SUMMER ORIENTEERING – A great opportunity to showcase our sport

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OscarWilkinson_photography0scarWilkinson_photog

Scottish Orienteering Association
Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore PH22 1QZ

scottish-orienteering.org
info@scottish-orienteering.org

Whilst orienteering is a year-round sport, summer really is the prime time with some real pinnacles in the calendar for both competitive and recreational orienteering.

Excitement is mounting for what is arguably the crown jewel in the Scottish Orienteering calendar, the Six Days on Royal Deeside, taking place from Sunday 27 July – Friday 1 August. First held in 1977, it's been running every two years since, making it one of the longest-running multiday O-events in the world.

With thousands of orienteers about to descend on Ballater and environs, it should be a lot of fun, with enjoyable challenge in top class forests. (Midges love orienteering venues too so remember your Smidge!) There will also be some excellent competition with the events attracting top international orienteers and an opportunity to enhance your World Ranking points. Entries are now closed for age classes; however, colour classes stay open until the night before the competition begins. This year's Six Days includes a Red option for adult beginners wanting a longer course but with less technical challenge, and the local clubs have been engaging with local running clubs to raise interest in orienteering as something to try.

The Central Organising Team has once more worked incredibly hard behind the scenes to make this complex event happen. Then of course each Day is driven by a huge volunteer army (of typically over a hundred – you may well be one of them this year). Considerable thanks are due to everyone involved, particularly Dave Kershaw, the chair of the Six Days Board, who will be stepping down after this year's event.

Prior to the Six Days, the intrepid folk at Masterplan Adventure will be hosting another 'Coasts & Islands' week (20-25 July), this year using newly-mapped areas on Shetland. It should be an amazing orienteering experience in some unique terrain: Shetland is very runnable - mostly short heather with occasional bare rock and boulders. No trees at all - don't be fooled by the map samples with lots of white!

For some members, this summer features orienteering even further afield, whether to Scandinavia for one of the major events:; O-Ringen in Sweden (20-26 July), or elsewhere for those selected to the GB squad at JWOC in the Dolomites (27 June - 4 July). Well done to the Scottish Juniors (M/W 18s and 20s) selected for that. Notable results included an excellent 4 th place for James Hammond (FVO) and a 15th place for Emily Atkinson (ELO), at her first JWOC, in the Individual Sprint races. EYOC is in Czechia (17-20 July), WOC in Finland (7-12 July with some great results for Grace Molloy, Jo Shepherd,

Luke Fisher, Alison Smithard and Joshua Dudley), then there is the European Orienteering Champs plus World Cup Round 2 (Belgium, 26-31 August), following the first round in Sweden in mid June. Not forgetting of course the World Masters in Spain for those who can take the heat in mid August!

Our congratulations / very best wishes for success at those to come! Major events aside, there are plenty of good summer events underway across the clubs. The Edinburgh/Lothians/Fife Sprintelope series of relaxed urban evening races is well underway, staged each year as a collaborative effort across a number of East Area clubs (AROS, ESOC, ELO, Interlopers and KFO). A quick belated Happy Birthday to ESOC, which having reached the grand old age of 60, celebrated with its innovative Race Across Edinburgh event on 21 June. Further north, the NOUL (Northern Orienteering Urban League is also underway, and FVO and STAG in the west have weekday evening urban event series too.

Summer is a good time to encourage newcomers to try orienteering whilst many other sports are on a break too. Take friends along to a local event or go round a course. Permanent Orienteering Course map with them. These are scattered over the country (including some mountainous ones – they're not just about city parks!) and are well worth remembering if you're away on holiday as a way to explore new areas, or for some pre-Six Days training. Download maps from www.goorienteering.org.uk or from club websites.

For something different perhaps, summer is also good time to try mountain-bike orienteering (MTBO), if you haven't already. The 2026 World Master Mountain Bike Orienteering Championships will be taking place in Moray, 8 -14 September next year, so get in training! Sign up for the Highland MTBO weekend near Inverness, 29- 31 August.

Whatever your approach to orienteering, have a great summer enjoying it!