

# Flight of the navigator

## Orienteering champion invites newcomers to give the sport a try

BY ERIN MCPHEE, NORTH SHORE NEWS    OCTOBER 30, 2011



Orienteering junior champion Graeme Rennie gears up for next weekend's Lynn Valley Adventure Run, presented by the Greater Vancouver Orienteering Club, Sunday, Nov. 6.

**Photograph by:** NEWS photo, Paul McGrath

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- Lynn Valley Adventure Run, presented by the Greater Vancouver Orienteering Club, Sunday, Nov. 6 at 10 a.m. Info: [www.orienteeingbc.ca/gvoc](http://www.orienteeingbc.ca/gvoc).

WHY just run? That's the question members of the Greater Vancouver Orienteering Club continue to pose as a means of attracting newcomers.

"(Orienteering) is such a great sport that so few people know anything about," says club member Graeme Rennie. The 20-year-old Lynn Valley resident is an avid international competitor, faring well at events around the world.

Orienteering sees participants use a map and compass to navigate a series of checkpoints as fast as possible in either an urban or forested setting.

"A lot of people, especially in Vancouver, are runners, but we can't seem to get very many of them out to try this sport," says Rennie.

To that end, the club is presenting its annual Lynn Valley Adventure Run, Sunday, Nov. 6. The event is

open to people of all ages, both familiar with orienteering as well as absolute beginners, as a variety of courses will be offered.

"We're really trying to get more people out that don't know anything about orienteering because it is a really fun sport for everybody," says Rennie.

"It's great for families, I mean that's how I started. We always went out with mom and dad and tramped around through the woods and always had a good time," he adds.

Rennie was introduced to the sport at a young age by his parents.

"When we were little kids, whenever we would go on a family vacation, it would usually be around an event," he says. "We'd go somewhere, we'd go camp at an event, and then we'd run the little races and then go off and do the rest of our camping and hiking, and whatever else it was we did in the summer."

What attracts him to the sport is that it's both physically and mentally challenging. He's never been a fan of just running, finding himself to get bored easily.

"As soon as you toss this navigation, this mental aspect, into it, it makes it a hundred times more exciting. You've got to think, you're crossing interesting terrain and you're seeing new places. That's my take on it, being more interesting than your average workout," he says.

Orienteering events typically offer three types of events: a sprint, a middle and a long course. Sprints, approximately three kilometres in length, tend to be set in urban settings, like university campuses.

"Obviously you can think of a university campus being slightly difficult to find your fastest route between two weirdly shaped buildings," says Rennie.

Middle and long courses are usually set in the forest. Middle,

approximately five km in length, require more technical navigation, resulting in a slightly slower pace.

"You still have to go fast but it's quite difficult to keep track of where you are," says Rennie.

Long courses, typically 10-12 km, task racers with slightly simpler navigation though are quite challenging.

"Especially by the time you get to the end of that, you're getting quite tired and it's difficult to keep your mind about you," he says.

Rennie had a big summer this year, his last competing at the junior level. Next season he'll move into the general adult category.

"I had a good time this year, we were off in Europe and we were up in the Yukon for a bit, lots of training and some good races up there. Not necessarily the best world results I've had. I definitely had better results at the worlds the previous year, but it was still tons of fun and definitely good practice," he says.

Rennie's 2011 achievements include being named the Western Canadian sprint distance, Canadian

sprint distance and Canadian middle distance champion in Whitehorse, Yukon, in July. He was also the second place Canadian long distance finisher at the event.

He earned sixth place in the Canada Cup elite series and was the top-ranked junior.

Rennie also competed at the Junior World Orienteering Championships in Poland. He placed 106th out of 158 runners in the sprint distance, the top North American. The previous year he earned an 86th place finish in the event.

"We tend to get our butts kicked by the Europeans pretty badly," he says of his Canadian teammates.

At next weekend's Lynn Valley Adventure Run, Rennie will be helping with race planning, including setting the courses.

Racers will make use of local trails and have the option of a variety of courses (four-15 km), racing solo or in a team of two, either running, hiking or biking. Racers are asked to meet at the Brockton School gymnasium at 9: 30 a.m. followed by the first start at 10 a.m.

"We really do want everyone to come out and give it a try," he says.

The registration deadline is Friday, Nov 4. For more information, including what to wear and registration costs (ranging from \$5 for individuals under 20 to \$20 for the whole family), visit [www.orienteingbc.ca/gvoc](http://www.orienteingbc.ca/gvoc).

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