

Get your bearings at Tay 2009

Orienteers from all corners of the globe will soon begin gathering in Tayside as the countdown starts to “Tay 2009”, the Scottish 6 Days International Orienteering Festival. The week-long competition, a major fixture on the international orienteering calendar, starts on 2 August and will bring a significant boost to the local economy as well as providing locals with the opportunity to participate in a major international sporting event.

The Scottish 6 Days is a prestigious orienteering event, taking place every two years in a different part of Scotland. This year the event will be centred on Perth, where the event centre will be sited at Perth Racecourse, but sees competitors travelling throughout the wider Tayside region to the six different competition areas on each of the six days of the competition. This year the event has been given added prestige as Day 1 has been designated a World Ranking Event and will attract some of the top names in the sport. Coupled with the presence of Per Forsberg, a well-known professional orienteering commentator, the event is set to be a major highpoint on the orienteering calendar.

The competition areas have been chosen to give a wide variety of terrain types and are set to fully test the orienteering skills of the competitors. They will also take them to some of the best scenery that Perthshire and the wider Tayside area can offer. The competition areas include Dalrulzion to the north of Blairgowrie, an area not used previously for orienteering; Barry Buddon, an area of complex sand dunes at the northern limit of the Tay estuary; Tentsmuir, a coastal pine forest covering the dunes on the Fife side of the Tay estuary; Tullochroisk near Kinloch Rannoch, which was used for last year’s Scottish Championships and has fine views over Loch Tummel; Loch Ordie, a newly-mapped complex moorland area north of Dunkeld and finally Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, Perth, a favourite orienteering area for many years.

Entries officially closed a couple of weeks ago and there will be over 3000 competitors, competing in age-classes from the under 10s to the over 80s. Many will make a holiday of the week, which includes activities such as mountain bike and sprint orienteering on the mid-week “rest” day, as well as a lively and varied social programme designed to showcase Scottish culture, including ceilidhs, pipe bands, folk music, whisky tasting and a quiz night. The event will bring a major boost to the local economy, with competitors booking local accommodation and visiting tourist attractions. When the event was held in the Speyside area two years ago record visitor numbers were recorded at two local tourist attractions on the mid-week “rest” day, whilst the Deeside 2005 event brought in over £0.7 million to the local economy.

Although Tay 2009 is a big international competition there will be courses that are no more difficult than those at a small, local event and local people who want to have a go at orienteering are encouraged to come along. It will be possible to enter the colour-coded (non-competitive) courses on the day – these courses are particularly suited to beginners and to families with young children – even the tinies are catered for with a “string” course where the children follow a string laid out on the ground with a simplified map and often pictures or models to identify the markers or “controls” they must find on their way round.

Local club Tayside Orienteers will be organising an introduction to orienteering and some basic training this Sunday 26 July from 10-12pm and Tuesday 28th July from 5-7pm. Both events take place at the Hermitage near Dunkeld – meet at the Forestry Commission car park up the hill from the main car park. For more information please see www.taysideorienteers.org.uk or call Mel or Grahame Nicoll on 01350 727695 email m.nicoll@virgin.net

The 6-Days Festival is organised by orienteers from clubs across Scotland, with the huge amount of work undertaken by volunteers having started in earnest well over a year ago. Tayside Orienteers members have been heavily involved. Spokesperson Melanie Nicoll said:- “Many people have been working hard behind the scenes to make this event a success and we are also very grateful to all those other people outside the orienteering world who have played a part. In particular, we are grateful to the landowners and tenants for their willing co-operation, to the staff at Perth Racecourse for their help in organising the Event Centre and campsite, and of course to those organisations that have given financial support to the event. On a personal level, as a relative newcomer to the sport, I am looking forward to competing in my first Scottish 6 Days along with my family, as well as to meeting orienteers from all over the world and forging some new friendships.”

If you do enter one of the colour-coded courses on the day, come along in clothing suitable for a run (or walk) in the outdoors. You should have leg cover and ideally wear a pair of trainers with good grip. For the easiest two courses, you can manage without a compass by reading the map carefully. But for anything more difficult, a compass is advisable. For hill walkers and others who are used to Ordnance Survey maps, the key factor to bear in mind is that orienteering maps are normally at a scale of 1:10,000 (1cm on the map equals 100m on the ground) or 1:15,000, so that you appear to arrive at points much more quickly than when using a 1:50,000 map – be careful you do not run too far! The most important thing to remember is that you can compete at whatever level you want, but whether you walk or run, have fun.

Tay 2009 is supported by Event Scotland, Perth & Kinross Council, the Forestry Commission and Perthshire Big Tree Country.

Full details of the event and further information are available at www.scottish6days.com/2009

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Notes to Editors

Scottish 6 Days

The Scottish Six Day Orienteering competition ("the 6-Days") is a biennial event, first held in 1977, and taking place in a different area of Scotland each time. The competition is designed to provide the highest quality orienteering over the week, in a relaxed atmosphere, and aims to appeal all ages and skill levels, from elite athletes to newcomers. Age classes range from 10 years and under to 80 years and above. A strong international representation is always present at each 6-Day event, with a traditionally large Scandinavian contingent, and more recently the event has become increasingly popular with competitors from Eastern Europe.

The event is overseen by the Scottish 6-Day Company, and organised by all of Scotland's orienteering clubs, who co-ordinate central organisation as well as individual race days. Additional assistance is provided where required by other UK clubs and individuals. Tay 2009's central organising clubs are Forth Valley Orienteers and Tayside Orienteers. For details of past events, visit www.scottish6days.com.