

The Orange International Marathon and Half-Marathon, Mauritius

Sunday 19 September 2010

Report by Kay Farrow of Beverley AC



Beverley AC's Press Officer, Kay Farrow, is currently living in Mauritius and competed in her first race there on Sunday. Here is her account of the event.

My first race in Mauritius and I won a prize! I was the second lady veteran to cross the line in the Orange half-marathon and I was awarded a medal, a large trophy and 3000 rupees (about £63). What an experience!

Although only a very small event compared to most half marathons I've done, there were some elite runners from Africa who were seriously good.

I had been warned that the organisation would not be what I was used to and the confusion at the start confirmed this. Full and half-marathon runners set off together 30 minutes after the published start time and the route was totally different to what had been advertised. It took me past the hotel where we stayed in January and along the route where we had cycled in the rain so I had some idea of where I was.



The gently undulating out and back course followed the main road which hugs the coast round the north west of the island. There were wonderful views of the turquoise Indian Ocean and yellow sandy beaches. At the half-way point for the half-marathon all competitors turned round and came back along the same route. It was great to see the top athletes on the other side of the road running twice as fast as me. I was amazed to see some people running barefoot!

The weather was very kind, cloudy and around 22 degrees Celsius and the two heavy showers of rain were very welcome. There were water stations every 5 kilometres and wet sponges were also provided at various points.

I was running alone most of the time but the route was well marshalled. Marshals with big orange flags were at the main road junctions supported by the police who stopped the traffic. As we had set off at 7.30am there was little traffic and few spectators. The biggest crowd I saw was 5 blokes standing outside a shop who looked at me in disbelief when I ran by. They were still there on the way back so I told them I could do with some support and they gave me a round of applause!

I finished in a satisfactory time of 2 hours and 15 minutes and in time to see the winner of the marathon, Hillary Jonathan Kericho of Kenya, finish 5 minutes after me. It was a pity that there were so few spectators to applaud his achievement.



Prize winners were listed on a shabby white board and I was thrilled to see my name included. The presentation of prizes took place about two hours after I had finished. The elite athletes waited patiently, lying on the grass under a huge gazebo, as the proceedings were conducted in reverse order on a large stage with TV cameras and press photographers recording the ceremony.



Wheelchair athletes were treated the same as able-bodied athletes and were expected to receive their prizes on the stage. They had only one leg each and hopped up and down the 8 steps. This is how things are done in Mauritius!

There were 89 finishers in the half-marathon, a number of them specially invited international athletes from various African countries. The winner was Kelvin Pangiso of Zimbabwe in 1.06.14. The first lady to cross the line was Kenya's Lilian Chelimo in 1.15.55. There were only 13 ladies in the race and third place received \$700 - about £440. Steve thinks I should do some serious training and become a professional athlete.

Entry to all the races was free. Fun runners received a t-shirt but there was nothing at all for those who completed the marathon or half-marathon unless they had won a prize. For those who stayed long enough to watch the prize giving ceremony, carrot and beetroot sandwiches were given out with a bottle of water.

Thanks are due to my husband, Steve, for getting up at 4.30am and getting me to the race on time despite getting held up for 30 minutes in a traffic jam caused by an accident on the road. He completed the 3km fun run while I was running the half-marathon and received an Orange t-shirt.



Kay and Steve Farrow at the start



Kay at the start



Kay at the finish