

## Rachel Cliff Q&A – 2016 Canadian Cross Country Championships



The 2016 Canadian Cross Country Championships take place November 26 in Kingston, Ont. These Championships serve as a national championship for youth, junior, senior and masters age category athletes. It's also the selection trials for the 2017 IAAF World Cross Country Championships and 2017 NACAC Cross Country Championships. For more information click [here](#).

**Rachel Cliff** of Vancouver and member of the BC Endurance Project (BCEP) was 3rd in last year's senior women's race and has appeared on the podium two other times; placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in both 2013 and 2014. Rachel also competed for Canada at the 2013 World XC Championship in Bydgoszcz, Poland where she placed 25<sup>th</sup> in the Senior race. Rachel has also seen steady improvement on the track achieving personal bests in the 5,000m (15:23) and 10,000m (32:21) this past summer.

**BCA:** You've had a lot of success on the roads, track, and cross country, including in last year's Canadian Cross Country Championships. How did you get into XC running and do you remember your first cross country race?

**RC:** I got into XC running in grade 4, my mom was a recreational runner and she introduced me to it as trail running was something she enjoyed. Even at that age I loved easy running for fun – the longer the better. However, I wasn't initially keen on running fast or racing – I was a mid-pack runner in our meets because I simply didn't want to hurt. The first XC race that I vividly remember was in Grade 5 at the Pine Tree Classic in Mundy Park. It was a mixed gender race and I got carried away running with the boys. I ended up coming 2<sup>nd</sup>, beating a few girls I never thought I'd be able to!! It still stands out as a special race.

**BCA:** What do you like most about cross country? Are there lessons that you've learned or insights that you take from cross country that make you a better track runner, or vice versa?

**RC:** I like that XC is a pure racing event and the way the course/conditions can impact your tactics. Even on the same course, no two XC races are ever the same. The mud, the weather, and your competitors affect the way it plays out. As a distance runner I also enjoy being able to race longer events off the track – I love track racing, but XC racing and training gives a nice change of scenery from 12.5 or 25 laps around

a track! Times don't matter, so XC teaches you to just run hard and stay calm if things beyond your control don't play out the way you want them to; a mindset that's useful in track races.

**BCA: After racing at last year's Championships, what part of the Kingston course do you like and/or find to be the most challenging?**

**RC:** I raced in Kingston quite a few times while in University, and I've always been a fan of the course. It is a challenging course with a nice mix of hills and flat sections and lots of spectator friendly sections. I'm excited to race the 2.5km loop (when I was in the CIS women only ran 5km so we did the 2.5km loop 2x) and I prefer that it's more hilly and technical than the 2km loop (which we ran last year in the 8km race). It'll be a new challenge to race 10km XC but I'm excited for it and am happy that Athletics Canada have followed the IAAF's lead for gender equality.

**BCA: What are your goals or expectations for this year's Championships?**

**RC:** This summer ended a bit rough for me and I took quite a bit of time off to unwind, re-focus and remember why I love the sport. Training is finally starting to come around and I want to have a competitive day against some of the best girls in Canada and return to the same quality of races I had this summer. A podium finish is definitely the goal.

**BCA: Do you have any cross country training or racing advice for upcoming youth and junior runners who would like to run at a high level?**

**RC:** Have fun and train hard, but don't overdo it. XC running requires a combination of patience and grit in the race and in training. It's no secret that you have to work hard, but you also want to stay healthy and enjoy it – consistent training always pays off in the long run.