

Joey Stel qualifies for track nationals in BC

By Jeff Doner

Aurora runner Joey Stel has taken another big stride forward in realizing his goals for the summer.

The 16-year old recently added to a successful summer by ?crushing? his personal bests in both the 1.5K and 3K races to qualify for track nationals in Langley, BC later this summer.

?Everything just lined up. In the past it seemed like it would be a really hot day, I had already raced that day or the day before or I would just flat out screw up one lap, this time I didn't,? he said about his most recent 1.5K race at York University.

?I crushed my time. I was sitting at 4:11 for most of the year and it's not that I didn't have the best circumstances to run really good times, it was just I didn't think it would end up getting a 4:06.?

Shortly after beating his 1.5K personal best by five seconds, he went on to do the exact same thing in the 3K, trimming a 9:06:04 personal best down to a 9:01.

?I really didn't think I had it in me there, to be honest,? he admitted. ?I've never really had a better weekend of racing for me before.? But this time around, Stel said everything just seemed to come together for him.

?For once it was not hot. A cold front came in after the rain and I think it was about 22 degrees and that felt awesome. Since it was a championship meet, the circumstances were just really good. There was a guy in front of me on my team and basically I just tried to stick with him and I knew that would get me a solid time.?

Stel is a member of the Newmarket Huskies cross country running team and said that it feels great to be finally achieving some of his goals for the summer. The big goal there was qualifying for nationals in Langley, BC on Aug. 8.

?That's the goal for me pretty much every year. Now I've made it and the goal becomes trying to do well there,? he said.

Although thrilled with the outcome, he said achieving a qualifying time came a little later than he had originally hoped.

?It's actually later than expected, but what was really at the front of my mind was that I only had two races left to qualify for nationals and if I screwed up there I would have only had one shot left,? he said.

?Now it really doesn't matter when I got it, just that I got it and it feels amazing. It's actually quite relieving because last year I was off by 0.7 of a second, so it's been a long time and I've never made it to track nationals.?