

## Who are the Hot Favourites at the Asia Pacific Trail Running Championships in Ulju, South Korea?

The inaugural Asia Pacific Trail Running Championships will take place in Ulju, South Korea from October 23 to 26, 2024. This event will bring together elite athletes from 23 countries or regions and will be joyful, fun and fiercely competitive.

Here we identify each race distance's 3 top-ranked runners under the ITRA Performance Index (the official ranking in global trail running, recognised by World Athletics). This rather clinical approach is intended to supplement, not replace, heated discussions in Asia-Pacific's bars, pubs and running clubs as to who will come out on top.

### Women's Long Trail Race



*Yuri Yoshizumi - Action Asia*

The Women's Long Trail Race (74km, 4,787m elevation gain, 15 hours maximum) is packed with talented athletes and the top three competitors are truly world class:

Xiang Fuzhao (China, ITRA PI 812), as well as being the highest-ranked competitor in the Long Trail race, Fuzhao may also find conditions to her liking. The long course in Ulju is not just mountainous but also rocky and rugged and Fuzhao is masterful on technical terrain. Fuzhao is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in Asia and 4<sup>th</sup> globally;

Yuri Yoshizumi (Japan, ITRA PI 772) is Japan's highest ranked trail runner and ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Asia. A prolific racer who usually wins, Yoshizumi-san exudes positive energy and has the

versatility and resilience to enjoy Ulju's challenging course and the APTRC's stiff competition; and

Emi Iwai (Japan, ITRA PI 722) was runner-up (to Yuri Yoshizumi) at Mt Fuji 100 KAI (70km) in 2023 and won the Shigakogen 100 (100km) in July, so brings good form to the APTRC, where Japan look like strong favourites for team gold in the women's Long Trail race.

## Men's Long Trail Race

In the Men's Long Trail Race (74km, 4,787m elevation gain, 15 hours maximum) the three standout athletes likely to lead the pack are:

Yuya Kawasaki (Japan, ITRA PI 861) who has won both the Hasetune Cup and the Shinetsu Five Mountains trail races in Japan and was runner-up at last year's Mt. Fuji 100. As the top-ranked athlete, he starts as favourite, but will face tough competition in a match-up that looks too close to call;

Michael Dimuantas (Australia, ITRA PI 858) who was the winner at the Grampians Peaks Trail 100 in Australia last November and has the endurance and technical skills to do very well at the APTRC; and

Qi Min (China, ITRA PI 851) who has won at Jiangnan 100km, Mingyue Mountain Ultra Trail 50km and Hong Kong 100 and looks well placed to podium at the very least.

## Women's Short Trail Race



*Honoka Akiyama - I run far*

The Women's Short Trail Race (41km, 2,783m elevation gain, 8 hours maximum) will test the mountain skills, pacing and endurance of a strong field of international athletes, including:

Honoka Akiyama (Japan, ITRA PI 743) who is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in Japan (behind only Yuri Yoshizumi) and 7<sup>th</sup> in Asia. She was runner-up in Mt Fuji 100 KAI (70km) and Mt Hiei International Trail Run (80km) this year – in both cases behind Yoshizumi-san. With Yoshizumi-san among the favourites for the Long Trail, Akiyama-san looks a strong prospect for victory in the Short Trail;

Patricia Mckibbin (Australia, ITRA PI 715): Fresh from the win at Kunanyi Mountain Run (64km) in Tasmania, Patricia is likely to be among the medals; and

Hyunja Kim (Korea, ITRA PI 697) who is ranked number 1 in Korea and recently won the Jangsu Trail race (80km) coming 3<sup>rd</sup> overall. She will enjoy home advantage and local crowd support as she pushes for the podium.

## Men's Short Trail Race



*John Ray "Stingray" Onifa - Southeast Asian Trail Running Cup 2024*

The Men's Short Trail Race (41km, 2,783m elevation gain, 8 hours maximum) is set to be a thrilling match-up of speed and endurance. At the sharp end of the field we can expect to see:

Yamato Yoshino (Japan, ITRA PI 869): Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in Japan and was the winner of the last 3 races he entered, Yoshino-san looks to be peaking just in time for the APTRC;

John Ray "Stingray" Onifa (Philippines, ITRA PI 861): A prolific racer whose brave front-running style and ever present smile ensure he would be a popular winner for the Philippines; and

Jisub Kim (Korea, ITRA PI 846): Korea's top-ranked trail runner, Jisub has already won 4 races this year. With local knowledge and home support his chances of making it 5 at the APTRC look good.

## Women's U23 Category

In the Women's U23 Category (15.9km, 1,182m elevation gain, 3 hours maximum) the favourites include:

Rajya Laxmi Rawal (Nepal, ITRA PI 608) who came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Jumla Rara Ultra Marathon (50km) in West Nepal this year and might go one place better at the APTRC;

Zoe Manning (Australia, ITRA PI 594) who has also raced 50km at Blackall in Australia so has the required endurance; and

Lam Tin Ching (Hong Kong, China, ITRA PI 527) who, despite her young age, has already completed Hong Kong 100 (100km) twice and raced overseas in Taiwan, so brings substantial experience to Ulju.

## Men's U23 Category



*Rex Lo Lok Yin - The Peak Hunter*

In the Men's U23 Category (15.9km, 1,182m elevation gain, 3 hours maximum) the rising stars to watch include:

Toby Lang (Australia, ITRA PI 754): Toby represented Australia at the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Chiang Mai in 2022 so has helpful experience racing at international level;

Ethan Penck (Australia, ITRA PI 729): Ethan won the 5 Peaks (26km) this year in Australia, so will not fear the distance; and

Rex Lo Lok Yin (Hong Kong, ITRA PI 710) as winner of the Victoria 162 25km and Hong Kong 5 Peaks 21km this year, Rex would love to add an international podium to his growing list of achievements.

In the team events, Japan, Korea, Australia, Hong Kong, Nepal and the Philippines look best placed for honours whilst India and Vietnam may be contenders to spring a surprise. With athletes this talented and stakes this high, the Asia Pacific Trail Running Championships promise to be an unforgettable event. You won't want to miss a moment of the action! Follow live updates, get behind-the-scenes access, and cheer on your favourite athletes as they chase glory in this epic inaugural championships.

Stay tuned, and be part of trail running history!

## **About APTRC – The Asia Pacific Trail Running Championships**

The inaugural edition of the Asia Pacific Trail Running Championship (APTRC) will be held in the breathtaking landscapes of Ulju-gun, Ulsan City, South Korea, from 23-26 October, 2024. The APTRC will showcase APAC's top trail runners competing in individual and country/region categories covering distances of 40 km and 80 km. There will also be a U23 category with a distance of 15 km.

## **About ITRA – the International Trail Running Association**

Founded in 2013, ITRA (the International Trail Running Association) represents around 300,000 athletes and 6,000 event organizer members in over 160 countries. ITRA is the leading reference organization for trail running globally, providing services to individual trail runners and trail running organizations, as well as international leadership for the sport. For more information about ITRA please visit our website [www.itra.run](http://www.itra.run).

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