



The People's Race Inc.: Behind the Scenes at the Honolulu Marathon

Michael S. K. N. Tsai

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The Honolulu Marathon debuted in 1973 as the shared vision of a maverick cardiologist bent on proving the benefit of long-distance running for cardiac patients and an impetuous mayor eager to prove Honolulu the equal of the top cities in the county. Over a span of forty-plus years, the race has grown into one of the largest marathons in the world, a \$100 million economic engine for its home state, and a launch pad for some of the most dominant long-distance runners in modern history. From its modest start as a community event for local amateurs, in 2012 the race boasted an estimated 31,000 participants—more than half from Japan—and the field was led by elite Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Russian professional runners; each hoping to earn a share of a \$150,000 prize purse.

The People's Race Inc. captures the personalities, politics, and power plays behind the burgeoning growth of the Honolulu Marathon and provides a unique lens for understanding the complex history of the sport itself. Drawn from revealing interviews with those closest to the event, as well as exhaustive research, journalist Michael Tsai presents an insider's account of how organizers forged lucrative partnerships with foreign investors, helped initiate the age of African dominance of the marathon, and weathered some of the most bizarre challenges imaginable. The book also exposes the ways in which the growth of the Honolulu Marathon mirrored the explosive, at times bewildering, development of post-statehood Hawai'i.



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