

KOTH Lantau – Sunday, 7 January 2018

19-20 degrees with variable weather

And the rain let up and the sun came out...

Woke up in the morning to the sound of pounding rain, followed shortly thereafter by the first of several calls along the lines of “please tell me the race is cancelled.” However, with no thunder storm warnings, T8 or black rain warnings, there was no legitimate excuse to cancel the race and stay in bed.

Impressively, 432 people showed up to race in the inclement weather and then things began to improve. The rain stopped, the wind blew the clouds away and the sun even peaked out a few times. The pictures I have seen from up high on the course are gorgeous and it clear that those who got out of bed to race were rewarded with a pretty sensational day.

Full Marathon – Campbell the benevolent, Campbell the ruthless

Jeff Campbell has been the man to beat for much of the past year. Today he decided to make a wrong turn and run an extra 1.5 km near Shek Mun to give the rest of the field a chance. However, he also ruthlessly skipped all of the water stops to save time and once again showed a clean pair of heels to the rest of the field. His 3:41:37 was easily the fastest time ever run on this version of the KOTH Lantau full course, despite his Shek Mun diversion. Jeff starts the race with one liter of water and that is all he has or needs until he’s finished.

Lantau local Clement Dumont is now racing in the M40 category and finished impressively in second place overall (3:45:52) and first in his new age group. Clement lamented that water stops are meant for refueling and joked that stopping should be made mandatory for Jeff.

Open runner John Ellis not only finished third in the race (3:56:35), he was almost certainly the only person to run topless over Lantau Peak on race day. Reduced wind drag allowed John to stay a minute ahead of Guy Connell (3:56:35), who was the third open runner to finish.

Guiseppe Mollica (4:09:30) and Mat Leng (4:12:40) were the next two open finishers, before M55 Bob Shorrocks came thundering home in another jaw dropping display of ageless running (4:16:37). I checked the records and Bob ran this same course in 2016 in approximately the same time, father time be damned.

M40 William Davies (4:18:18) was also in good form to grab second in his age group and finish 8th overall, ahead of a slew of open runners. Finally, M45 Peter Bachmann (4:32:55) crashed the party, winning his age group and coming in 15th overall. Cosmo Richards (4:38:34) grabbed the final M40 podium spot.

Hau Ping (4:45:14) was second in the M55 category, followed by Chan See Kau (4:51:42). Cheng Sai Kit Alger was second in the M45 category (4:50:33), followed by Dwyfor Evans (4:52:02).

Once again the M50 category was inexplicably slower than the M45s or M55s. Andy Hsu (4:59:33) was first, followed by Luigi Hayashibara (5:02:53) and Nicolas Gontard (5:20:08).

Christopher Gunns began 2018 the way he did 2017, winning another KOTH M60 race, this time in 5:34:37. Chris became concerned toward the middle of the South Lantau Trail that another sexagenarian was gaining on him and put on the jets, only to realize at the finish that the other runner was more than 10 years younger. The second M60 was Chan Hoi Nam (5:39:33), followed by Richard Ho (6:13:38).

In the lady's race, Stephanie Roland was the dominant female runner, cruising home in 4:41:00. Stephanie was well ahead of Emily Woodland (4:59:02), who had won the KOTH HK Island race 6 weeks earlier, but confessed to too much holiday celebration. Katia Kucher (5:16:51) was third overall and first amongst the F40's with Irene Montemayor (5:19:48) fourth overall and third in the open category.

Natalia Watkins (5:45:23) finished second in the F40 group, just over a minute ahead of Leung Woon Ping (5:46:42).

Evergreen Yueng Mei Lun won the F50 race impressively (5:53:37) with Sophia Kennaly also running very well to finish in second (5:57:20) and Chun Luen Lai third (6:01:39).

Half Marathon – Weekend Double for Kevin and Elsa

Fresh off of victories the day before at the Green Race, Kevin Scallan and Elsa Jeandedieu came out for more on Sunday. Kevin saw off some early challengers on the way up Sunset Peak and then put the race away on the downhill to win convincingly in 1:23:17. Kevin ran 1:29:48 the previous year so obviously this 2-race per weekend diet is good for him. Elsa meanwhile ran an excellent 1:35:58 and was simply too strong for the rest of the field.

Jan Littlewood (1:26:02) was second overall in the men's race and also the first M40 finisher in what turned out to be a very good race for the veterans. The North Face runner Plato Luk finished third overall (1:28:22).

Some people may remember Pedro Ribeiro from day's past when he would routinely come over from Macau to win or get lost. Pedro has run the Lantau course in 1:17 when he was younger. This time he decided to make a wrong turn toward the top of Sunset Peak, but still finished fourth overall and 2nd in the M40 category in 1:29:00.

Tam Tsz Hong captured third in the open category (1:30:51) and fifth overall with Hui Siu Tung 6th, while Andreas Nessi claimed third in the M40 category (1:32:23) and 7th overall.

Thomas Hardcastle cracked the top 10 and also earned honors in the M45 age group (1:33:41). Tim Marchant (1:34:50) was not far behind despite some breathing problems at the beginning of the race. Roland Riedel grabbed the final hardware in this category (1:43:38).

Olivier Streun (1:39:59) won his second M50 race in a row and is well positioned for the series title. He was followed by Kwok Ching Po (1:43:28) and Wayne Gray (1:52:57).

Wong Tsz Wan was first in the usually competitive M55 age group (1:41:10), ahead of Raymond Li (1:49:14) and Eric To Hoi Lau (1:49:15).

Ray Yuen Tak Shing is finding the M60 category to his liking this year at the age of 64. His 1:59:46 was good enough for gold, about 30 seconds ahead of Tsui Pak Long, with Wong Peter Chun Tong third (2:01:32).

Returning to the lady's race, Chris Kwan Yee Ting finished second after Elsa and first in the F40 age group (1:42:35). Vivian Lee (1:45:33) was close behind and finished second in the age group and third overall. Kate Richdale finished third in the age group and fourth overall in a time of 1:46:40. Kate will officially move up a category next year and looks a good prospect to set some new age group records.

Jeanette Wang was the second open runner to finish (1:48:16) with Zein Williams third (1:51:33). If my sources are correct, Zein is once again recovering from child birth and seems to be rounding into form nicely.

Camilla Fernstrom won the women's F50 race (2:04:29), ahead of Joanne Brown (2L05:06) and Kate Martin (2:05:24) in what was obviously a pretty tight race.

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). 7.5- year old Karson Yeung Tsung Chit was the youngest this year and he finished in an impressive 3:01:08. At just over 8 years old, Luka Noyes was the second youngest and she finished in 2:58:10. Soon-to-be-10-years old Sofie Salgado managed 2:36:10 and her slightly younger classmate, Kaya Noyes managed 2:31:13. They all have their sights set on 75-year old Frank Pikington who finished in 2:29:08. Frank continues to be an ageless wonder. Check out the Friends of KOTH Facebook page photo of Frank and the 5 young lads and lassies nipping at his heels.

Thanks also to the Swire group of companies for their continued support (GigaSport prizes, Bonaqua and Aquarius). Thanks to Kin Hang for terrific course marking, as well as to the fore runners, marshals and sweeps, all of whom did a brilliant job on a blustery day. The next race takes place in Taipo on 4 February. Race details will be posted to www.seyonasia.com and to Friends of KOTH Facebook page.

Happy trails.

Keith