



KOTH Taipo Mountain Marathon

27 January 2019. Sunny and 15-19 degrees.

(Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong)

Pollution bullet dodged again

For the third straight race, overnight wind brought pollution levels down from horrendous to merely a tad on the high side in urban locations. Luckily in the country parks and up on the ridges it was even better. On the temperature side, it did get a tad warm in the sun, but overall runners reported comfortable running conditions.

Due to typhoon damage and AFCD policy, we had to do a substantial reroute of the second half of the course, though it is hard to say whether the revised course was much faster or slower than the previous course.

Full Marathon – Cambell versus the pack

With a second consecutive triumph, Jeff Campbell is now well positioned to win the King of the Hills title for a second consecutive year. Jeff glided to victory in 3:46:37. However, unusually, he actually lost time after the first half split. This result is best explained by pack mentality as a bunch of people hung in close enough to Jeff to smell blood and push each other. Guillaume Perrot held second place through CP 5, before succumbing to Guy Connell over the final 6 km. Guy was in turn pushed by Baptiste Puyou and moved up from 4th to second place and made up a minute on Jeff over the second half to finish in second place overall (3:48:43) with Guillaume Perrot just a smidgen behind in third place (3:48:57) and Baptiste Puyou 4th in 3:49:37.

The race was dominated by the open runners as Mat Leng, Logan Marshall and Ethan Ko took the next 3 places before a vet could finally find a spot on the leader board. That vet was Iron Man Triathlete Thomas Hardcastle, who finished 8th overall and first in the M50+ category (4:20:50). With the ice finally broken, the vets filled the next several places.

9th overall and first in the M45+ was Peter Bachmann (4:22:21), followed by M40+ Johann Peter Santer (4:28:24), fellow M40+ William Davies (4:30:32 despite a massive detour), second M50+ Chu Ming (4:30:38) and second M45+ Matthew Kennedy (4:33:16).

Cheng Sai Kit Alder (4:41:51) rounded out the M45 podium positions. Kok Pakning (4:49:07) did the same for the M40+ and a bloodied but unbowed Nicolas Gontard (4:54:00) did so for the M50+.

The M55+ race saw Hau Ping (4:44:23) in dominant form again. Chan See Kau (he of the bicycle helmet) finished second (4:58:01), followed by old friend, Peter Faarbaek (5:08:55), who is visiting



HK following several years away in Dubai. Peter admitted that the hills of Dubai do not prepare one for HK and cited a recent race in Dubai with similar altitude change that took him the same amount of time, despite being 8 km longer.

Christopher Gunns managed the rare feat of pacing his wife to keep her happy and winning the M60+ race at the same time (5:23:09). Chris is now undefeated in his age group in 10 straight KOTH races, an amazingly consistent streak. Chan Chi Kin (5:265:08) was second, followed by Chan Wai Lam (5:48:24).

Chris Kwan Yee Ting (4:56:58), won the women's race as well as the F40+ division. Since mid-November, Chris has completed three 100 km races, 3 KOTH full races, plus other races each week that she hasn't told me about. All of this racing is a but an appetizer for her assault on the "4 Trails" over CNY. Let's hope that she can continue this frenetic racing schedule without breaking down.

Another woman who has raced a considerable amount this season is second place overall finisher Cheung Chiu Man Janice (5:07:27), who was also the first open female runner. It would appear that the battle for Queen of the Hills will come down to Chris and Janice and be decided at the final race on March 3.

Looking fresh at the finish was third place overall and F40+ second place runner Leung Woon Ping (5:15:30). Leung was followed home by second place open runner, Anata Zhang (5:20:56), sporting strips of sports tape from ankle to thigh. Joanne Eades recovered sufficiently from ending "dry January" 48 hours earlier "in spectacular fashion," to finish third in the F40 race (5:31:43) and Aiquil Safiulina claimed the final female open prize in 6:07:00.

Yeung Mei Lun was her usual exuberant self, finishing first in the F50 category (5:41:59). Mei Lun has a great running resume that she continues to build upon and exhibits greater joy running than just about anyone I have ever met. Eva Lo was also all smiles finishing second (5:47:10) with Poon Yuk Pui third (7:04:58).

Half Marathon – Flyin' Ryan

This year's form half marathoner, Ryan Whelan, was once again too strong and fast for his rivals. Ahead by over a minute already at the first checkpoint, Ryan finished comfortably in the lead in 1:44:54. Ryan is now three for 3 and has locked up the series title.



Fellow open runner, Rudy Bottin (1:48:56), finished second before an onslaught of veteran runners. Giuseppe Mollica was third overall (1:49:02) and first in the M40+ category. Jan Littlewood was 4th overall (1:49:39) and first in the M45+ category and Mo Develin was 5th overall (1:49:46) and first in the M50+ category. In an unusual turn of events, veterans would claim 5 of the top 10 spots in the race.

Paul Byrne finished 6th (1:53:18) and third in the open category before the veteran siege continued. Michael Galligan (1:54:18) was 7th overall and 2nd in the M50+ category and a limping John Ellis uncharacteristically dropped down to the half marathon to finish second in the M40+ category (1:56:11) and 9th overall.

Credit to open runners Alisdair Burns and James Park for also cracking the top ten on the day.

Tim Marchant was second in the M45+ category (2:00:35). Mark Redfern finished third in the M40 category (2:02:10), Olivier Streun finished third in the M50 race (2:03:18) and Joe Wong finished third in the M45 category, also in 2:03:18.

Wong Tze Wan was once again indomitable in the M55 category (2:05:04), followed by Steve Wong (2:07:57) and Eric To (2:11:35).

Peter Wong Chun Tong (2:35:57) was two minutes slower than last year, but this proved good enough to win the M60+ race, ahead of Hung Wai Chun (2:36:19) and Tsui Pak Long (2:43:14).

Wendy Porterfield had an awesome race and deservedly won the women's crown (2:11:17) with husband and baby cheering her on at the finish. Wendy was chased home by F40 stalwart Vivian Lee (2:11:58) who finished second overall and first in her age group. Open runner Suzanne Gifford (2:13:09) was third overall and second in her age group. TNF runner Stephanie Mak finished third in the open category and 4th overall (2:16:56).

Camilla Fernstrom had a commanding performance (2:26:37) to finish 5th overall and first in the F50 category. F40 Delphine Riche Franz was close behind (2:28:26), grabbing second in the F40 category.

Ada Chan (2:29:07) was second in the F50 category, followed by Natalie Webster (2:33:08), third in the F40 category and Sophia Kennelly (2:37:55), third in the F50 category.

The annual awards ceremony will take place on Thursday, March 28 at Café 8 at Central Ferry Pier. Details will be posted soon. Space is limited so please sign up when the registration is posted to



www.seyonasia.com and to the Friends of KOTH Facebook page. We will hand out top 3 series prizes from Columbia, as well as personalized KOTH mugs, to the top 3 in each category winner. This is a great opportunity to meet your fellow runners in a different setting and share tales of the trail.

In the meantime, while some of the final positions are already decided, there are still lots of placings still up in the air. The final race (and also the tie breaker race in the event of a series tie) will take place on March 3 at Repulse Bay Beach. This is the first time in a few years that we are able to return to the popular beach start and finish location where runners can finish their race with an ocean swim and a shower.

Finally, my sincere thanks to the marshals for great checkpoint support, forerunning and sweeping, to Kin Hang for the course marking and to GigaSports and Swire Coca-cola for making the race possible.

Happy trails!

Keith Noyes
Race Director