

## [2016 USATF Masters 5KM Cross Country Championship-Preview \[2\]—Overall & Age Divisions](#)

**November 5 2016.** Tallahassee Florida will welcome 112 speedy Masters Cross Country runners to their gorgeous course. As far as the nature of the course goes, Bill Quinlisk notes: "The course is 40% short well-mowed grass and 60% fine-crushed shell trail. The trail section is rolled the morning of the race. There are no major hills. Last year, when we viewed the Florida High School's State XC Championships on the same course, most runners were wearing 1/8 or 1/4 inch spikes. Racing flats are another option although for the later races the trail may begin to wear. Also, weather may impact the length of spikes needed."

### Overall Race

At last year's race there were no awards for the Overall winners and I imagine that is the case this year although the USATF website is missing information on prizes and awards for 2016. Still, whether there are prizes or not, we are a visual animal; we see the race and are naturally curious about who comes across the finish line first. Last year the Women were all in one race but the Men were split up into three races, 40+, 50+, and 60+ so the idea of a single winner was a little strained. In fact the fastest time was recorded out of the 50+ race. This year there is one Men's race and one Women's race so it will be easy to observe who is the first across the finish line.

**Men.** We may well see the fastest time of the day recorded again by a 50 year old. **Kristian Blaich** finished 7th overall at the 5K Masters Road Championship at the Syracuse Festival of Races in a smoking fast 15:48. None of the 6 who came in ahead of him have entered so that makes him the favorite. His main competition should be Coloradan **Craig Greenslit** and Florida's **Danny Goodman, Jr.** Greenslit finished 11 seconds behind Blaich in Syracuse, but Greenslit could have an edge on a cross country surface. In December 2014, Greenslit came in nearly 20 seconds ahead of Blaich at Club Cross. Goodman has an advantage over Blaich in terms of time, not head-to-head competition. Blaich won the 2015 10K Championship in Dedham in 33:56; Goodman took 6th in 2016 but ran 33:36, 20 seconds faster. None of the other competitors has broken 16:20 at Syracuse although **Tommy Carroll** ran 16:21 this year. **Steve Bell** has run a 15:47 at the notoriously fast Macon Labor Day 5K but the rest of his 5K's are above 16:30. Blaich's teammates, **Brad Salvens** and **Peter Kotchen**, have run 16:07 and 16:14 respectively at Macon but cannot usually run with Blaich. It looks like these others will have a tough time

keeping up with the first three mentioned.

**Blaich, Greenslit, Goodman.**

**Women.** The Women's Race should come down to a contest between **Marisa Sutera Strange** and **Sonja Friend-Uhl**. They battled for the win in the Masters 10K Road Championship in Dedham with Sutera Strange winning in 36:27 by a single second. At the 5K Masters Championship in Syracuse the order was reversed with Friend-Uhl clocking a 17:46 to best Sutera Strange by 8 seconds. Both do just as well on the Cross Country course as they do on the Road so it should be another great duel to watch. And that's not all. There are several contenders to be the third finisher overall, **Trish Butler, Alice Kassens, Kara Parker,** and **Katherine Wolski**. NB Tampa's **Butler** ran 19:02 at the 5K Championships last month, while Kassens, of the Athena Track Club, who likes the longer races, has a 1:28:11 half marathon and a 47:26 in the last 12K Championship in Alexandria. That 12K time is age-grade equivalent to a 19:05. Run Minnesota's Parker, meanwhile, won her 45-49 age division at the Medtronic 10 Mile Run in 1:04:23, an age-grade equivalent of 19:06. And the 10 Mile Run has that long hill coming up from the Mississippi River. I give Parker a chance to break into the top 3. Still, Wolski should be able to stay ahead of those three as she has run her 5K's in the 18:18 to 18:40 range and, no slouch at the longer distances, a 59:21 15K that is an 18:50 AG Equivalent 5K. Of course, the XC course itself can also make road course comparisons less relevant.

