



# The Scottish 6 Days

*by James Nisbet*

The Scottish 6 Day was based in Strathearn this year and yet again it didn't disappoint in terms of classic orienteering and organisation. For me personally I had been busy at uni with no orienteering for at least six months - so preparing for

Day 1 on the M20L course (7.7km and 285m of climb) was always going to be a challenge. Thankfully due to my personally designed '4 week couch to mountain running training programme' I was at least half fit for Day 1. It was also a good start to the week that our holiday cottage was only two fields away from the car park field.

I won't bore you with all the detail of every day but in summary my week was as follows:

- Day 1 - Auchingarrich – 7.64 km, 285m of climb (actual distance 9.25km and 230m). Enjoyable day, but lots of dense forest and hard to get up to speed.
- Day 2 - Edinchip – 7.55km, 245m of climb (9.06km and 374m). One mistake and a lot more climb than expected!
- Day 3 - Dundurn & Cnoc a' Mhadaidh – 4.00km, 200m (4.42km and 235m). Probably my favourite day, nice area and I was very happy with my navigation.
- Day 4 - Culteuchar & Dron – 9.37km, 435m (10.84km and 526m). Very tough running. Navigation was a bit too easy, just a slog across the mountain.
- Day 5 - Craig a Barns – 8.24km, 425m (9.32km and 530m). Great area, but an awful amount of climb.

Day 6 – Grandtully – 4.42km, 130m – actual distance 5.31km and 301m.

On the final day I was given a GPS tracker to wear, which was a completely new experience for me. Before setting off to the start I was given a vest to wear underneath my o-top. It was a bit uncomfortable, but I soon got used to it. The idea of the trackers was to test out the technology of being able to show where different competitors were on the course and how they were doing (combined with TV cameras dotted about the hillside). Technology wise it allowed anyone with a phone to see exactly where I was on my course and my route. However, I'm not sure how this will evolve, as unless other competitors are in quarantine without access to technology then competitors will be able to see their course in advance (not to mention others route choices). So ultimately it is likely just to be a tool for TV coverage of elite competition.

On the run itself I was perhaps a little bit put off by the fact that everyone could see my route choice. I made a big error on the first control, mainly due to the poor compass I was using for the first time, as I managed to snap my compass in half on Day 5!

After the first control, my race was relatively good going, with a lot of very runnable forest and short control legs. Despite being very runnable, I found the area was not great compared to the other days. I struggled a lot near the control sites as there were very few distinct features to navigate off. Perhaps if I learnt to pace, I would have had a better idea of how close I was, rather than trying to use indistinct features to navigate off.

The run-in on this day caused a few issues, with some people missing the penultimate control as it blended in with the club tents on the run in. One of my aims each day was to try and get the quickest run in, as my sprinting is a lot better than my stamina at the moment. On Day 6 I managed 2<sup>nd</sup> on the run in behind a M21E from Edinburgh Uni, as was the case on most of the days. Although it would have been nice to be this fast around the rest of the course, it was fun to compete for something other than finishing before the rest of the family!

Overall though I didn't win any prizes I was really pleased to have completed all the days without any major errors and notch up some decent ranking points given how little training I had done prior to the summer. The next Scottish 6 Day in 2021 will be in Lochaber which is Scottish Highlands territory. I certainly look forward to it, but perhaps not to the fact I'll be a M21 by then.



*Photo by Wendy Carlyle*