

Bear of a Course No Match for USATF XC!

Brown Bear Invitational Saturday October 1, 2022, Attleboro MA

Race #2 on the USATF NE XC Grand Prix series went off without a hitch on Saturday October 1 on the Coogan XC Course in Attleboro MA. Our gracious hosts, the Brown Bear Running Club, meteorologically mastered the weather, running the 6k Women's and 8k Men's race in relatively dry conditions betwixt some healthy precipitation. Neither the extra distance, the weather, nor the mass of youthful college harriers would stand in the way of a large and enthusiastic USATF crowd, numbering 172 feisty souls (343 soles, someone lost a shoe on the course). Runners, keep those legs warm as Grand Prix Race #3 - The Wayland Cross Country Festival - is on for Sunday October 9, featuring one of the largest all-ages fields in the region.

At Brown Bear, first up were the Women and the 6k challenge. An awe inspiring performance by Battle Road, with 7 of the Top 8 finishers led by Lily Robinson, unfolded on each loop. Lily's 22:28.22 tore the tape, followed closely by teammate Sarika Temme-Bapat. Sarika also placed second at XC GP Race #1- GBTC XC Invite, giving her the lead in XC GP Open Points. Another Masterful performance by Christina Cambell of HFC, finishing fourth overall and first 40+, broke up the Battle Road onslaught. Joining the Top 10, just like at GBTC, was Maggie Peard of the Cambridge Running Club with another strong performance.

Team honors in the Open went to, of course, Battle Road, followed by HFC (top Team 40+ double dip, chocolate chip), Cambridge RC, Tracksmith, Liberty, and Greater Lowell. Greater Lowell's Kara Haas took home the gold in the 50+ division, but that was not enough to counter the depth of Liberty's torch work, earning them Team prime plaudits in the 50+ Team group. GLRR and Tracksmith battled to a split of the Team points for 2nd 50+ Team. Mary Cass ran supreme amongst the 60+ Individuals cementing Liberty's Team win in that grouping. Mary scored for the Libertines in all Team groups *and* took top Age Grade with a solid gold 87.32, edging Mimi Fallon of HFC and Kara Haas of GLRR. The Liberty women scored in all 4 Team groups, proving that running is a lifelong pursuit. No barriers.

After a brief deluge, the skies cleared and the Men pounded the turf for 8 kilometers. Former steepler Ben Drezek of Tracksmith again tested the field early, broke any thoughts of a pack, and kept pushing all the way to a 24:28.3 win. Mike Durkin, second place, and Tracksmith's Colin Cernik, third place, just could not close the gap, but stayed tantalizingly close through all four loops. A gritty performance for sure, still yielding smiles and "well done's" at the finish. Nearly every one of the eight complete Teams placed a runner in the Top 20 with Tracksmith emerging for the Open Team win, Battle Road 2nd and HFC 3rd. The Striders El Jefe TJ Unger's strong running earned the good doctor a 40+ Individual victory, keying HFC's 40+ Team win over a determined CMS squad. The Central Mass Striders turned the tables on HFC in the 50+ class, reversing the Team's 1st and 2nd place finish, followed by Greater Lowell. Following suit, Lowell took the 60+ Team win going away despite CMS's Dan Verrigton copping the Individual crown and HFC's super 70+ winner Bob Ruel's fine day, pushing HFC to 2nd in the 60+ cohort. Congrats to Tracksmith's Dave Dugan for the 50+ Individual conquest, HFC Strider Jason Cakorous for the overall Age Grade triumph, and to HFC and GLRR for fielding full scoring Teams in all the age groups.

Race results are online, and the updated USATF-NE XC Grand Prix standings will be published soon. In the meantime keep eating miles and [register for Race #3 in the XC Grand Prix, the Wayland XC Festival on Sunday October 9](#). Discount registration closes at 6pm on Thursday, so get a move on and get a piece of the \$1,000 in awards available in the Open competition.

Chris Wargo

USATF NE XC Chair