**Friend-Uhl, Sutera Strange, Wolski**

### **Runners By Age Divisions**

#### **40-44**

**Men.** With Greenslit and Blaich showing, if not acting, their age by way of the joining the Men's 45 and 50 divisions respectively this year, Goodman should control the Men's 40. **Tommy Carroll** normally runs for Atlanta, as he did at Syracuse but he is on his own this weekend, perhaps to allow others to have a chance at the fun. There is a good chance he should go home with a Men's 40 Silver Medal. He was 7 seconds ahead of his ATC teammate **Brent Fields**, who is probably his toughest competition. **Kevin Burke** of Checkers AC was ten seconds behind Fields at Syracuse. Perhaps he can catch him on the Cross Country course. [Late flash--Carroll will be added to the ATC team as it appears Michael Strickland may have a sprained ankle.

**Goodman, Carroll, Fields.**

**Women.** **Alice Kassens** should dominate the 40's division. Atlanta's **Kathy Wiegands** who runs strong 5K' in the upper 19, low 20 minute range and a half marathon not much above 1:30, will try to stay with Kassens. But both her 5K and Half Marathon times tend to be well slower than Kassens so it will be a challenge. If **Stephanie Whitis** can run as well as she did at Syracuse when she clocked 20:31, that should be enough to give Atlanta a 2-3 finish for the Women's 40 as well.

**Kassens, Wiegands, Whitis.**

#### 45-49

**Men.** **Craig Greenslit** looks to be the one to beat for this group. **Steve Bell** may well be second across the line but the Atlanta guys will try to get there first. **Valentin Alvarez, Peter Kotchen, Brad Slavens** and **Eric Stabb** all have a shot at a podium finish. Stabb ran great at the 10K Championship in 2015, breaking 34:30, and at the 8K Championship in Brea in 26:40 earlier this year, but has not been active on the roads since. If he is anywhere near the form he had then, he could easily wind up on the podium.

**Greenslit, Stabb, Bell.**

#### Women

This division looks pretty clear although on a given day anything can happen. Barring surprises it should be **Sonja Friend-Uhl** taking the win with **Kara Parker** a strong second and Atlanta's **Susan Welch**, a 1:40-ish half Marathoner, in 3rd.

**Friend-Uhl, Parker, Welch.**

#### 50-54

**Men.** **Kristian Blaich** should be running in the lead pack for the Overall Race win. Along the way he should take this division easily. His teammate, **Michael Strickland**, who ran 17:12 in Syracuse looks to be the best of the rest. **Mike Nier** and **Dale Flanders** of the Genesee Valley Harriers, will try to deny him the 2nd spot. Nier ran 17:22 at Syracuse. Flanders, if he is not too tired from his 15K exertions in the heat of Tulsa last weekend, should be well positioned for a podium finish; he ran 17:35 in Syracuse. [Late news flash-rumor has it that Michael Strickland sprained an ankle and may not be able to run.]

**Blaich, Nier, Flanders.**

**Women.** I can read off my 1-2-3 for this division by just looking up at the Overall Race. Sutera Strange, Wolski and Butler should finish in that order for both Overall and Women's 50 races. If any of those 3 have an off day,

GVH's **Kathleen Hayden** is poised to pounce. Her 20:13 at Syracuse suggests she could be in the hunt for a podium spot. Others who will be up close include Butler's teammate from Tampa, **Michelle Allen**, TNT's **Kimberly Anderson** and GVH's **Carol Bischoff**.  
**Sutera Strange, Wolski, Butler.**  
**Alico, Cushing-Murray, Carlson.**

### **55-59**

**Men.** The Atlanta Track Club's **Gary Droze** looks to be the favorite although he will be pushed by Florida's **Alfonso Solano**. Droze's 17:14 at Syracuse gives him the credentials for first but Solano has run a few 5K's in the 17:30-17:45 range. It appears the race for third place will be between ATC's **Michael Anderson** and **Stephen Crelli** from Pittsburgh. Crelli probably has the edge; he has run his 5K's in the 18:30 to 18:58 range. Anderson's best 5K is an 18:58 in the Atlanta 5K. I would give Crelli even more of an edge on the basis of a 36:44 in Pittsburgh's Great Race except that it is a 'PR-Maker,' dropping 400 feet over its 10K course. But Crelli is a strong runner, make no mistake! **Bob Nugent, Jr.** is a 'dark horse.' A Mountain, Ultra and Trail runner, Nugent does not appear to have the speed of the runners named above but cross country should play to his strength.  
**Droze, Solano, Crelli.**

