

KOTH Lantau – Sunday, 9 February 2020

14-18 degrees and mostly cloudy

No face masks required

With much of Hong Kong in a panic and most races cancelled, it was an honor to be able to hold a King of the Hills race today. With a history dating back to 1984, KOTH has not suffered many interruptions and people were genuinely grateful for the opportunity to get out on the trails and run. A big thanks to everyone who came out, adhered to the hygiene protocols and made today a really fun event.

Full Marathon – A family affair

Like two brothers, Mat Leng and Guillaume Perrot, ran together from the beginning. Friends and teammates, they even crossed the line holding hands. The timing system says Mat was a second faster (3:48:57) than Guillaume (3:48:58) so that is the order in which they are ranked.

Now why did they run together and encourage each other in an individual event? It turns out that they were most afraid of being beaten by a third teammate (and Mat's girlfriend), Veronika Vadovicova. Their strategy worked...but barely. Veronika finished third overall (3:51:53), smashed the female course record into oblivion and beat both of them by 3 minutes over the last interval, suggesting that if the race had been a bit longer she would have won outright. Veronika has recently moved to HK (she came in second in the Vibram 100 last month) and looks set to rewrite a lot of records in the near future.

George Major was 4th overall and third bloke across the line (3:57:40). M45 Michael Ormiston finished 5th (4:01:57) and was the only veteran finisher in the top eight. 9th place overall (4:11:03), Andrew Graham running in the M40 category was the second veteran and was followed by a flood more.

M45 Ezra Emerson (4:12:25), running in racing flats, finished second in his category as well as finishing in the top 10 over all. He was chased the entire way by fellow M45 Jono Woodhouse (4:13:39 and third in category) and the second M40 runner, Johann Santer (4:15:44). Julien Bonnard (4:21:59) finished third amongst the M40s

There was some brutal competition in the M50 division. Wary of his rivals faster downhill skills, Peter Buchmann set a grueling pace up to the Buddha and over Lantau Peak. Alas, Michael McComb still caught him on the downhill and sauntered home with the age group victory (4:18:13) while Peter paid for his earlier pacing and slipped to second in 4:27:52. Eric Yum (4:39:48) rounded out the category.

Speedster Chan See Kau once again dominated the M60 category with a blistering 4:45:09 run. Cheung Wai Lap (5:04:44) was second in the category, followed by Wong Hon Wing (5:36:37).

Hau Ping not only helped with the course marking on Friday, he won outright the M55 race with a fine 4:52:35 finish. Kwan Ka Po (5:34:29) was second and Kenji Noguchi (5:47:48) third.

Returning to the ladies' race, Zein Williams ran an excellent 4:31:04 to finish second. But for having to race against international superstars two races in a row, she would have two victories to celebrate return to the trails following the birth of her fifth child. Talk about ironwomen! Fredelyn Alberto

(4:43:13) finished third in a show of the power of persistence and training. Fredelyn struggled to make the cut off times in this race a few years ago and is now a podium finisher.

Looking completely relaxed, Tsang Woon Ming won the ladies' F40 race in 5:08:08 seemingly without breaking a sweat. Habiba Benahmed (5:21:11) pushed hard and was rewarded with second place with Jinko Takeshige (5:34:05) finishing third on her home Lantau turf.

Eva Lo ran well (5:55:15) to win the ladies' F50 race. Wong Ping Yee (6:03:44) and Janet Shum (6:08:01) were not far behind.

Half Marathon – A battle of contrasting styles

Ryan Whelan feared Clement Dumont might pass him going down off Sunset Peak so he gunned it up the hill to open some distance...and still got passed on the downhill. He did recover on the long South Lantau Trail contour to earn victory in 1:18:36, with M40 veteran Clement (1:19:50) second overall and first in the veteran category (yes Clement, you are still superfast, but your age reveals that you are a veteran.)

Up and coming Harry Tabor (1:21:07) finished third overall and is showing title contender potential. Simon Brouwer (1:22:01) was fourth and the third open runner, followed closely by Bryan Crane (1:22:48).

George Gaffney (1:24:39) was the second M40 veteran across the line with Lee Chun Yin (1:33:14) third in the category.

M50 Michael Galligan was dominant again (1:30:35) in his category to lock up the series title. There was some confusion in the race timing system over the age/categories of those following him, but it should be Siegfried Verheijke (1:37:46) in second and Olivier Streun (1:40:33) in third. Just behind Olivier was longtime friend of KOTH, Rob James (1:40:35) running his last race before repatriating to England. Please come visit us again anytime Rob.

Tim Marchant (1:31:06) was in fine form to win the M45 category. Mark Redfearn (1:33:21) and Ng Wai Lun (1:35:36) were not far off the pace.

Steve Wong (1:42:38) won the M55 category with Eric To (1:42:58) second and Jonathan Gilchrist (1:43:12) third. (I need to adjust the prizes for all the of the M55 category winners.)

Chan Wai Lam (1:45:45) ran well to win the M60 race. Derek Irwin (1:47:19) chased valiantly, but wisely showed caution over the final three km where he has tripped up before. Lee Chi Ming (2:00:12) was third.

In form Lauren Decoff shrugged off a Friday night of Champagne celebration to win the ladies' race (1:40:19). Glad that she was able to recover quickly. Emma Phipkin (1:41:55) finished second with Suzanne Gifford (1:45:20) third.

Natalie Webster (1:50:40) ran well to win the F40 race. Jennifer Pollock (2:11:08) was second and May Lau (2:18:28) third.

Kate Martin (1:59:48) won a competitive F50 race as well as coming in under the 2-hour mark. Being chased by second-place Nathalie Maitre (2:03:03) no doubt provided some impetus. Corinna Wong Kit Mui (2:08:48) was third.

This is also the race each year where the kids come out (we are happy for minors to join the race as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian). 9.5- year old Karson Yeung Tsung Chit was the youngest this year and finished in an impressive 2:24:56. He has improved by 40 minutes in the last two years and should soon be challenging for a podium spot soon on this trajectory. The race director's progeny also acquitted themselves well. Almost-12 years old Kaya finished in 2:16:58 and 10-year old Luka finished in 3:00:27 and then annoyingly said that she felt fresh enough to complete the entire race again. And the biggest kid of them all, 77-year old Frank Pikington finished in 2:48:29. Frank continues to be an ageless wonder.

Special thanks to the volunteers who came out despite the virus alert and to our sponsors at GoneRunning and Swire Coca-cola for continuing to support this healthy endeavor.

The next race takes place in Sai Kung on 1 Mach and we plan to go ahead unless the authorities tell us we can't. Race details will be posted to www.seyonasia.com and to Friends of KOTH Facebook page.

Happy trails.

Keith