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B.C. skier always seeking a bit of magic

Samantha WRIGHT ALLEN / Prince George Citizen
February 25, 2015 07:47 AM



Eliza-Jane Kitchen competes in the women's 7.5 k classic cross country skiing event. Kitchen finished in 10th place. - 2015 Cnaada Winter Games photo by Bill Campbell

Her family calls it her "magical dream mode."

It happens when B.C. cross country skier and Canada Winter Games competitor Eliza-Jane Kitchen is racing at her best.

"It's just like another setting on the remote of myself," said the 18-year-old North Vancouver athlete. "I kind of think of it as my magical state where if I can get to that in my race... (you) don't worry about anything else, just get in your mode, enter that magical state of performance and then I can push it hard."

On Monday, she said she achieved that mode during the women's 7.5-kilometre classic, earning her a 10th-place finish. Kitchen didn't make it out of the quarterfinals Tuesday, placing 22nd in the sprint race, and will compete in Thursday's mass start and Saturday's team relay.

"I was definitely hoping for a top-10 finish," said the up-and-coming skier after Monday's race. "I had a really great season so far this year. A lot of the girls are older, so I didn't have any expectations on myself and see how I

compare against them all."

She managed to pass one skier on her final loop.

"It definitely gives you a little bit of an adrenaline rush," she said, adding she was thinking to herself: "I'm in the race."

She was also thinking about the months and months of training that brought her to Prince George. As soon as she got off the bus at Otway Nordic Centre, where all the cross country events take place, she dug her hands into the snow.

"It's been hard with the lack of snow in Vancouver," she said. "Some days, they start at 6:30 a.m., and it's pouring rain and it's the last thing you want to do. I thought of that in my race (Monday). I was like, 'You've trained for this and those hard running intervals will pay off.'"

It's Kitchen's first time at the Games but she has competed in four national championships in the sport.

"I've been skiing since I could walk," said the Grade 12 Handsworth secondary school student, whose older brother also competes in cross country skiing.

At a young age, Kitchen had the same drive to compete.

"I just wanted to race and win medals," she said with a laugh. "I just love to compete. It's not about the place, it's just fun to be out there."

Kitchen was a contender for the junior team that recently returned from the world championships in Kazakhstan, but ultimately wasn't selected.

She has her sights set on that accomplishment next year.

"Right now I'm just really enjoying what I'm doing, the training and competing and just being part of this, almost a community.

"I love being part of this sport."

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