



Record Number of Participants Highlight Cross Country Championships



While the weather was cold, the spirits remained high and the athletes remained focused as the 2014 Athletics Ontario Cross Country Championships were an overwhelming success. Taking place on November 16 at the beautiful Firemen's Park in Niagara Falls, this highly anticipated event was well-represented across Ontario and will certainly be a benchmark for future provincial championships.

The event, which was executed through a partnership between the Niagara Sport Commission and the Niagara Olympic Club, was

special in many respects, not the least of which was due to the record number of participants who took to the course. Among the record-setting 976 entries, there were some clear standout performances across all ages and distances, highlighting the incredible distance running talent that resides in Ontario. For all of the award winners, their victories proved even more special as Canadian Olympian Mohammed Ahmed was on-site to present the awards. Not only does Mohammed have great ties to the sport, competing at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, but he also has fond memories of the host facility, Firemen's Park, where he won an OFSSA Gold Medal.

Some of the standout performances from the day included the highly anticipated Senior Men's 10k, wherein Jeffrey Archer from Physi-Kult Kingston claimed victory with a final time of 33:45, three seconds ahead of runner-up Berhanu Degefa from Toronto Olympic Club. The Junior Men's 8k was won by Andrew Nebel from Runners Edge Track Club, posting a time of 26:04. Sasha Gollish, from the University of Toronto, earned a first place finish in the Senior Women's 6k with a time of 21:23, narrowly beating out her teammate Rachel Hannah (21:28). Speed River TFC's Sarah Wismer recorded a time of 18:05 to place first in the Junior Women's 5k. The Masters 5k category saw several impressive performances across all age groups, with Steve Boyd from Physi-Kult Kingston taking home the fastest overall time of 16:30. Katherine Ahokas, representing the Muskoka Algonquin Runners, was the first female finisher, meanwhile, collecting a time of 19:00. A complete list of all remaining results can be seen [HERE](#).

Not only did the athletes experience a fantastic outing, but all others involved, from the spectators to the volunteers to the event organizers, did as well. The course, first and foremost, was an immediate standout for athletes and spectators alike. Said one spectator, "What a fabulous day! [The event] ran so smoothly and I heard quite a few people commenting on how wonderful the course was marked out and how well organized it was." This was thanks in large part to the impeccable maintenance from the Stamford Center Volunteer Firemen's Association. Their great efforts supplemented the facility's already



accommodating large start area and spectator-friendly course design, which was able to maintain a solid running surface from start to finish, despite the cold and snowy weather.

The event also received an incredible contribution from numerous volunteers from the Niagara Sport Commission, Niagara Olympic Club, St. John's Ambulance, Athletics Ontario, and additional friends of the sport. "What a pleasure to work with [the volunteers]," said a course official, showing the irreplaceable value of their hard work and dedicated efforts before, during, and after the event. These provincial championships would not have been a success without all of the volunteers involved.

Overall, in what was truly a standout event by any definition, one coach summed it up best, claiming that this was the "best Athletics Ontario cross country meet I have every attended."