SAN DIEGO, CA – The Mission Bay Cross Country course greeted Masters athletes with fair skies, calm winds and moderate temperatures. **Marisa Sutera Strange**, 56, was the surprise winner last year in Tallahassee. Could she repeat? **Lorilyn Bloomer**, who finished third on this course at the 5 Km Masters Championships in October, set the pace for this 6 Km contest at the front of a group including **Gwendolen Twist, Amy Alzina, Grace Padilla,** Strange, and **Vivien Hyman**. Bloomer pulled away over the second of three loops; Strange pulled away from the chase pack, keeping Bloomer in sight, but unable to close on her. Bloomer roared to the win in 24:14, as Strange toughed it out for 2nd in 24:31. **Juliet Wahleithner**, who broke out of the chase pack on the last loop and nearly caught Strange, finished 3rd. **David Angell**, who finished 2nd last year in Tallahassee, and newcomer, **Eric Blake**, who beat Angell at the 10K Masters Championships, had come to challenge the defending champion, **Jacques Sallberg**. Those three formed a lead pack midway through the first 2 Km loop of an 8 Km course. **Chokri Dhaouadi, Paul Smith, John Gardiner**, **Colin Olson** and **Kevin Everett** were bunched up just meters behind**.** On the second loop, Sallberg pushed the pace. Angell and Blake were the only two who could stay close; they were looking at a 20-meter gap. Sallberg poured it on, widening the gap, bringing home his second consecutive USATF Masters Cross Country Championship and his fifth in six years; that is dominance! Sallberg’s winning time on the 8 Km course was 26:52, with Blake and Angell over 40 seconds back in second and third. Sallberg noted, after the race, that it was time to take off the cross country spikes for a bit. He hopes to find himself racing on the grass again in Toronto at the WMA Championships. He will go for a steeplechase win on the track and XC on the turf!

Thrilling races resulted in new age division National Champions: 40-44: **Juliet Wahleithner** 24:33, **Eric Blake** 27:35; 45-49: **Lorilyn Bloomer** 24:14, **Jacques Sallberg** 26:52; 50-54: **Nancy Thomas** 26:09, **Craig Godwin** 28:32; 55-59: **Marisa Sutera Strange** 24:31, **Nat Larson** 29:50; 60-64: **Nancy Simmons** 29:20, **Joe Sheeran** 30:38; 65-69: **Deborah Shea** 34:54, **Tomas Rodriguez** 35:19; 70-74: **Jane Treleven** 29:51, **Ignacio Jimenez** 36:04; 75-79: **Len Goldman** 39:45; 80-84: **Madeline Bost** 53:18, **Roland Cormier** 48:42; 85-89: **Warren Osborn** 1:05:44, 90-94 **Gunnar Linde** 1:20:04. Three of the Women’s races were tightly contested. Impala teammates Simmons and **Mo Bartley**, in 60-64, ran in tandem most of the race, with Simmons pulling away for a 6 second win. The same was true in 70-74 for Red Lizard teammates, Treleven and **Jeanette Groesz,** with Treleven enjoying a 5 second margin at the finish. In 40-44 Wahleithner broke away from **Vivien Hyman** to win by 20 meters. The closest contests in the Men’s race were 40-44 where Blake pulled away for a 7 second win over Angell and in 60-64 where **Dan King** stayed tight for three loops; Sheeran put the hammer down on the last loop to pull away for a 10 second win.

Age-Grading sorts out which of these Champions ran the fastest for their age by comparing their actual time to the projected World’s Best for a runner of their age and gender. Everyone knows who the main contenders are, but no one knows who is on the podium for sure until the calculations are done, and the scores posted. The Women’s contest was close! **Jane Treleven**, 71, who finished second to **Marisa Sutera Strange**, 56, at the 5 Km Masters Championship on this course in October, reversed the tables by 0.02% points, winning at 87.54. **Jeanette Groesz**, 70, took third with an 86.0%, and then there was a six percentage-point drop! A similar reversal occurred in the Men’s race. **Jacques Sallberg**, 45, missed adding the Age Grade to his Overall Championship by 1.02% points. **Joe Sheeran**, 62, who finished 2nd to Sallberg in October, made sure to get the victory here with an 86.60. **Craig Godwin**, 52, at 85.26, edged **Nat Larson**, 57, for the final podium spot by 0.18% points; the top 10 age graders were all within three percentage points of the podium. Sheeran topped all age-graders at Lehigh in December, making this his second consecutive top score in Cross Country Championships.

In team competition, the top-five runners score for Men 40+ & 50+; for Men 60 and up and for Women, it is the top-three runners for each team. In W40+ the Janes Elite Racing led all the way as the San Diego Track Club (TC) edged Team Nash for second place, 12-21-22. The Janes took 50+ also as they were unopposed. The Impala Racing Team won the 60+ contest handily taking 1-2-3 for a 6-15 victory over the Boulder Road Runners. Team Red Lizard enjoyed the same dominance in 70+, enjoying a 6-15 victory over Impala. Sallberg led the Cal Coast TC to a nail-biting win over the Sports Warriors TC. With four runners in they were tied 27-27; it would come down to the fifth scoring runner for each team. Cal Coast got the win, 43-44, with the SRA Elite in third with 53 points. The Bowerman TC dominated in 50+, going wire to wire with 22 points. Cal Coast was second at 44 and the Atlanta TC’s 97 points closed off the podium nine points ahead of SRA Elite. In a Rocky Mountain showdown, Athletics Boulder enjoyed the win with 14 points to the Boulder Road Runners 21. It was a donnybrook for the final podium spot; the Jamul Toads racked up 35 points to take third, with the Shore Athletic Club and Cal Coast tied with 38 points. The Boulder Road Runners won handily in 70+ with 10 points, as the Atlanta TC and the San Diego Striders had 21 points each; the Striders took second on a tiebreaker. No tiebreakers needed in the 80+ division which the San Diego Striders captured unopposed.

The 2020 USATF Masters Grand Prix series next heads to Dedham, MA for the USATF Masters 10K Championships. Once the USATF Masters 10 Km webpage is live, find details and a registration link at: www.usatf.org/events/2020/2020-usatf-masters-10-km-championships

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