

Magic Isle miles

The colorful panorama provides a motivational backdrop for almost 3000 runners who witness **Mother Nature at her finest** as they partake in the mystery of the marathon



Photo : Patrice Malloy

OVER 17 MILES OF THE MAUI MARATHON RUNS ALONGSIDE THE AZURE BLUE PACIFIC OCEAN.

By Patrice Malloy

Maui, the second largest of the Hawaiian Islands, was named in honor of Maui Tikitiki-a-Taranga, the heroic demigod of Polynesian myth.

The legendary Maui would have undoubtedly given his rousing endorsement of the Maui Marathon and its annual stream of runners who travel from around the world. They come to celebrate the union of sport and the splendor of the island's natural beauty and cultural riches.

Also known as The Valley Isle and the Magic Isle, the Maui offers stunning views of the azure blue ocean, rolling surf and neighboring islands. The colorful panorama provides a motivational backdrop for almost 3000 runners who witness Mother Nature at her finest as they partake in the mystery of the marathon.

The Maui Marathon is one of the oldest in the United States. This year was the 36th edition. As the jewel in the crown of the Maui-based Valley Isle Road Runners Association, the event has grown from accommodating approximately 600 marathon finishers to over 2,900 participants in the marathon, half marathon and 5km. The Maui Tacos 5km celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, while the sold-out Maui Half Marathon enjoyed its third year.

"We are not the largest marathon in the Hawaii, and that is OK with us," said Cheryl Boullion, President of the Valley Isle Road Runners Association (VIRR). "We like to think of ourselves as a friendly, intimate, fun event. We pride ourselves on hospitality and service. Plus, we receive many positive comments on how well organized the event weekend is."

The VIRR also directs the Hana Relays, a 52-mile relay along the wildly-twisting Hana Highway, one of the most scenic thoroughfares in the world.

'Aloha' is spoken in many ways at the Maui Marathon. More than just a Hawaiian greeting or farewell, Aloha means mutual regard and affection for one another and extends warmth and caring with no obligation in return. Additionally, 'Aloha Spirit' is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence.

The Maui Marathon Race Weekend exemplifies Aloha. The action-packed events benefit numerous local charities and features athletic activities for all ages, all supported by enthusiastic volunteers and well wishers.

Runners from 14 countries and 48 US states participated in this year's marathon, half-marathon and 5km. The events' bilingual announcer thrilled the Japanese runners with

his humor and support throughout the weekend. Approximately 35% of the field traveled from Japan.

The Maui Marathon course is undeniably one of the most scenic in the world. Featuring 17 miles of oceanfront running, the route fuels all of the human senses.

The point-to-point course started in Kahului at Queen Ka'ahumanu Center, a popular shopping center on Maui. Participants were able to nibble on fresh sushi or a bagel and some fruit before heading to the start line.

A traditional Hawaiian blessing, a performance from the ever-popular hula dancers and conch shell blowing heralded the start of the race. For the initial stretch in the early-morning darkness tiki torches lit the way.

The 05.30 start gave runners about an hour before sunrise, an early reprieve from Maui's tropical heat. Temperatures typically rise from 24C at the start of the race to 28C three hours into the run.

The marathon's first five miles (8km) were run on residential streets and on the paved shoulder of the Kuihelani Highway. Early sights were moonlit sugarcane fields and the backs and heels of other runners.

At the 10km point, many were able to enjoy the sunrise over the 10,023-foot (3055m). volcano Mt.

Haleakala and get their first glimpse of the cobalt blue Pacific Ocean and its crashing surf.

It was open sail for the runners during the next 17 miles (27km) of occasional rolling hills as they cruised down the coast on the edge of the sea. They ran past the Pali, or "cliffs," and took in spectacular views of the neighboring islands of Lanai and Molokai. An extinct volcanic crater rim, Molokai has long been one of the most popular diving and snorkeling destinations in Hawaii.

At the 22-mile mark (35km), participants took a left turn onto Front Street in the historic whaling village of Lahaina, home to the largest number of restaurants, art galleries and shops on the island. Here, some of the faster marathon runners intermingled with half marathon participants who had decided to soak in the sights by walking the course.

