

Press Release – 2014 Australian Junior Championship

As announced by the SSA Cross Country Committee (SAXC) earlier this year, the 2014 Australian Junior Championship for Cross Country Skiing will be held at Perisher on July 26/27 as a stand-alone weekend separate to the Open and FIS events. At the recent SAXC meeting in Mt Beauty the format of the events on this weekend were confirmed as follows:

Saturday July 26 AM: Classic Sprint Time Trial and Finals

Saturday July 26 PM: Trial "Cross Country Cross" Obstacle Course (non-championship event)

Sunday July 27 AM: Freestyle Distance Events

The "Cross Country Cross" event on the Saturday afternoon aligns with the new event on the program for the 2016 Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer. The exact format for this event is still being developed, however it will likely involve a combination of jumps and turns designed to challenge all-round skiing skills as well as head-to-head racing.

In addition, the distances for these events were confirmed as follows:

Sprint	Distance	
Women & Men	Women	Men
U12 - ~ 0.4km	U12 - 1.5km	U12 - 1.5km
	U14 - 2.5km	U14 - 2.5km
U16 - 0.4-0.8km	U16 - 3.5km	U16 - 5.0km
	U18 - 5.0km	U18 - 7.5km
U20 - 0.8-1.2km	U20 - 5.0km	U20 - 7.5km

The main reason that the distances have come down slightly relative to recent years is to promote junior skiers learning how to ski fast and at a high intensity throughout the race, rather than pacing the race at a lower intensity just to finish. There are plenty of opportunities for juniors to ski longer distances at other events during the season, and the top Australian juniors will compete in the Open FIS races over 5/10km for women and 10/15km for men. The sprint distances and courses used will be determined by the race organisers dependant on snow conditions.

There was also discussion amongst the committee regarding why the junior men are skiing longer than the junior women in the U16 category, when they are physiologically similar at this age and should also be learning how to ski faster first before building endurance. The key factor here was a desire to begin stepping the distance up towards the World Junior Championship and Youth Olympic distances, which are 5km for women and 10km for men (3.3km and 5km in the relays).

Regarding techniques, Classic was chosen for the Sprint and Freestyle for the Distance races as these match up with the styles at the World Junior Championships next year. The format of these events will be reviewed following the winter, however the general intention is to keep the same format for 2015 with alternating styles. This year this means that the techniques are the same for the corresponding Australian Championship FIS races at Perisher the following weekend, however this timing may not be the case in subsequent years.

Online race entry for the 2014 Australian Junior Championship will open later this month.