**Women.** This division shapes up as a battle between New Balance Tampa's **Susan 'Lynn' Cooke** and ATC's **Mary Sweeney**. Cooke ran 20:26 at Syracuse and, while Sweeney has no recent marks I can find, was running terrific earlier this year. She ran 41:47 in the 10K Championships in Dedham, an age-grade equivalent of 19:59. But the absence of recent race results makes performance less certain. **Margaret Sloan** has been running her 5K's in the low 22 minute range and should have the edge for third. GVH's **Colleen Magnussen** may well have something to say about that; she ran a 23:12 5K at Syracuse last month.  
**Cooke, Sweeney, Sloan.**

### **60-64**

**Men.** It is good to see **Tom McCormack** back among us. He broke the Men's 60-64 record 2 years ago in Syracuse with a 16:58. But much of 2015 and 2016 were years lost to injury. He is not back all the way to that fitness level but will be a force to be reckoned with, no doubt. He has run three local 5K's in and around the Smoky Mountains in 17:42 to 18:09. He also apparently has a 4:46 at the Waynesville Main Street Mile. It may be flat, possibly even downhill and fast but however fast it is, a sub-5-minute mile is moving! The competition comes mainly from the Boulder Road Runner's

**Kyle Hubbart**, and the GVH duo of **Gary Radford** and **Mark Rybinski**. Hubbart ran 18:18 at Syracuse and, if he is not still feeling the Tulsa 15K, should give McCormack something to think about. Radford was only 3 seconds back from Hubbart at Syracuse so he will be right in there as well. Rybinski was further back at Syracuse but is on the road to recovery. He should be running faster after another month of recovery and training. We had hoped to see **Ken Youngers** take part in this spirited competition but rumor has it that he may not make it. If true, we certainly hope to see him running for ATC in December at Club Cross.

**McCormack, Radford, Hubbart.**

**Women.** This will be a stroll in the park for the Atlanta Track Club; all 3 runners in the division are affiliated with ATC. **Cynthia Williams** should take 1st based upon her 22:46 5K at Syracuse. The contest for 2nd between her teammates **Cynthia Lucking** and **Terry Ozell** should be closer but I am leaning toward Lucking. Ozell came in 5 seconds ahead of Lucking at the USATF 1 Mile Road Championship at the CRIM. But Lucking also ran a 49:07 10K at Dedham, suggesting she probably ran one of the two 5K's that make up that race in under 24:30; she should be able to break 24 in a 5K. Ozell tends to run her 5K's in the 24:30 to 25:30 range.

**Williams, Lucking, Ozell.**

## **65-69**

**Men.** The top 4 look to be Hall of Famer **Doug Bell** and Atlanta teammates, **Kirk Larson**, **Jerry Learned** and **Vasan Neovakul**. Bell ran 18:30 at Syracuse and a 38:55 10K at Dedham. Larson ran 19:24 at Syracuse and a 41:02 at the Marin Memorial Day 10K. Learned ran 20:30 in Syracuse and 44:27 in Dedham, a very consistent performer over the years when healthy. Neovakul had an off day at Syracuse but still broke 22 minutes there; normally his 5K's are in the high 20 to mid 21 minute range. No one else is consistently under 22 for a 5K in recent months. It is good to see **Roger Price** back in this competition. He has been battling injuries for the last few years but even last year, when not at his best, he still managed a 20:54 at Syracuse. If he could manage that kind of running on Sunday, he could well wind up on the podium. This summer, however, his 5K's were slower. Should any of those falter, GVH's Coach, **Mike Reif**, and **Bruce Kritzler** could contend.

**Bell, Larson, Learned.**

**Women.** Kentucky's **Terry Foody** and South Carolina's **Catherine Lempesis** will contest this division. Lempesis seems to run her 5K's in the mid 20's and Foody's are in the low 30's. Barring unforeseen circumstances it should be Lempesis followed by Foody.

