

My Top-Ten (more or less) Orienteering Memories from 2006

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The off-season stinks. Yeah, it's nice to ski, and enjoy some recovery time, and start planning next year's events. But true addicts, like you and me, miss orienteering and would happily do without the off-season if we could. But since we can't, my advice to fellow-addicts is to use the off-season to reflect upon and evaluate last season's performances. One game I enjoy is to simply think about the past season and see which memories stand out.

Here is a collection of my personal highlights from last year's orienteering season. It was a season in which I was fortunate to make several trips to events in Canada and two trips to Europe: a summer trip that included orienteering in Croatia, Switzerland, and serving as Canadian Team leader at the World Champs (WOC) in Denmark; and a fall trip to Turkey to orienteer in and around Istanbul. I hope this short article entertains you and jogs your memory to bring back your own favorite moments while you wile away the off-season, and look forward to next year and many more fun events.

May – Barebones, Alberta

1. **My favorite run.** It wasn't even a race! I was test running the Barebones 2006 women's long course on the White Earth map near Edmonton. The forest was wonderful, the terrain variable, and the course was demanding and fun. It was pure happiness, and I was even treated to a rare wolf-sighting.

July – Croatia & Switzerland

2. **My top performance.** Crikvenica sprint in the Croatian Open: 12 minutes 29 seconds of pure concentration and hard running. 1.8km, 15 controls, 20 seconds total time loss. All this on the day that Italy won the World Cup of soccer – I could almost believe it was my victory everyone was celebrating.

3. **Most stylish event: Swiss O Week.** This six day event was blessed with inspired organization and perfect weather. Who would have thought you could make six amazing orienteering maps around the glaciers and mountains that surround Zermatt? Each day we wandered through the car-less town of Zermatt to take what ever mountain train or cable-car we needed for that day's event. A gob-smacking half hour ride up the mountains to some fun orienteering every day in the high alpine. True Swiss elegance and style.



August - World Champs, Denmark

4. **Listening to Per Forsberg** announce the WOC races. I must admit even I didn't think it was possible to make orienteering this entertaining and exciting. If you've never heard his trademark phrases in his trademark Swedish accent with his trademark enthusiasm then you are missing something special in orienteering. Among my favorites: "That's for shure", "She is SO good", "He's too late", "That's very-very good", "It's un bee leave a bell". For a taste:

www.nswstingers.com/gfolder/per_forsberg_breakout.mp3.

5. **Having dinner with Australian Hanny Allston** the night she won the World Championship in Sprint distance. The Canadians and Australians, Germans and Americans, Lithuanians and others were all staying at the same boarding school accommodations. When Hanny walked into the dinner hall that night she received a five minute standing ovation from all the other athletes and officials. It was an awe-inspiring accomplishment – the first time a gold medal was won by a non-European - and a truly heart-felt tribute from her fellow athletes.
6. **Racing Brent** in the WOC public races. When Brent Langbakk wasn't running in the WOC races we'd run on the same public courses together. In the evening we'd compare route choices and it became obvious that I had reached a stage where it wasn't navigation or route choice that was costing me lost time, but that it was laziness – I wasn't running fast enough, especially on the easy legs. In one particular race I was truly 'busted' by Brent as he ran past me while I was walking up a hill – ever since that memory has inspired me to run harder.

September – BC Champs, Whistler

7. **Establishing new terrain.** Not only was it Magnus Johansson's idea to hold the 2006 BC Champs in Whistler and his leadership that brought together a great team of organizers, but by himself Magnus made a new sprint map, updated the Brandywine Falls map, and led a group that made the new Lost Lake map. Now Whistler has three high quality maps for our enjoyment.

October – North American Champs and COF AGM, Hamilton

8. **My worst hiccup.** Control 8 at the NAOC sprints. I'd been running fast and hard for almost eight minutes when I noticed I was losing concentration; I had just mis-read a building on the map! I paused to refocus. This loss of focus was truly one of my most disappointing moments of the year. Sprint races demand intensity – that's why we love them.
9. **Winds of change** at the COF. With some fresh faces on the Board, a new website, and a hyper-cool RouteGadget database (rg.orienteering.ca) the COF is looking rather rejuvenated. I hope we will see more Canadian's thinking and contributing at the national level to support the COF Board of Directors as they in turn volunteer their time to support the development of orienteering across the country.

October – Saskatchewan

10. **My biggest surprise.** This year Saskatchewan joined the COF and next year they will be hosting the Canadian Champs just north of Saskatoon. James Baker and I will be helping them with the course planning and so we made a late-season trip to visit the terrain. Wow! Fantastic terrain. And not only that, but I was astonished to find out that Louis Riel's Northwest Rebellion took place within a gun-shot of the map. Be sure to visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North-West_Rebellion before coming to Saskatchewan in July 2007.



November – Turkey

11. My worst blow-out. The first control at the World Ranking Event in Turkey. The ground was covered in wet heavy snow, I was the very first starter of the race, it was three degrees below zero, and I had packed my suitcase as if I was going to the tropics. I was so cold that all I could think about was ‘how does one self-diagnose hypothermia?’. Maybe I didn’t read the map because my hands were shivering so much? But eventually I stumbled upon the control and when I saw foot prints in the snow my concentration snapped back onto the map, my eyes narrowed, my focus sharpened, my heart accelerated and I soon heated up. If I could have one back from last year it would be that one.

12. Hippest event of the year: Istanbul 5 Day. One day cancelled due to flooding, one special day crossing the Bosphorus Straights to orienteer in Asia, one intense day sprinting in the imperial parks of Yildiz palace, one long cold day running in snow, and one magical day racing in the Grand Bazaar. This five day event was organized with sublime aplomb. And even if the orienteering had not been fantastic, this event would still have been the highlight because the event centre was in the heart of fascinating Istanbul – truly “Europe’s Hippest City” (according to Newsweek Magazine). We stayed in the centre of Istanbul among the remnants of this ancient capital. Each day we would board the busses in-between one of the world’s largest and oldest Christian churches (Haghia Sophia, built in 537AD) and one of the world’s largest and most famous Islamic mosques (the Blue Mosque). Following the 5-Days we explored Istanbul for another week – and could have stayed longer. Check out www.ist5days.com and be sure to add the Istanbul 5 Day to your must-do list.

