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Relay cross to debut at 2017 Ski Nationals

CANMORE, ALBERTA - An exciting new event called Relay Cross will make a world premiere at this year's Cross Country Ski Nationals to be hosted by the Canmore Nordic Ski Club from March 18 - 25. The Relay Cross will see teams of two compete on two different yet intersecting courses that will include rollers, uphill, downhill, banks and sharp turns along with other thrilling features.

"We thought it would be fun to introduce a unique challenge at this year's Nationals building on the enthusiasm for the successful Cross Country Cross Free event at the 2016 Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer," says Bob Ellard, 2017 Ski Nationals chairman. The Relay Cross will be the first race of the competition and replaces the team sprint event that has a nine-year history.

"The Relay Cross will test competitors' speed and balance and it will require some strategic decision making," Ellard says. "It will be exciting for both athletes and spectators."

The two courses will each be two kilometres in length and will include a double "escargot" where the course will spiral in the pattern of a snail shell, a feature seen at some cycle cross races. The escargot will bring the two courses together, and competitors face-to-face, as they ski in and out of the escargot.

In addition, each course will include a 30-cm high barrier that skiers will have to navigate by slowing down and moving over it sideways, or by taking a calculated risk and jumping over it. The course will not be ready until the day before the event at which time all competitors will have an opportunity to ski it.

About 1,000 athletes, coaches and families are expected to attend the 2017 Ski Nationals.

For more information or to register visit www.skinationals2017.com

Media contacts

Donna Cunnin or Sarah Fabbri: nationalsmedia@canmorenordic.com