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## Suchy secures second gold

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Emily Suchy of Team B.C. poses for a photo after her win in Tuesday's para 800-metre ski race at the Otway Nordic Centre during the Canada Winter Games. - Citizen staff photo

Even though the sprint isn't her favourite, B.C. sit-ski athlete Emily Suchy had a sizable lead as she glided over the finish line Tuesday.

It was the 17-year-old's second gold medal in as many days competing at the Canada Winter Games.

"I felt really strong," she said after the women's para 800-metre race at the Otway Nordic Centre. She also won gold at the 2.5-kilometre sit-ski event Monday.

"My race plan, a lot of it's 'think power,' think how quickly I'm snapping my poles forward because that's really all I've got to work with," she said, laughing. She demonstrated the quick short jabs of her poles needed on inclines, and how she extends the poles backward on flat stretches.

"The main part is to keep your momentum going as you're going up the hill."

She finished with a time of two minutes 26 seconds in the 800m, a full 20 seconds ahead of silver medallist Tanya Quesnel from Ontario.

The weather was much warmer Tuesday, making the snow "mushy" in parts.

"It's a little bit slower in the sun but still pretty fast," Suchy said, describing the course as a hair pin there and back, with a sharp corner at the end.

The Revelstoke resident is no stranger to hardware: although it's her first Games, at the national championships in 2013, she took home two gold and two silver medals.

Suchy said she's been getting stronger the last couple years, after discovering the sport five years earlier at a street festival in Canmore, Alta.

"They had a tent full of sit-skis and I was like 'That's super rad.'"

One training camp later, and she was hooked.

"I just fell in love right away," she said. "I really just like being outside in the sun with my friends, in the fresh air and going fast down hills."

Team B.C. coach Tony Chin said Suchy's strength comes from having experience in water sports too, which helps her excel in the sit-ski.

"She's very well-rounded," he said. "That's what we like. I think too many athletes at a young age start specializing and I think that's a big mistake."

Chin described Suchy as a phenomenal athlete.

"She is so incredibly strong. She trains hard, she deserves everything she gets out of this sport."

Suchy would like to compete in the Paralympics, but right now her functional ability means she's only classified to compete at a Canadian level and not in international competition.

"That's a pretty big disappointment for me because I like to be out here and I'd really like to take it further," said Suchy, who has a condition called Perthes' disease, which affects her hip.

"You could say it's like a severe arthritis," she explained, adding it means she can't do much weight-bearing activity. For cross training, she works on the bike, roller board and focuses a lot on weight lifting and core strength. "A lot of pressure on it is not good for it and I don't have a lot of range of motion."

Facing four strong competitors at the Canada Winter Games has been a great experience she said, especially since she's usually racing alone or in the able-bodied category.

"It's my dream to race with really fast people and be pushed really hard," she said.

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