

Caitlin Campbell: Age is Just a Number

By: Adriana Vicic

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This article is part of the "Women in Biathlon Series". With excellence and leadership at the forefront of Biathlon Canada's values, we will be featuring some of the great female athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers that support us in sport and help build our close-knit community. Follow us on social media @biathloncanadaofficial to keep up with each story as we hear from women across the country.



A common trait in athletes across all sports is having a hunger for competition and a desire to be the best. For Caitlin Campbell, a young female biathlete from Prince Edward Island (PEI), these qualities allowed her to become the top female biathlete that's come out of the Maritimes.

Campbell took up biathlon at the young age of 13. In 2014, after just a few years of learning the skills of shooting and skiing, she qualified for Nationals. It was there that this PEI native decided that she not only wanted to compete, but she wanted to do well.

"I went to Nationals, held in New Brunswick, and I finished dead last," said Campbell. "And that was kind of a starting point for me. I wasn't happy with that, I knew I could do better. Sometimes you need to lose in order to win."

Campbell began following a training plan seriously, with the goal of going to the Canada Games in 2015. Unsurprisingly, she achieved that goal, and even surpassed it with a top-10 finish—the highest achievement in biathlon PEI had ever seen.

"I went there and realized, hey, I can compete with the rest of Canada, I can do this," said Campbell.

The now real-estate-professional knew what she was capable of, but she had to prove it to everyone else, too. When she showed up for the World Junior trials, Campbell recalled that most of the athletes there didn't think she had a chance.

Campbell ended up being one of the first females to qualify, and in turn also the first female from the Maritimes to qualify for a World Junior team. These championships were held in 2016 in Romania, but what promised to be an exciting, successful trip, was cut short.

During her second race there, Campbell lost control and was knocked unconscious. When she woke up she was very concussed, covered in blood, and disheartened. "That was the end of that trip for me. I was there, but I didn't get to race anymore. At least I got a good story."

After not making the World Junior team the following year in 2017, Campbell decided it was time to retire her skis. She was keen to finish school and set new goals for herself, and ended up taking the entirety of 2018 off of biathlon.

A year later, she was right back into it. She was selected for the Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program in 2019—the start of a very successful coaching career in biathlon.

"I went to the 2019 Canada Games as the coach for that program, and that was a lot of fun. I learned a lot. It's so different transitioning from athlete to coach. In a way, you almost know a lot more, but there are also things that you never even thought of as an athlete."

Campbell said she was able to offer strategies, like visualization, that she used in her own career to help the young athletes succeed in theirs.

"Especially being here [in PEI], I did a lot of training on my own, or with some of the guys on my team, but I didn't have a girls team to train with. So, when I was training, I would just run through my head the entire time, I would just visualize my competitors in front of me, behind me, on the range with me. I was training alone, but in my head, I was never alone."

This advice will be passed on as Campbell continues to move forward in her coaching career and she embarks on her newest and most exciting opportunity yet—head coach of Team PEI biathlon at the 2023 Canada Games, which will be held in her home province of PEI.

As Campbell reflects on her career and continues to flex her coaching muscles, she is making it a priority for herself to continue being a role model for young female biathletes on the East Coast.

"I want them to see that there are options. If people want to advance in the sport they can, just because they live here, and we don't have as many [athletes], we don't have as many venues—we do have some nice resources and some great coaches, and it's totally doable."

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