

KOTH Lantau Mountain Marathon

(Nam Shan, Lantau, Hong Kong. 3 January 2016. 18-19 degrees, foggy and drizzling.)

The strange new KOTH Lantau world of 2016

For the first time in memory, it rained during an early January KOTH race. Regular drizzle made for slippery conditions and generally slower times, but did succeed in cleaning up the noxious air plaguing the city the previous day.

This was also the first running of a new KOTH Lantau full marathon course in order to meet the guidelines of the powers that be at AFCD, who don't seem to have any understanding of why we like trail running. To avoid the "off piste" descent to Tung Chung, the new course added about 5 km of distance and this required a new, earlier start to the full marathon. For most people this meant about 20-30 minutes extra to finish the route. Thankfully, the half marathon route remained unchanged.

Full Marathon – Davies in fine form

Last season's KOTH, M-40 Will Davies, fought off early challenges from Jeremy Ritcwy, Michael Skobierski and Stefano Del Faverno to pull away over Lantau Peak and win in 4:02:13. Will was the form runner on the day and looks a serious contender to repeat as King of the Hills.

Stefano surged past a struggling Michael Skobierski on the final South Lantau Trail section to claim second, with Michael 3rd and Guy Connell fourth and third in the open category.

M55 Bob Shorrock finished a fantastic 5th place overall (4:13:22), followed by a long gap before 6th place Anthony Leung (also the second M40 runner) finished in 4:34:35. Open runner Romain Demare was seventh, with M40 Ezra Emerson in 8th overall and 3rd in the M40 category. Open runner Baptiste Puyou finished 9th and M50 stalwart Hau Ping finished 10th overall and first in his age group. M55 Chan See Kau finished 11th overall and 2nd in his age group. Jube Lo Chi Wai claimed 3rd in the M55 category while finishing in the top 25 overall.

Barry Hung Fan Tai and Alger Cheng Sai Kit battled it out for supremacy in the M45 age groups with Barry beating Alger home by about 3 minutes. Juan Delgado was third in the age group a further 4 minutes behind.

Returning to the M50s, Tiger Ho finished 2nd in the category, just ahead of Danny Li Ming Tai.

Chan Hoi Nam dominated the M60 race (5:37:40). Ma Sheung Yan was second and Nicholas Kaiser third.

Valerie Lagarde was the first female finisher (5:02:59) and 16th overall. Valerie seems to have finally put post-OTW muscle soreness behind her and appears ready to run some fast times this year. She will need to maintain her form because F40 Nikki Han was less than 6 minutes behind and picking up pace toward the end. Sayaka Matsumoto finished third amongst the women and second in the open category, while Chan Mo Kwan finished 4th overall and second in the F40 veteran category. Despite all of her holiday indulgences,

Joanne Eades managed 3rd amongst the F40s and 5th female overall. Mallette de la Riva had the F50 age category to herself, but still finished strongly in 6:22:52, which also placed her 8th overall.

Half Marathon – Cale Again

Steve Cale recorded his second consecutive KOTH half marathon triumph (1:22:43), turning a 50 second lead over David Woo at Pak Kong Au into a 3-minute victory. David finished in third last year and improved his time this year by 5 minutes and earned second place for his efforts. Anthony Rocher rounded out the top three podium finishers with a 1:27:31 time.

Older, but still fast, Jan Littlewood returned to KOTH after a few year hiatus to win the M40 race in 1:30:39. Jan finished some distance ahead of the other prize winners in the category (Andreas Nessi , 2nd and Tim Marchant, 3rd).

Jan wasn't that far ahead, however, of M55 Peter Hopper who had gone out and practiced the course in order to turn the tables on Yeung Kwok Keung, who had topped him at HK Island KOTH. Peter ran a fine 1:33:24 (only 33 seconds off the age group course record), to see of both Yeung and third place Leung Ping.

Thomas Hardcastle finished 10th overall and first amongst the M45s (1:33:53). Thomas faced stiff competition from Dwyfor Evans (2nd), Peter Bachman (3rd) and Sean Haggerty (4th) who all finished within a few minutes of each other.

A competitive M50 race saw Kwok Ching Po take home the gold (1:41:23) with Leung She Wah and Steve Wong close behind.

Lee Kwong Chow was the clear M60 winner (2:00:57) with Tsang Hing Keung second and Tsui Pak Long third.

Zein Williams ran a devastating race to capture the female title in 1:33:56, which placed her 11th overall. Elsa Jeandedieu was second and last year's winner, Emma Bruce, third overall and first amongst the F40 veterans. Jinhwa Kim returned to KOTH to capture 4th overall and third in the open age group.

Kwan Yee Ting was the second F40 veteran and Tsang Woon Ming the third.

F50 Tammy Mak King Foon returned to her winning ways (2:16:18), ahead of Susan Mifsud and Leung Siu Fung.

The full age range of KOTH participants was on display today. Ever-young Frank Pilkington, on the cusp of his 74th birthday finished in 2:21:51 and Kaya Noyes, still only 7 years and 10 months old, finished in 3:16:55 and became the youngest person ever to complete a KOTH race.

Once again the team from East provided a great finish area meal and Giga Sports provided great prizes to all the category winners and Swire Coca-cola kept everyone well hydrated. My great thanks also go out to the marshals who did a superb job in the wet conditions,

Also my thanks to the course markers and fore runners for a superbly marked course and to the sweeps who have already taken down the signs and ribbons today before the sun set.

The next race of the series takes place in Taipo on Sunday, 31 January 2016. For further information, please see www.seyonasia.com.

Happy trails!

Keith Noyes
Race Director