



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Pacific Bliss: Runners build a healthier world at the 18th Volvo Santa Monica Classic**

- *Past champions Luis Gutierrez, Elizabeth Ben-Ishai win 10k titles*
- *UCLA grad student Gabrielle Rinne, masters runner Sergio Reyes take 5k victories*
- *Santa Monica's scenic shoreline delivers iconic experience for 6,500 runners at the 18th edition of classic road race*

SANTA MONICA, CA - September 10, 2023 - In a running career spanning from high school in Truckee to an injury-plagued stretch at Yale to now her post-graduate days at UCLA, **Gabrielle Rinne** has run dozens of races. Rinne doesn't know the exact number, but she's sure of one thing. Until Sunday, she had never won a road race.

On a warm, overcast morning, no woman was faster across the 3.1-mile layout as Rinne won the **Volvo Santa Monica Classic presented by ASICS 5K** in 18 minutes, 19 seconds - 16 seconds ahead of another Los Angeles runner, **Sadie Encinas**. After a run of injuries in college, Rinne said, "I'm going to go into retirement." But she buried those thoughts and now, as a UCLA Psychology PhD candidate, she decided, "Now I'm getting back into running for the fun of it. Races like this are just awesome."

Rinne was just one of the many inspiring stories that unfolded on a morning when more than 6,500 entrants toured Santa Monica from the ocean-front start to the finish at the pier. Few runners had a more moving tale than 51-year-old **Ingrid Walters**, who finished third in the women's 5K in 18:52.

"My favorite part of the day is that I'm three years cancer free from breast cancer," said Walters, who lives in Santa Monica. "This is a pretty special race for me." Running played a major factor in Walters' recovery. "I ran through all my treatments," she said. "As soon as my chemo started, I ran every week, 55 miles a week and through radiation. It kept me sane. It kept my life going. It kept me pumped because I didn't realize how strong I was until I got through it."

In the men's 5K, all the young, fit, sleek runners in their 20s and 30s couldn't keep pace with 41-year-old **Sergio Reyes**. The masters runner from Palmdale won the men's race in 15:10.

"Every year it gets harder and harder, like I'm grinding out there," said Reyes. "I don't look at the splits too much because they're slowing down. I was able to just keep a strong pace and managed to hold on barely through the tape." Reyes won by 17 seconds over **Adam Wilkinson** of Santa Monica.

Reyes is training for the Twin Cities Marathon on October 1, hoping to qualify for the 2024 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in February. His last marathon was the 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials in Atlanta. Of his marathon training, which is up to 120-130 miles a week, Reyes said, “It’s an old feeling. It’s not familiar yet, but I’m hoping it will be in another three weeks.”

**Luis Gutierrez** of Rancho Cucamonga won the men’s 10K in 32:51, his second straight year winning the event.

**Elizabeth Ben-Ishai** of Pasadena won the women’s 10K in 37:27. The win was a meaningful one for Ben-Ishai. Two years ago she won the event when it was her first race since turning 40. Two years later, she hit the tape first again. “It’s always beautiful in Santa Monica,” she said, “always fantastically organized and a lot of spectators cheering you on.”

The Volvo Santa Monica Classic is organized by **The McCourt Foundation** (TMF). Aside from promoting fitness and fun, the event is a platform for TMF to drive broader health and wellness. More than 100 participants this weekend ran for Team TMF, raising funds to support the mission to cure neurological diseases while empowering communities to build a healthier world. For complete results, photos and more, visit [www.SantaMonicaClassic.com](http://www.SantaMonicaClassic.com).

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