Thanks to Dr. Jim Barahal, Honolulu now has an exciting new international running event with some distinctive features. Called the Hapalua, this half marathon offers opportunities for both visitors and residents and has great potential for the future.

The second annual Hapalua was run last Sunday. It started at the famous Duke Kahanamoku statue on Waikiki Beach and ended around the slopes of Diamond Head. Although there was intermittent heavy rain, nearly 3,000 runners had a great day and raised a lot of money for a number of worthy charities.

Readers of Saturday Briefing probably know that Dr. Barahal has been the president and guiding spirit of the Honolulu Marathon for decades and, with a great staff of workers and volunteers, has helped that race grow and mature to become a truly world-class event and a major contributor to Hawaii’s economy every December.

By carefully employing the experience and resources of the Honolulu Marathon, Dr. Barahal has now also brought a “half marathon” to our state in a format that offers many opportunities for fun, competition, unique experiences and helping others.

Hapalua is the Hawaiian word for half, indicating that the race is a half marathon – 13.1094 miles or 21.0975 kilometers – and many writers have noted its rapid rise in popularity around the world. Rounding the distance numbers has given it such alternative names as 21K or 13.1 Miles. In Guam, playing on the Chamorro language greeting, a similar race is called “Hafadai Half Marathon” (pronounced “half a day” but meaning, in essence, “aloha”).

No matter what one calls it, running competitively for over 13 miles is challenging but does not require the same level of training that a full marathon does. That opens the door for participants to have fun and do something for others at the same time.

Hapalua Chase

A group of 12 men and 12 women were selected to run competitively as Team Hawai‘i against three world champion professional runners from Kenya for some serious kālā (cash). The formidable Kenyans were Patrick Makau, current marathon world record holder (2:03:38); Jimmy Muindi, current Honolulu Marathon record holder (2:11:12); and Nicholas Manza, who has left competitors in the dust in one venue after another.

To even things out and make the finish truly exciting, the members of Team Hawai‘i were given head starts – ranging from 18 to 24 minutes for the women and 7 to 11 minutes for the men.

Prize money totaled $11,000 and those first across the finish line – pro or amateur – took home $5,000 for first place, $2,500 for second place, etc. This year’s winner was West Point-trained, Fort Shafter-based Army 1st Lt. Stephen Marthy. In retrospect, the head starts for Team Hawai‘i appear to have been a little too generous, as 15 runners finished the race ahead of the first two Kenyan competitors.

Credit: http://thehapalua.com/%20the%20chase/

The Chasers

Jimmy Muindi • Patrick Makau • Nicholas Manza

Hapalua >> 2
Hapalua Relays

Others had an opportunity to compete in relay races around Kapi’olani Park, starting just after the main race began. Groups of four to seven runners formed teams representing schools, companies, nonprofit organizations, etc. and ran around the park seven times for a total of 12.6 miles (approximately 20 kilometers), or the rough equivalent of a half marathon.

With the main race, the chase and the relays all going on at the same time in the intermittent downpour, it was quite a scene!

Hawai’i’s liquid sunshine did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the participants, however, and they were able to warm up at the Kapi’olani Park finish with hot malasadas.

Fundraising: “Where the dollars meet the finish line”

The Hapalua produced some additional winners – the charities that registered for the race, entered runners and organized fundraising teams. Cause-related endurance events have been growing rapidly, not only in the U.S., but around the world. It is a great combination, with charities, runners and sponsors all working together to promote good health, raise money for worthy causes and have fun in the process!

The Hapalua had about 30 charities registered, ranging from well-known groups such as the YWCA and Aloha United Way to very small organizations. The Hapalua gave them all an opportunity to shine. For example, the team from St. Andrews Priory School raised over $6,000 for that fine institution, and a team known as “Joggin’ For Frogmen” raised nearly $35,000 for the family of Navy SEAL John Leathers who was apparently lost during a training mission off Ka’ena Point, O’ahu, last month.

All things considered, last Sunday’s Hapalua Half Marathon was a great event. Congratulations and thanks to Dr. Jim Barahal and his team for bringing an exciting new international tradition to Waikiki.
An avid runner, here is Lianne at a half marathon held in San Francisco...in the rain!

Robert finishes the race despite the lack of “tunes” thanks to his soaked earbuds!

Before heading up Monsarrat Avenue, I noticed the relay participants running around Kapi'olani Park. They were coned off in a separate lane. I thought it was nice that they offered the relay option in addition to the half marathon.

The malasadas and shave-ice offered at the finish line were a nice way to celebrate our accomplishment, along with the Nike DriFIT™ shirt and medal.

Hopefully, there will be a third annual Hapalua run next year. Having done the Honolulu Marathon three months ago (26.2 miles), one would think that the Hapalua would have been a piece of cake. It wasn’t, but it was a fun experience, even in the rain!

Any event like the Hapalua requires commitment and training. This is not something you can cram for. There’s no easy route to good results (time). I started running only a few years back with the encouragement of a friend, and wouldn’t call myself a “runner.” I walked more than half of the half marathon but fed off the energy of those around me. I was thinking, “Am I crazy? This is 13.1 miles and it’s POURING!” My ear buds got soaked and stopped working!

The event was well organized and very well coordinated from start to finish. By 9 a.m. they had participants walking on the sidewalks and opened up most of the major roadways to regular traffic. It was nice to see the relay runners speeding by along the home stretch.

The Hapalua was more intimate than a full marathon. I was able to chat with an older lady from Delaware who was a “speed walker.” She said she walks under 12 minutes per mile. I could not keep up with her and followed behind her to the finish. It was exciting to know that visitors from the East Coast participated. I was also able to see a bunch of familiar faces along the course. Compared to the full marathon, this event is not as intimidating, but it’s more challenging than the Great Aloha Run.