



ORIENTEERING C A N A D A

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MANITOBA HOSTING THE 2009 CANADIAN ORIENTEERING CHAMPIONSHIPS

One hundred and fifty athletes are gathering near Brandon, Manitoba from August 21 – 30 to participate in the 2009 Manitoba Sandhills Orienteering Festival, which includes the Canadian Orienteering Championships, the Western Canadian Championships, a national junior training camp and the annual Canadian Orienteering Federation Conference.

The Canadian Championship races are all being held in Spruce Woods Provincial Park while the Western Canadian Championships will take place in the Lauder Sandhills near Hartney, MB. The organizers of these championships are from the local area, as well as Winnipeg.

"This event has been a good three years in the making", notes Manitoba Orienteering Association president, Jennifer Hamilton. "The extensive organization began by scouting a new area in the province to map. Then we hired expert map makers, spent countless hours planning courses, vetting control locations, seeking sponsorship opportunities and organizing equipment as well as food for each of the eight events. The meet director, Dave Graupner, has done an incredible job of pulling together a team of qualified volunteers to make this a successful orienteering competition."

"Orienteering in the intricate Manitoba sand hills is always a great technical challenge and an ideal location for the Canadian Championships", explains Canadian Orienteering Federation (COF) president Charlotte MacNaughton. The Canadian Orienteering Championships have been held in Manitoba before in 1997 and 2001.

The Canadian Championships involve three races. The sprint race runs on Friday August 28. 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 29 and the long distance will be on Sunday August 30. The estimated winning time for the long distance race is 90 minutes. The sprint and long distance races 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.

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.

Several members of Canada's national orienteering team will be competing at the Canadian Championships. The World Championships are wrapping up on August 22 in Hungary and many of the national team athletes are coming directly to Manitoba to coach at the junior training camp and to compete in the national Championships. Canada's top athlete at the World championships, Patrick Goeres of Winnipeg, will be attending the Manitoba Orienteering Festival. Patrick was 38th in the sprint race in Hungary. Emily Kemp of Ottawa, Canada's top junior athlete, will also be coming to Manitoba. Emily's best result was 24th at the recent World Junior Championships in Italy.

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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