



## KOTH Hong Kong Mountain Marathon

(Repulse Bay, HK, Sunday 29 November 2015. Temp. 20-28 degrees; bright blue skies.)

### First course change since 1998

For the first time in the history of the HK Island KOTH course we had to use an alternative route. This has come about due to a new AFCD policy to force trail races onto the major trails of Hong Kong and off of some of the more obscure and rougher trails that we all love. The impact of this policy on the HK Island course is less significant than the other races in the series, but still significant. The course this year was 0.7 km shorter and the most technical downhill of the race was replaced by a paved downhill. This makes comparison with historical records nearly impossible, though most people agree that the new course is somewhere between 5-10 minutes faster than the old course. We only hope that AFCD will have a change of thinking about its misguided policy one day so that we can return to running the definitive version of the course.

### Full Marathon: Veterans Ritcey and Price rollick home

M-40 veteran Jeremy Ritcey has returned to HK and seems finally to be rounding into the form he showed when he departed 1.5 years ago as an open category runner. Running boldly from the start of the Violet Hill climb, Jeremy romped home in 3:04:04. Jeremy is a multiple time King of the Hills and he is now in pole position for KOTH this season.

F-40 veteran Claire Price returned to the KOTH full marathons for the first time in several years and dominated the ladies race with a time of 3:21:56. Claire was 6<sup>th</sup> overall and her time was about 14 minutes faster than the previous female course record. This is what makes it so frustrating to try to compare the records. My opinion is that Claire's running today, had it been on the old course, would have broken the record by some margin.

Open category runner John Ellis, fresh off a Baron of Bowen triumph, showed great speed on the latter part of the race to slowly pick off those ahead of him, finally catching Stefano Del Savero just before the final descent to Repulse Bay and finishing in a well deserved second place overall (3:11:21). Stefano was third, less than a minute behind.

M55 Bob Shorrocks found his new age category to his liking. He came in 4<sup>th</sup> overall (3:14:06) in a time that was 23 minutes faster than the previous age group course record. I'm pretty confident that Bob would have set a record today on the old course as well.

Ng Kwok Lun was 5<sup>th</sup> overall, while grabbing third place in the open category. Then, following Claire, and open runners Guiseppe Mollica and Tommy Wong Hon Hei, Michael McComb came

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through with an M50 winning time of 3:24:59. M45 winner Yip Chun Fai was just over a minute behind and the tenth runner overall.

M45 Peter Lee had a quick recovery from Trailwalker to finish second in his age group with Alger Cheng Sai Kit grabbing third in the category.

F. Marco and Olivier Joubert battled it out for second and third in the M40 category with Mr. Marco placing and Mr. Joubert showing.

Hau Ping placed comfortably second in the M50 category with Billy Fung Kwok Hong third. In the M55's Chan See Kau finished second and Chim Yiu Cheung third.

Christopher Gunns won the M60 category (4:13:40), ahead of serial winner Chan Hoi Nam and fireplug Law Kwong Chow.

At the same time, the ladies were having some interesting battles behind Claire. Valerie Lagarde was on the mixed team winner at OTW last week and was afraid that she would be too tired to race today. This fatigue did not stop her from being the second lady across the line (first open category) in 3:44:06. Nia Cooper chased valiantly, but had to be content with third female overall and second in the open category. Tsang Woon Ming (3:57:51) was 4<sup>th</sup> overall and second amongst the F40s. Emily Woodland rounded out the podium in the open category as did Nikki Han in the F-40 vets.

Tammy Mak King Foon won the F-50 race quite handily (5:24:09) ahead of Cecilia Chan.

### Half Marathon – The fast pack

Seldom has a race been so competitive at the sharp end. No fewer than 10 people bolted off from the start with legitimate aspirations of winning. The result was a take-no-prisoners cracking pace.

By Tai Feng Au, four runners, Steve Cale, Jeffrey Falconer and Sam Fletcher had gained a bit of separation and then held exactly this order the rest of the race. Steve's 1:40:32 winning time is the fastest ever run at a KOTH HK Island event so this requires some comparison to Neil Tait's legendary 1:41:57 in 2003. Neil's split at Tai Feng Au was a full two minutes faster than Steve's, even before taking into account the longer, more technical second half of the original course. Again, I will risk the disagreement of many, but I suspect that if Steve had been running the original course today, he would likely have been about 4-6 minutes slower than Neil's course record.

Open runners Anthony Rocher, David Woo, and Nicolas Maes captured spots 5-7 respectively, before **SEYON ASIA LIMITED**, House G, Ah Kung Wan, Clearwater Bay, Hong Kong  
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M-40 Seth Fischer galloped home in 8<sup>th</sup> overall and first in his age group (1:50:05). Joe Wong was second in the age group, followed by Frank Riehm in third.

The M55 age group proved to be wildly competitive. Perennial winner and pre-race favorite Leung Ping had to settle for third place as both Peter Hopper (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Yeung Kwok Keung (1<sup>st</sup> in 1:58:01) were faster on the day. Several later finishers in the category commented that if Leung Ping could only manage third, then they had no chance.

The first three M55s were so fast in fact, that the M50s were all lucky to be too young to compete with these guys. Last year's M50 winner, JB Rae-Smith, picked up where he left off to win the category in 2:07:10, with John Gilchrist (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Steve Wong (3<sup>rd</sup>) close behind.

Tsui Pak Long (2:29:04) had his way in the M60 category, followed by Ray Yuen Tak Shing and Frank Pilikington. Frank by the way, also won the John Lane Prize as the oldest runner to complete the race. Frank is a sprightly 73 years old.

Road demon Iwona Gancarz is fairly new to HK, but is adapting quickly to the trails. F40 Iwona won the ladies race on her first attempt (2:01:08). This is over one minute faster than the previous F40 record and only seconds off the course record, but again, I think the older record stands as the faster time based upon the estimated time adjustment.

Zein Williams was second overall and the first open runner (2:04:38). SCMP columnist and hiking mom Jeannette Wang finished third overall and second in the open category, less than a minute ahead of Elsa Jeandedieu.

Vivian Lee Wing Sze was the second F40 finisher ahead of Kwan Yee Ting.

F50 Joanne Brown won her age group in an impressive 2:24:08. Again, this is two minutes faster than the previous age group record, but probably not fast enough to say definitively faster than the time on the old course. Leung Siu Fung celebrated her birthday today by coming in second in the category (3:05:26). What's most impressive is that today was Siu Fung's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Icerio Chong Bing Ying rounded out the podium.

The next race in the series takes place on Lantau Island, on Sunday, January 3, 2016. Please see [www.seyonasia.com](http://www.seyonasia.com) for details.

This series cannot take place without the generous support of title sponsors, East and GigaSports and without the beverage support of Swire Coca-cola. All the racers and I are also grateful to the **SEYON ASIA LIMITED**, House G, Ah Kung Wan, Clearwater Bay, Hong Kong  
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fabulous marshals who support and encourage throughout.

Keith Noyes

Race Director