The Maui Half Marathon also started at 05.30, at the marathon's finish line. It took a 6.5-mile (10.5km) out-and-back course along the same route as the marathon. A huge success, the half marathon has been a sell-out every year as increasing numbers of traveling runners chose a shorter race while on vacation.

Course entertainment in both the full and half marathons left no room for doubt in runners' minds that they were in Hawaii. Keiki



Photo: Kevin Molloy

SHADE AT THE 17-MILE MARK WAS WELL RECEIVED

(hula) dancers and Maui Taiko drummers inspired runners along the course. Aid stations with water, Gatorade, iced down sponges, frozen popsicles and misting chutes helped runners keep their cool. Both the marathon and half marathon culminated at the world-famous Kaanapali Resort and the finish line at Whalers Village.

Jacob Rotich of Kenya made a historic run, with his third consecutive Maui Marathon win - a feat never before accomplished since the inaugural 1970 race. Strong trade winds put the brakes on hopes for record performances. "My goal was to improve on my time from the last two years," said Rotich, "but the headwinds and heat slowed me down". He won the 2005 and 2004 competitions in 2:27:58 and 2:28:14, and the Maui Marathon is the only marathon he has ever run.

Maui resident, Joe Alueta, was the runner-up finishing in 2:43:04. His second place \$750 prize was augmented by a \$750 bonus for placing first Maui male finisher.

Even in paradise, some of the best-laid plans can go awry. Sayuri Kusutani, of Japan, the women's champion, planned to run a conservative first half and then pick up the pace. "Easier said than done," said Kusutani, 47, who started to feel the effects of the wind, heat and humidity. The defending champion, Kusutani also repeated a triumphant performance, winning in 3:05:12. Her efforts earned her a \$2250 payday - \$1500 for the win and \$750 for first female masters finisher.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:

RUNNERS PAUSE TO REFRESH AT A FRESH WATER STATION

TRADITIONAL KEIKI, OR HULA, DANCERS ENTERTAIN THE RUNNERS AT THE PRE-RACE CARBO LOAD PARTY (AT THE WESTIN MAUI)

2ND PLACE OVERALL FINISHER, JOE ALEUTA WAS ALSO THE FIRST MALE FINISHER



Photo: Kevin Molloy



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MEN:

1	Jacob ROTICH	KEN	2:33:44
2	Joe ALUETA	USA	2:43:04
3	James SHEREMETA	KEN	2:44:30
4	Thomas JENSEN	USA	2:51:44
5	Ross NICHOLLS	USA	2:58:05
6	Masateru KANEKO	JPN	2:58:18
7	Syuuichi MIZUNO	JPN	2:58:58
8	Keish DOI	USA	2:59:42
9	David CARLSSON	USA	3:02:20
10	Juan SANCHEZ	USA	3:02:28

WOMEN:

1	Sayuri KUSUTANI	USA	3:05:12
2	Noriko MURAKAMI	JPN	3:06:28
3	Yoko YAMAZAWA	JPN	3:10:35
4	Kayoko NOMURA	JPN	3:11:16
5	Yuka MORI	JPN	3:15:26
6	Atsuko SATO	JPN	3:17:05
7	Elizabeth MORRIS	USA	3:25:38
8	Hiroimi KITAHARA	JPN	3:26:50
9	Tracy BAKER	USA	3:29:11
10	Mari NAKAHASHI	JPN	3:29:12

HALF MARATHON:

MEN:

1	Josphat BOIT	KEN	1:07:06
2	Jonah MAIYO	KEN	1:11:38
3	Brian UDOVICH	USA	1:18:10

WOMEN:

1	Stephanie DICKSON	USA	1:27:46
2	Kriaten KILLIAN	USA	1:29:45
3	Jennifer MADRIL	USA	1:30:59

RACE CONTACT DETAILS

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Next year's Maui Marathon and Half Marathon are scheduled for September 16, 2007. Visit the website for complete information. For travel package information, visit www.marathontours.com

Full race contact listings start on page 74