any measure. Pak Kin Sun finished second in the category, followed by Yuichi Hayashibara. For the series, Barry Hung was second and Pak Kin Sun third.

Returning to the M50 age group, Hau Ping placed second on the day and secured enough series points to pip Chan See Kau for second place overall in the series. Wong Tze Wan finished third on the day, but fourth for the series.

M55 Leung Ping, having already wrapped up the half marathon series in his age group, did his annual run at the full marathon distance with his usual aplomb. In fact, he set a new course record for the age group (4:21:45). Chan Chi Kin finished second and Lee Chi Ming third. For the series, three-time winner Chan Hoi Nam was the victor, followed by Chan Chi Kin and Lee Chi Ming.

M60 Law Kwong Chau dominated his age group for the fourth race in a row. This is the first year we've had M60 as an official category and Law has certainly been the man. Rounding into form Bob Whitehead finished second and secured enough points to finish second in the series. Leung Kam Yuen finished third. They finished in the same order for the series.

A shout out also, for Yu Tung Bo who, at 72, became the oldest competitor to finish a full marathon this year.

All hail the Queen

Denvy Lo continued her rebound into top form. Trailing Olya Korzh at the last checkpoint, Denvy turned on the jets to set a new woman's course record (4:14:19) in winning the race and locking up her first Queen of the Hills title. Denvy can now look forward to UTMF with confidence.

Olya finished second on the day, but will collect a series prize in the half marathon category this season. Mathilde Heaton finished third on the day and second for the series. Emily Woodland came in 5th, but secured enough points for third place in the series.

F40 Emma Drake rolled to victory in her category. Sadly, Emma only had two results this series and is not eligible for an overall prize. Instead, Yuen Kit Shan, 2nd on the day, wins the series. Yuen also, enviably, looks like she should be competing in the junior category. I had to double check her ID before giving her prize to her. Lam Lai Man finished third. Yuen was the series winner, followed by Olivia Luk and Bei Hu.

F50 Tammy Mak completed a season of domination with a final victory (6:03:45). With four victories, she is the undisputed category winner. Poon Yuk Pui finished second on the day and for the series. Chan Kwai Chun was third on the day, however Chan Kit Fong was third for the series overall.

Half marathon: Late bloomer

Sebastien Mitrani has improved his finishing position throughout the series and reached the pinnacle on Sunday, when he secured his first overall victory (1:45:25). Lau Chun Man was second overall and second in the open division. Lau was just 3 seconds ahead of Sam Fletcher in what must have been a heck of a sprint over the final plunge to the finish line. Sebastien's strong finish to the season allowed him to claim the series title, with Nicolas Maes second and Anthony Arthur third.

M45 Jo Koster was 4th overall and once again showed dominance in his age group. With three series victories, Jo had little trouble securing the series title. Michael McComb raced well to earn second place on the day with Gary Grant not far behind in third. Gary captured second overall in the series, while Chow Mun Lok took third.

M40 Seth Fischer was 5th overall and first in his age group despite flying back from the US 24 hours earlier. Seth only completed two races this season and so is not eligible for a season prize. Jeremy Sutch did well to finish second, followed by Sean Haggerty. Dwyfor Evans won the series based upon first places Sai Kung and Lantau and strong results in the other races. Sean Haggerty's fine last race gave him the points to finish second, while Joe Wong Cho Kwong took third.

M50 Yeung Kwok Keung raced for the first time this season and was rewarded with first in his age group in a fine 1:56:47. JB Rae-Smith finished second and won the series after finishing with two firsts and two seconds over the 4 races. Sham Tseng winner Steve Wong finished third. Mark Leeper was a surprise runner up as he had few podium finishes, but had consistent results throughout the series. Ditto for third place Derek Irwin.

M55 Martin Cubbon returned to his winning ways of the previous season with his first victory of this season. Lam Chi Keung finished second and Victor Chin third. With three victories, Leung Ping was the series champion, followed by Leung On and Lam Chi Keung.

M60 Peter Wong won again in the age category that he continues to dominate year after year. Peter also won the series title without a significant challenge. Closest to him on the day and for the series was

72-year's young Frank Pilkington. Lam Yun Kwong finished third. Frank Pilkington earned a much deserved second place in the series, followed by Tsang Hing Keung.

69-years young Bob Nipperess completed his final KOTH race before his forthcoming retirement to France. After being a loyal KOTH competitor for well over a decade, we will certainly miss him.

Fan Sui Ping continued her trail running comeback, this time winning the race and the F40 category in a fine 2:02:07. Coming off the roads (and wearing road flats) the trail must have seemed especially slippery to JoeJoe. Marie McNaughton and Nathalie Maitre grabbed second and third places respectively in the category. For the series, Marie was the champion, followed by Anita Freres and Retha Stroebel.

Emma Bruce (2:08:06) was the first female open runner and second overall. She was followed home by Jinhwa Kim and Charlene Hua. Olya Korzh was the series winner, followed by Emma and Jinhwa.

F50 Yeung Mei Lun remains dominant in her age group and finished in 2:38:07. Sophia Kennelly and Leung Shiu Fung battled hard for second with Sophia finally finishing 27 seconds in front. Leung Shiu Fung was the series champion, followed by Mary Daniels and Leung Choi Wan.

Rounding out the day's superlatives, 10-year old Yuka Nagano became the youngest person ever to complete a KOTH race. We were a little bit worried when she finished alone, but she had dropped her pacer (dad) along the course. Next time she'll need a faster pacer as we prefer to see kids this age accompanied by a guardian on the trails. Yuka ran 3:04:45, which is a great result! With endurance legend John Lane passing away last year and Yip Man Lun retired, it is inspiring to see this next generation getting ready to take up the torch.

Once again, thanks go out to the fabulous marshals, the Kin Hang Hiking Club and Hang Hang Hiking Club, and Swire for the great refreshments at the end.

The annual awards dinner takes place on Thursday, 20 March at Fat Angelos. Please see www.seyonasia.com for details. First, second and third place series winners in each category will be given at the awards dinner a personalized KOTH coffee mug as well as a Columbia Omni-freeze Zero baselayer and a \$500 cash voucher.

See you at the dinner and happy trails.

Keith Noyes
Race Director