Marathon Runner  
Kiyoko Shimahara Returning

The Honolulu Marathon has always attracted a large number of runners from Japan. For the past five years, over 60 percent of the registrations come from that country, significantly contributing to the total impact of the event on Hawaii’s economy.

Along with that, we are seeing the development of a strong cadre of top Japanese runners competing in races all over the world. The appearance of these elite, home-country runners in the Honolulu Marathon makes that race even more attractive to the thousands of Japanese recreational runners who come to Hawaii every year.

Last year, two women from Japan, Kiyoko Shimahara and Kaori Yoshida, took first and second place, respectively, in the Honolulu Marathon, crossing the finish line several seconds ahead of top-seeded entrants from Kenya and Russia, countries that routinely produce some of the world’s fastest runners.

Shimahara is a dynamic young athlete. She will have her 33rd birthday on December 22, a little more than a week after this year’s Marathon. Standing just 5 feet tall and weighing in at 95 pounds, she is one of the smaller athletes on the worldwide marathon scene.

However, Shimahara never lets her petite stature slow her down. In addition to her win in the 2008 Honolulu Marathon, she placed fifth in the 2006 Boston Marathon, third in the 2008 Bank of America Chicago Marathon and has consistently been a top-ten finisher in major races around the world since graduating from Kokushikan University in 1999.

Shimahara thoroughly enjoyed her experience at the Outrigger Reef on the Beach last year. Through a mutual friend, she recently sent me a message, recalling her visit in 2008.

Dear Dr. Kelley,

Last year was my second visit to Honolulu. I had always heard from so many Japanese runners about the Honolulu Marathon, and for many Japanese runners, it is one of the races they ABSOLUTELY must do at least once in their life.

Several top Japanese runners I know have done the race after they retired from their top competitive career, but my coach and our club, the Second Wind AC, really wanted to compete there when we could be in the good shape to try to win the race.

Last year we stayed at the Outrigger Reef on the Beach. It is really beautiful, and I heard it was just refurbished before we arrived. The location and setting were perfect for us. I am always good at sleeping, but for the days before the race, I felt I was resting and relaxing even better at the Outrigger.

It was also nice to have the ocean on one side, but also nearby we could walk to many restaurants and shops on Kalakaua Avenue and also along the Waikiki Beach Walk.

Everyday, we could take a morning run from the hotel either toward Kapi‘olani Park or along the Ala Wai Canal.

For breakfast everyday, we ate at the Shorebird restaurant. The setting is incredible. The ocean is right outside the restaurant, and I also made sure to sit on the side of our table so I could have a view of Diamond Head!
After I won [the Marathon], I was lucky to stay a few extra days at the hotel after the race. My teammates and I took it very easy, just enjoying the pool and the Jacuzzi. When they went swimming in the ocean, I met friends to have a nice, cold beer (OK, maybe two nice, cold beers!) at the Shorebird Restaurant in the afternoon.

The return trip will be good. I heard that no Japanese woman has ever won Honolulu two years in a row, so I would like to try this.

This summer I won the Hokkaido Marathon and made a new record for the race of 2:25:10, so my condition should be good for Honolulu.

I am really looking forward to seeing everybody at the Outrigger again, and to making it my second home for a week before and after this year’s Marathon.

It is also great that Outrigger is one of the main supporters of the Honolulu Marathon. As athletes, we really appreciate not only the financial support for running, but also that you are giving us such a beautiful place to stay during race week.

Sincerely,
Kiyoko Shimahara
Second Wind A.C.
Tokyo, Japan

I responded with the following —

Dear Kiyoko:

Thank you for your wonderful letter. We are so pleased that you enjoyed Waikiki and, in particular, the hospitality of the Outrigger Reef on the Beach.

All of the members of the Outrigger ‘ohana are looking forward to your return to Waikiki next month, and we wish you well as you strive to win the Honolulu Marathon for the second consecutive time.

When the race is over, I will look forward to meeting you at the Shorebird and personally serving you a really nice cold beer. (OK, maybe even two nice, cold beers!)

Aloha,
Richard Kelley
Honolulu Marathon Registrations
Up Slightly, But Up!

I am beginning to see signs in a number of areas that the U.S. economy is starting to turn around. For example, visitor arrivals in Las Vegas increased by 4.3 percent in September 2009, as compared to 2008.

In Hawaii, the Confidence Index, as measured by the latest People’s Pulse telephone survey, is up to 34 from an all-time low of 30.

And, for the visitor industry, it is good to learn that there is a small but definite 2 percent increase in the total number of runners registered for this year’s Honolulu Marathon, scheduled for Sunday, December 13 – three weeks from now.

The biggest jump, 8.1 percent, comes from Hawaii-based runners, but there is also a heartening 3 percent increase in Japanese registrants.

Registered Runners as of November 2, 2009

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<th>Source</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>6,211</td>
<td>5,745</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>U.S. Mainland</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
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*Source: Honolulu Marathon Association*