

ORIENTEERING AT BALLYANNON

By John Walshe

The popular orienteering venue of Ballyannon Wood saw the penultimate competitive event in the Cork Orienteering Club Summer League taking place on Tuesday of last week.

Despite the persistent rain throughout the day, the evening brightened and fortunately there were no showers for the duration of the event, although parts of the wood were very muddy in places.

Amongst the 67 competitors were a couple of overseas visitors and there also was a good turnout of local families. The honours over the Long Course went to Midleton man John Chandler who finished with a time of 26:25. John has finished inside the top three at several of this summer's events and finally claimed his first win.

The fastest lady was Ciara Aoife who recorded a time of 43:52 while over the Short Course Teresa Leahy from Ballymacoda took first place with an impressive time of 18:35.

Elaine Sheridan is the Summer League Coordinator and said that, despite the weather, this year's league has been very successful: "Actually, we haven't had a wet night yet and there was a good turnout for each event with a lot of families taking part. We have a total of 10 leagues in all plus a relay on the final night. After this, there will be two trail runs and then an Autumn Series which begins in August."

A man who has played a major role in promoting the sport of orienteering at a local level is former Olympic athlete, Liam O'Brien. A founder member of the Cork Schools Orienteering Association, he is the current treasurer with Carrigtwohill man Willie Fitzgerald chairman of the association.

"I first got involved in 1982 through Brother Keohane, who was then Principal of Midleton CBS, and after that the school started taking part in club events," he explains. "Willie Cunningham of the Vocational School was the driving force behind the formation of the Cork Schools Association and we now promote three events each autumn, an introductory day which takes place in both Curragh Wood and in Doneraile and then two league events in October and November."

Schools can also participate in a Munster and All-Ireland Championship - where Midleton CBS have won many honours - and there is even a possibility of competing at the world schools championships held every two years.

Orienteering is described as a sport where a person navigates around a set course with the aid of a map. Courses vary in length and difficul-



(back) Deirdre Coughlan, Carmel Buttimer and Jo Cronin; (front) Ronan Coughlan, Diarmuid Buttimer and Abbey Cronin



Teresa Leahy and her brother John Hennessy



James Griffin from Midleton and Fergal O'Shea from Ballincollig ready for the off



Daragh Ryan, Anne-Marie Sheridan and Issac O'Connor



Liam O'Brien and Willie Fitzgerald checking their maps

ty and can be run in parks, woodland, open land and even on the street. Each participant receives a map with a set course containing points which are to be visited in order. The sport is open to all ages and abilities with special emphasis on family participation.

Full details of the Cork OC activities can be seen on their website www.corko.net where there is also a link to all of the summer league results. The Autumn League Fixtures are as follows: Currabinny Wood, August 28th; Moanbaun Wood (Watergrasshill), September 4th; Fota House & Gardens, September 11th; Farran Forest Park, September 18th.



John Chandler, winner of the orienteering event at Ballyannon