



ORIENTEERING C A N A D A

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NEW BRUNSWICK HOSTING THE 2008 CANADIAN ORIENTEERING CHAMPIONSHIPS THIS WEEK

Two hundred and fifty athletes are gathering this week in Alma, New Brunswick for the 2008 Canadian Orienteering Championships.

The Canadian Championship races are all being held in Fundy National Park with the nearby village of Alma serving as the event centre. The organizers of these championships are from the local area, as well as Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton.

"Fundy National Park is an ideal location for the Canadian Championships", explains Canadian Orienteering Federation (COF) president Charlotte MacNaughton. "The detailed terrain in the park provides exceptional navigational challenges for the runners." The Canadian Orienteering Championships have been held in Fundy before in 1993 and 2000.

Other events associated with the Championships include a unique sprint orienteering race being held on the ocean floor at low tide at Hopewell Rocks on August 21st. Hopewell Rocks features a maze of flower-pot-shaped rock formations which the athletes can navigate by foot during the low tide. "A competition being held on the ocean floor during low tide will be a first for the sport of orienteering", explains Orienteering New Brunswick President David Ross. "The Hopewell Rocks event has been a real drawing card for us. Lots of the participants, particularly from the US, decided to make the trip to Canada because of this unique event."

Also included in the championship week are three races that were held in Rockwood Park in Saint John on the August 16-17 weekend. Additionally, forty young orienteers from across Canada and the US are taking part in the annual Sass Peepre National Junior Training Camp in Saint John. The Canadian Orienteering Federation is hosting its annual conference and annual general meeting in Alma. A highlight of the conference is a presentation by two-time World Orienteering Champion, Holger Hott of Norway.

The Canadian Championships involves three races. The sprint race runs on Friday August 22. The winners of the various age categories will take around fifteen minutes to complete their race. The middle distance event, with an estimated winning time of 35 minutes, will be held Saturday August 23 and the long distance will be on Sunday August 24. The estimated winning time for the long distance race is 90 minutes.

There are ten different age categories at the Canadian Championships as well as various open recreational categories. The youngest athletes are under 12 years. The oldest athletes competing this weekend are over 75.

The sprint and middle distance races this weekend are World Ranking Events, which allow competitors in the men's and women's elite category to gain valuable points for the international ranking system administered by the International Orienteering Federation.

Many members of Canada's national orienteering team will be competing this weekend – including Sandy Hott, who finished 26th in her two races at the World Orienteering Championships in the Czech Republic in July. Sandy is known for the best ever finish at the World Orienteering Championships by a North American. She was ninth in the middle distance race in Japan in 2005. Also competing this weekend will be Patrick Goeres of Winnipeg, MB and Louise Oram of Vancouver, BC who qualified for the finals at the 2008 World Championships and Emily Kemp of Ottawa, ON who finished in 33rd spot at the recent Junior World Orienteering Championships in Sweden. "Non-Europeans are gradually climbing up the results list in this European-dominated sport," says COF President Charlotte MacNaughton.

Orienteering is a cross-country running sport involving navigation. At the start line, the athletes will be handed a very detailed map made specifically for orienteering. Various checkpoints will be circled on the map. The athlete, using only the map and a compass, will run as quickly as possible to each of the checkpoints in order. The athlete who visits each checkpoint and returns to the finish in the fastest time is the winner. The starts are staggered to avoid following. The athletes carry a small electronic device that registers when they visit each checkpoint.

The Canadian Orienteering Federation (COF) is the national governing body for the sport of orienteering. It is responsible for the development of orienteering in Canada, including Canada's participation at the World and Junior World Orienteering Championships. There are four disciplines in orienteering: orienteering on foot, orienteering on nordic skis, orienteering by mountain bike, and trail orienteering, which is designed for athletes with a mobility impairment. For more information, visit the COF website at www.orienteering.ca.

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