



KOTH Taipo Mountain Marathon

31 January 2016. Overcast and 16-12 degrees.

(Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong)

Ring in the new course and thanks for the bad weather respite

After remaining more or less unchanged for over 30 years, the first half of the KOTH Taipo course had to be changed to accommodate new requirements of AFCD (who don't seem to understand trail running or trail runners and don't seem bothered that they don't understand.) The new course required deviating from the Ping Feng Shan ridge immediately after Wong Leng rather than continuing along the ridge to Shun Yung Feng. The new course is 0.5 km longer than the old course, but probably runs a tad faster as it misses out the undulation along the last 1.7 km of ridgeline and skips the very technical downhill from Shun Yung Feng. Runners seemed to like the new course, but all agreed that it is actually more dangerous accident wise than the old course due to the speeds reached on the downhill (see comments above about AFCD not understanding trail running).

Runners also enjoyed far better weather than the arctic conditions of the previous week and the rain held off completely to make for a cool, but very pleasant day for running. The main complaint on the day was that asshole hikers had removed signs in the Sha Lo Tung section. Our fore runner was able to correct most, but not all of the tampered markings before the lead pack of runners arrived so many runners clocked an extra 1.5 km via Hok Tau Reservoir before the big climb to Wong Leng. Those people who tamper with course markings are stupid and dangerous. They have no idea what trouble they can cause. It is a safety issue that eludes their pea brains. Just once I'd like for us to catch one of them in the act...

Full Marathon – Two Man Race

Michael Skobierski took the lead after Sha Lo Tung and led from the front the rest of the way with Pierre-Andrew Ferriere hot on his heels. By Kuk Po CP 5 Michael had opened up a 100 second lead and was able to hold this lead the rest of the way. Michael finished in 3:35:47 and Pierre-Andrew in 3:37:48. After showing great potential in the KOTH Lantau race earlier this month, Michael confirmed his status as a top trail runner in HK. Baptise Piyou surged passed a tiring Guy Connel at the end to finish third (3:42:55) with Guy fourth.

Jeremy Ritcey finished 5th overall and first in his new M40 age category (3:48:32). (Jeremy, one of the few benefits of getting older is that you get to enter a new age category.) Fast open category runners Clement Dumont, Stefand Del Favero and Ng Kwok Lun finished 6th, 7th, and 8th overall respectively. Bob Shorrocks was 9th and first in the M55 category (3:54:54). Bob may be the only person who has won his age group in every KOTH race he has ever entered.



Fully recovered after a hospital stay, Ezra Emerson finished second in the M40s and 11th overall (4:22:05). Olivier Joubert finished third in the category.

Mark Walton was 12th overall and first in the M45 category (4:22:45). He was closely followed by Yip Chun Fai in the same category with Barry Hung Fan Tai coming in third.

Chan See Kau was 15th overall and second amongst the M45s with Jube Lo Chi Wai third in the age group.

Tiger Ho was first in the M50 age group in a somewhat pedestrian 5:07:38. This is one case where getting older does not bring any benefit in terms of age groups as the 55 year olds have consistently outperformed the 50 year olds this season. Danny Li Ming Tai was second in the age group, followed by Chan Siu Man.

Christopher Gunns ran 45 minutes faster than the last time he did the course several years ago and was rewarded for his efforts with a fine time of 5:13:59 and first in the M60 age group. Chan Hoi Nam was second and Cheung Yeung Kui third.

The women's race was more of a training social than a competition. Nia Cooper and Valerie Lagarrde ran together and encouraged each other the entire way. Finally, Valerie fell off the pace slightly and Nia won in 4:38:11 with Valerie a minute back. Sherrin Loh was a bit further back (4:48:26) in the third place overall and first in the F40 age group.

Emily Woodland (who seems to have done every race every weekend this year) finished in 4th overall and third in the open category. Tsang Woon Ming finished second in the F40 age group and Sabrina Dumont third.

Mallette de la Riva was triumphant again in the F50 age group (6:03:07), ahead of Tammy Mak King Foon and Sophia Kennelly.

Half Marathon – David Woo's Day

After several close calls, David Woo broke through to win his first KOTH half marathon in 1:47:28. Romain Riche was only 5 seconds behind so we can imagine how intense the final pounding downhill must have been. Third place Kevin Scallan was a further 36 seconds back in one of the tightest one, two, three finishes we've seen in a while.

Dwyfor Evans announced after the race that he had recently discovered downhill running mojo. It certainly was on exhibition this da as Dwyfor was 4th overall and first in the M45 age group (1:51:26).

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Continuing his run of spectacular form, Peter Hopper finished fifth overall (1:52:37) and first in the M55 age group.

Peter Bachman was 6th overall and second in the hyper-competitive M45 category. Thomas Hardcastle was third in the category and tenth overall, meaning that M45s captured three of the top 10 places.

Just outside of the top ten at numbers 11 and 12 were F40 female veterans Emma Bruce (1:54:57) and Iwona Gancarz (1:57:46) who convincingly won and placed respectively in the women's race. Given the slippery conditions and technical nature of the trail, all times under 2:00 hours were very impressive on the day.

M55 Leung Ping was next across the line (second in his age group), just ahead of M50 winner JB Rae-Smith, who with a time of 1:59:04 was the last runner to manage under 2 hours on the day. The other podium finishers in these two age groups were M50 Steve Wong (2:07:48), M50 Leung Shu Wah (2:08:14) and M55 Yeung Kwok Keung (2:08:34).

Andreas Nessi grabbed line honors in the M40 age group, (2:05:35), ahead of Tim Marchant and John Kearns.

Law Kwong Chow was the first M60 across the line (2:18:54). Law was one of the course markers on Friday and the practice seems to have helped on race day. Tsui Pak Long was second in the age group, followed by Ray Yuen Tak Shing.

Returning to the ladies' race, Elsa Jeandedieu was third across the line and first in the open category (2:10:17). Vivian Lee Wing Sze was fourth across the line and third in the F40 category – completing a very impressive day for the veterans against their younger rivals. Jinhwa Kim was sixth overall and second in the open category, with Gloria Kha third.

The F50 race saw an impressive run from Yiu Suk Yin (2:55:28) to capture first. Man Yiu Fai (3:25:04) was second, and Ho Wun Cheung third.

With three races completed, a few of the season honors have been wrapped up, while most will be settled at the last race on Sunday, 28 February in Sai Kung. The date for the annual KOTH Awards Dinner has been confirmed for Thursday, 10 March. Further details on both the KOTH Sai Kung race and the award dinner will be posted shortly. See www.seyonasia.com for details.



Finally, a big thanks to the supporters who braved the cold weather, East for the fantastic catering (how good was that pumpkin soup at the finish!) and the Swire group of companies for making the event possible.

Keith Noyes
Race Director