## **Lempesis, Foody.**

### **70-74**

**Men.** In this division we get to celebrate the return of another of our Lions, Hall of Famer **Doug Goodhue**, Age Division Runner of the Year for 8 consecutive years from 2007 to 2014. This is his first National Championship race since the 12K in Alexandria last year. He was feeling his oats enough to run the Volkslaufe 20K this summer and lower the US record by 2:24 to 1:29:28. Knowing how competitive Doug is, he was probably kicking himself that he didn't lower the record by another couple of minutes. That will be for next year as Goodhue is still in the process of rebuilding his fitness. He apparently had another setback after that race. His main motivation is to come out and run with the team. He had hoped to team up with **Paul Carlin** (that's me) for this race but I had a minor setback going into the Tulsa 15K and that race took a lot out of me. I will miss this race. We hope to team up for Club Cross in December. **Jan Frisby**, 2015 M70 Runner of the Year and holder of the 10K record, will also be present. His fitness has been off for most of this year but Doug Bell let me know that Frisby has been training well so we may see a rejuvenated Frisby in Tallahassee. The other runner in the mix is **Przemek Nowicki**, Shore AC's ace. Nowicki has not hit the heights that Goodhue and Frisby have hit but he has been a steady performer over the years. He was a minute and 20 seconds ahead of Frisby in Syracuse but Bell's note suggests it should be closer this time. Goodhue was, of course, a sub-20 minute 5K performer at Syracuse up through the 2014 race. Last year when he was already starting to deal with some injury issues, he ran 20:07. His 5K's this summer were close to what Nowicki ran in Syracuse. Handicapping is difficult in the circumstances. As Goodhue is untested in the past few months and has mainly a motivation to run with the team, I will go with Nowicki as the favorite, Frisby for 2nd and Goodhue for 3rd but it could well be reversed. Goodhue and Frisby are very competitive if they think they have a chance of winning. If any of those first three run into trouble, the Shore AC's **Edward Smith** and **JL Seymore**, along with Ann Arbor's **David Cohen** are poised to jump into the breach. They ran between 23:46 and 24:12 in Syracuse.

**Nowicki, Frisby, Goodhue.**

### **75-79**

**Men.** If Atlanta's **Ron Mastin** were completely healthy, he would be the favorite. He ran 23:05 in Syracuse last year. But he has been battling injuries for much of the year and has definitely been in recovery mode, slowly rebuilding his fitness in the past few months. He ran 28:15 in Syracuse this year but with another month of training and strengthening

under his belt, might well be capable of running a minute or two faster were the race to be held today. His teammate, **David Turner**, has been clocking his 5K's in the 26 to 27 minute range this year. Ann Arbor's **Phillip Kroll** prefers longer distances but is dropping down for this Cross Country race. He has run a 42:53 8K at Brea, a 2:04:41 Half Marathon at the Half Marathon Championships in San Diego and a 1:24:08 15K at Tulsa last week. His 8K is Age-Grade equivalent to a 26:10. The only question is whether he will have fully recovered from what many thought of as a draining 15K run last week. If so, I believe he is the favorite although if Mastin's recovery has accelerated, he will try to hang with Kroll and could deny him the victory.  
**Kroll, Mastin, Turner.**

**Women. Madeline Bost** is the sole contender. She has been running her recent 5K's in the 37-38 minute range. This marks her return to national competition after taking a fall on a poorly lit trail that has apparently tripped up many runners of all ages. We welcome her back and applaud her pluck.  
**Bost.**

### **80-84**

**Men.** Atlanta's **Jim Askew** and Ann Arbor's **Jon Desenberg** will fight it out for the Gold Medal. Askew appears to have the edge. He runs his 5K's in the 26 minute range while Desenberg ran 31:54 at Syracuse. Askew also ran the USATF 10K Championship in Dedham at 58:58, 15 minutes better than Desenberg's effort in the 10K at Ann Arbor. Regardless of the outcome in this race, however, Desenberg leads in the Masters Grand Prix for this division and appears poised to put it out of reach when he finishes the race.  
**Askew, Desenberg.**

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It looks like some great competition on the fine-crushed shell--which will be a little more finely crushed after today's races. The cry, "Let's Crush it!" is even more apt than usual.

Clearly Atlanta TC is here in strength. There were times at Syracuse when the Headquarters Hotel seemed like Atlanta North; that feeling must be redoubled in Tallahassee this weekend.