

Despite 2016 featuring no IAAF World Cross Country Championship and athletes focusing on the 2016 Rio Olympics, there were some real highlights this year with the USA Cross Country program.

Garrett Heath and Amy Van Alstine each claimed gold at December's USATF National Club Cross Country Championships at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Hoka One One Northern Arizona Elite won the open men's team championships, while the Boston Athletic Association won the open women's team title. Kevin Castille (M40+), Rick Becker (M60+), and Sonja Friend-Uhl were the fastest masters in their respective races, while Castille (91.52%), Becker (90.77%), and Kathryn Martin (95.64%) were tops on Age Grading.

Garrett Heath came back a month later to upset Great Britain's Mo Farah to win the senior men's race at the Great Edinburgh Cross Country International Challenge. Amy Van Alstine placed sixth in the senior women's race, while Philip Roacha and Katie Rainsberger each finished fifth in their respective junior races. Team USA (232 points) finished third behind the hosts Team GB (125 points) and Team Europe (197 points).

Craig Lutz won his first national title in the Open Men's race at the USA Cross Country Championships in Bend, Oregon, while Mattie Suver won the Open Women's race ahead of Amy Van Alstine. Thomas Pollard and Melissa Berry won their respective junior races. Grace Padilla and Jacques Sallberg were fastest of the day in the Masters races, with Jo Anne Rowland and Rick Becker taking wins in the Age Graded competition.

Allison Morgan (Senior Women) and Don Cowart (Senior Men) won gold at the APA Pan American Championships in Caraballeda, Venezuela to lead Team USA to team wins in those races. Thomas Pollard claimed silver to lead the Team USA Junior Men to Team Gold, while Claire Graves finished 12th to lead Team USA to bronze in the team standings.

Tallahassee will host both the November 6 USA Masters 5km Cross Country Championships and the December 10 USATF National Club Cross Country Championships. Team USA will compete at the Great Edinburgh International Cross Country on January 7. The USA Cross Country Championships return to Bend (Oregon) on February 4 with what's expected to be a record-setting prize money purse. Athletes will select themselves at the Bend race to represent Team USA at the March 26 IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Kampala, Uganda.

2016 also marks my 13th and final year as Chair of the Cross Country Council. There are so many people that I need to thank that I can't list them all here, but I do want to single out a few: First I want to thank my mentors Doris Heritage, Anne Phillips, and Bill Roe who have guided me over the years with word and action. I'd like to thank Thom Hunt (current Vice Chair), Paul Greer (Secretary), Bill Quinlisk (Masters LDR Representative), and Fred Finke (International Teams) for their long term service to the Council. I'd also like to express special thanks to Carole Langenbach (past Masters LDR Representative) for her service during my early tenure, to Bob Larsen and Joe Vigil for their wisdom and advice, and to Bob Latham and Rick Rothman for their hard work over the last few years. And thanks to all of you who have supported me during my "baker's dozen" years at the helm of the Cross Country Council.