



ORIENTEERING  
C A N A D A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 27, 2011

## **2011 NATIONAL ORIENTEERING WEEK April 30 – May 8 Encouraging Canadians to try orienteering**

National Orienteering Week is an initiative of the Canadian Orienteering Federation (COF) in which orienteering clubs across Canada host beginner-friendly orienteering events. National Orienteering Week runs from April 30 to May 8th.

“National Orienteering Week is a great time for Canadians to give orienteering a try” explains COF Executive Director Charlotte MacNaughton.

Orienteering is a cross-country adventure sport in which the participant uses a detailed map and sometimes a compass to help them navigate through the race course. Orienteers enjoy the physical and mental challenges that the sport provides, which is why the sport is often referred to as ‘the thinking sport’ as the athletes strive for balance between physical and mental exertion. Events vary in length from 15 minutes to 2 or more hours depending on the type of event and the suitability of the terrain. Some events are held in city parks, while others are held in forested wilderness areas.

“The sport has lots to offer for all ages, all fitness levels, and all levels of experience”, explains MacNaughton. “Whether it’s people wanting to be more active in the outdoors, runners seeking a sport involving more brain-work, adventure racers wanting to improve their navigational skills or families looking for a fun sport they can do together, orienteering can fit the bill.”

All events have a variety of race courses appropriate for the various ages, skill and fitness levels. Young participants race primarily on trails with simpler navigation (either walking or running), while elite athletes will run primarily off-trail with difficult navigational challenges and complex route choices.

Information about National Orienteering Week, including a complete event listing, is at [www.orienteering.ca](http://www.orienteering.ca).

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 World Junior 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](http://www.orienteering.ca).

###

For more information, please contact Charlotte MacNaughton, COF Executive Director at 403-283-0807 or email [info@orienteering.ca](mailto:info@orienteering.ca)

## Backgrounder

### What is Orienteering?

Originally developed over 100 years ago in Scandinavia, orienteering has grown as a sport to the point where races are held in over 60 countries worldwide every year, and the International Orienteering Federation has expanded to include some 70 member nations, and is actively developing the possibility of orienteering being added as an Olympic event. The sport itself requires competitors to navigate to designated checkpoints using map and compass through unknown terrain. While most races involve high-speed cross-country running, other popular variations include orienteering on mountain bikes or on nordic skis. With recent increases in Adventure Racing, orienteering has gained popularity amongst adventure racers looking for an opportunity to enhance their navigational skills.

Orienteering appeals to outdoor-oriented athletes – people who enjoy being active in the fresh, clean air. It features a very low environmental impact, and encourages participants to respect and appreciate nature.

At the elite level, Canada has been regularly represented at the World Championships for more than 35 years. This year, members of the Canadian Team will be competing at the World Championships, Junior World Championships and World Cup series, as well as numerous regional and national races across North America.

At the recreational level, orienteering is a good way for all members of the family to enjoy the outdoors while learning navigational skills and developing comfort in the wilderness. Weekend warriors enjoy the physical challenge of running, biking or skiing while solving the mental challenges of navigation and route choice presented by the course planner. All orienteering events have a variety of courses available for participants to choose from, ranging from short and technically easy courses for the youngsters, to long and technically challenging for the elites.

While the core of the international racing season lasts from May-September, most regions are active and conduct orienteering events year-round. Major races are typically held between April and November each year. The North American racing schedule includes dozens of larger (100+ participants) races yearly, with an even greater number of smaller races and training events.