

Young Achiever: Brianna Oldis

Cross-country skier sets her sights on Winter Olympics

BY Nicki Letts

Cross-country skiing is one of the world's great human-powered modes of movement. It tests athletes to their physical and mental limits.

But for 18-year-old Brianna Oldis, it comes naturally.

The **Mount Beauty** local, who has been cross-country skiing since she could walk, recently won a grant from the **Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club** to train in Europe.

As part of the National Junior Team, she spent eight weeks training and racing in Switzerland, Austria and the Italian border.

Her goal?

"I really want to compete in the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy," she said.

For anyone else, this might seem like a pipe dream. But Oldis has been on skis for practically her whole life.

"My parents did a lot of backcountry skiing, so from the age of two I was backcountry skiing too.

"Every winter, we'd be out there together skiing and snow camping."

It wasn't until she was at high school that she tried racing.

"I didn't even know that cross-country racing was a thing until I was 11. My mum had a school camp up on the mountain and I stumbled across a race and managed to win."

"There wasn't much competition though!" she adds, humbly.

One victory and Oldis was hooked. She bought a pair of skate skis and, the same year, entered into the Kangaroo Hoppet, Australia's premier long-distance cross-country ski race, held in Falls Creek every August.

"I didn't win or anything but it was a good experience. Then I came back the next year and took ten minutes off my time," she said.

It wasn't long before Victorian Junior Squad manager Ronice Goebel witnessed her talent and invited the young athlete to join her cross-country ski team.

Two years later, Oldis qualified for the Australian Junior National Team.

She said the hardest part is training by herself.

“It’s a tough haul being a cross-country skier in Australia,” she said.

“We have three or four camps a year to train together but everything else is by myself, which can be quite frustrating.”

The cardio-intense sport requires a dedicated training regime, which Oldis creates herself using a mix of multiple disciplines.

“It takes lots of athletic training, including road riding, running, mountain biking, the gym.”

At the same time, she has started her first year of mechanical engineering at Deakin University in Geelong.

For Oldis, being away from home isn’t new. She spends months at a time training overseas, something she knows is necessary to be at the top of her game.

“I was happy with how my skiing came on in Italy. I’ve had lots of setbacks in the last few years, including sicknesses and serious injuries, so I was happy with how I managed to stay healthy and participate in all my races.”

Now she can’t wait to get back out there onto the trails she knows best and reach her goals.

“Racing is up in the air at the moment, but I’m really hoping I can qualify for the Nordic Junior World Ski Championships in January and February in Poland,” she said.

“I definitely feel it’s achievable.”

*Nicki Letts – Journalist
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