



## PRESS RELEASE

### Chen of Taiwan and Mariash Koudele of Canada / United States win the Atacama Crossing 2016

[10 OCT 2016 SAN PEDRO, CHILE]. It's been one of the most exciting 4 Deserts races with the positions changing in the Top 10 during every stage and within a stage. Going into Stage 5, The Long March, there were just 37 minutes separating the Top 4, but in the end Tommy CHEN of Taiwan and Jax MARIASH KOUDELE of Canada / United States were the male and female Champions, respectively.

Tommy Chen said **"It has been an inspiring race!** I feared the long day, after the Gobi March, but after a couple of checkpoints I relaxed, the fear passed and I was filled with confidence." For his strong efforts **Chen received personal congratulations from the president of Taiwan!**

Mariash Koudele was not only the winner of the women's competition but she was 4th overall and was also in first place at many times during the stages with an overall 2nd place after Stage 3!! This is quite incredible, especially considering **she is also on track to become the first woman to complete the 4 Deserts Grand Slam Plus** – only three people have ever completed this feat. Mariash Koudele said "This win means the most to me as it all started from here a year ago. Top 3 would have been great, I aimed to be the strongest female and to reach top 5. **I'm so happy to have pushed such a competitive group.**"

**Neill Weir from Northern Ireland, who placed second, was competing in his first multi-stage race** and first race which required him to run with a backpack. "I have never even run 47 miles before," said Neill Weir. He was a complete unknown coming into the race and took everyone by surprise when he finished Stage 1 in first place. Neill further commented: "I prepared to do well and hoped to cross the finish line under 30 hours. I'm surprised. The terrain was super hard, in particular the sand dunes on Stage 3. Having said that, **running free on the sand dune in the Death Valley was one of the best parts of the race.**"

**Third place went to Ben Dame of Germany** "I wanted to be in the top 3. The terrain in this race was hard but that proved to be my strength. Taller guys can beat me on flat road sections but the tricky, technical ground is my strength."

**An exciting fact in this year's Atacama Crossing was that in the Top 10, the ages ranged from 26 to 51 and there were eight countries represented! Those countries covered Asia, Europe, Americas and Africa.**

**Sarah Sawyer** of the United Kingdom took 2nd place among women. "I came here to enjoy. I'm over the moon for the second place. Isabelle pushed me so hard. **I loved this race and the scenery.** The challenging terrain was the hardest part for me," Said Sarah.

**Isabelle Sauve of Canada was right behind Sawyer in 3rd place.** "I didn't have a firm goal in this race but next time I'll have .... I'll be back! (laughs). It has been an amazing race. It was well organised and the people were great. You can tell all the staff had their heart in it. **I loved the water crossings and even the huge dune on Stage 5.** The terrain for me was the toughest."

Chen was not the only one who received congratulations from a President, 4 Deserts **Grand Slammer Ludy Dvorak received a personal message from the President of the Czech Republic** for his completion of the Atacama Crossing and his third 4 Deserts race so far this year.

At the very back of the pack was Team AHO from Japan – a 10 person team who have the motto "Someone's challenge leads to someone's courage. Someone's challenge leads to someone's happiness". Team AHO was affectionately known as "Team Happiness" by all the competitors, staff and volunteers.

The Atacama Crossing is more than just a race. For Canadian brothers Paul and Eric Chan, the Atacama Crossing was their fifth multi-stage desert race so far this year with a goal to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for the most multi-stage ultramarathons completed in a year.

Many of the competitors were raising money and awareness for a charity. The 4 Deserts Race Series organisation always supports a charity through each race. In the Atacama Crossing 2016, they supported the Make-A-Wish Chile Foundation to support wishes for sick or unfortunate children in Chile.

Find out more information on [www.4deserts.com/atacamacrossing](http://www.4deserts.com/atacamacrossing)