



Orienteering Ontario

O-CUP SERIES

HISTORY

The Ontario O-Cup Series started as a winter navigation challenge to help keep our orienteers sharp through the winter and to provide some orienteering fun for hearty outdoors souls. First named the THOMASS Series (*The Handicap Orienteering Method And Scoring System*), it used a novel handicapping system and THOMASS box to 'even the playing field' of competition, and originated with the Ontario Junior Program of 1993 which at the time was managed by both Mike Waddington and Nina Waddington. Points were awarded to the top 50 finishers of each race in decreasing scale (first place - 50, second place - 49 etc.), with all remaining participants receiving 1 point for enduring the run. There were eight races, with an individual's top five races counting toward their series total, and awards were presented to the top male, female, junior and overall club.

TODAY

The modern-day O-Cup Series has evolved in many ways, but still uses the core point-scoring system and THOMASS handicapping to determine an overall series champion. The current O-Cup rules, as adopted by Orienteering Ontario for the 2024-2025 Series, are:

Event Rules:

- One race constitutes an O-Cup 'event', regardless of race format, and is defined as having a single race time between a start and finish point (e.g. a multi-staged, knockout race is considered one event)
- All participants must sign an Orienteering Canada waiver in order to participate in an event. A host club may choose to allow participants to sign one waiver in a calendar year, to cover all events hosted by that club, so long as they retain the participant's waiver for the minimum time legally required.
- Each participant must carry a safety whistle during the entirety of a race
- Races may be of various formats (traditional point-to-point, score-O, knockout, etc.) however, regardless of format, there must be a THOMASS-based handicap system in place (as outlined below), which is explained to participants in advance of the event

Traditional THOMASS Handicap System – number of controls/checkpoints a participant can skip (6 max.):

AGE	12-	13-14	15-16	17-19	20-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Female	6	5	4	3	2	3	4	5	6	6
Male	6	5	4	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
SPECIAL CASES						BONUS HANDICAP POINTS				
Handicap of 2: Women in the top 10 of Canadian orienteering rankings						Age/gender handicap +2: first O-Cup race ever				
Handicap of 0: Men in the top 10 of Canadian orienteering rankings						Age/gender handicap +1: first O-Cup Series, after 1 st race				
Handicap of 6: if pregnant						* Maximum total handicap = 6				

e.g. a seventeen-year-old female athlete is eligible to skip three controls in a THOMASS box, or she could elect to skip five, if it's her first ever O-Cup race, and subsequently four controls for the remainder of the Series races.

Score-O Handicap System – attained by dividing by percent adjustment or using the multiplier:

THOMASS handicap	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
% division factor	100%	92%	83%	75%	67%	58%	50%
multiplication factor	1	1.1	1.2	1.33	1.49	1.72	2

*e.g. two participants, P1 (handicap of 0) and P2 (handicap of 3) both achieve a raw score of 850 points. Thus, the final handicap-adjusted scores would be: P1 = 850 (850/1 or 850*1) and P2 = 1,133 (850/0.75 or 850*1.33)*

- A first time O-Cup participant has the option to add an additional 2 controls to their handicap (to a maximum of 6 in total) for their first event and 1 for the rest of their first O-Cup season. This ‘promotional’ handicap, if elected to be used, must be declared by the participant when registering for each event
- Anyone who is pregnant may choose to have a handicap of 6
- When a THOMASS box is used in an event it must have enough controls so that even a participant with the maximum handicap must punch at least one control in the portion of the race affected by their handicap. For example, if the participant is a 77-year-old female (handicap of 6), the THOMASS box, or equivalent, would need to have a minimum of 7 controls
- Race organizers may set the rules for both start procedures (mass start, staged, chase, etc.) and when racers get access to the course map (in advance of start, at the start, at a map exchange/pick up, mid-race, etc.) – these should be advertised to racers in advance of the event

Series Rules:

- All participants will be awarded ‘race points’, on a descending scale, as follows:
 - 50 for first place
 - 49 for second
 - 48 for third . . . to the 50th racer
 - 1 for all remaining participants who complete a course (i.e. do not mispunch)
- Additionally, one or two key event organizers (as determined by their host club), will receive 50 ‘hosting points’, per event, to recognize the large amount of work required to course plan and host an O-Cup race and to compensate an organizer for foregoing competing themselves
- An overall O-Cup Series champion will be determined as follows:
 - Total race points accumulated in their best 4/6 races participated in (or equivalent if the total number of races in a Series year is different)
 - If a participant hosted an O-Cup event, and received 50 hosting points for doing so, they may choose to substitute their hosting points for their lowest single race point result, to a maximum of one event, so long as they have raced in a minimum of four events. For example, if a participant received 49, 43, 45, and 48 race points, for a total of 185, and 50 hosting points, they may elect to substitute the 50 hosting points in place of the 43 race points to bring their Series total to 192 points. If, however, the same participant had only competed in three races they would not be eligible to use their hosting points in place of a race score and thus would not be eligible for consideration of O-Cup Series champion.
- In the event of a tie in points the tiebreakers, in order, will be the racer:
 - 1) with the highest point value in their worst of the 4/6 race results scored;
 - 2) who has raced in the most events;
 - 3) who has also hosted an event
- The overall O-Cup Series champion will have their name engraved on the O-Cup trophy
- The above rules do not preclude also acknowledging and/or rewarding the top male, female, junior, master, or other category of participant, other than having their names engraved on the O-Cup trophy

Guiding Principles:

- Events should be organized in the orienteering ‘off-season’, roughly between November and April, on dates that do not conflict with other major orienteering events or commonly observed holidays, and in coordination between clubs, to encourage maximal participation, as per these Series events and timings:

Timing	Event Name	Race Format	Host Club
November	Kick Start & Starry Night	Point-to-point (THOMASS boxes)	Stars
December	Ice Breaker	Score-O (60-minute limit)	DontGetLost
January	TOC O-Cup	Score-O (90-minute limit)	TOC
March (early)	UKR O-Cup	Point-to-point (1 THOMASS box)	UKR / TOC
March (late)	Kick Start	Point-to-point (2 THOMASS boxes)	Stars
March (late)	The Chase	Point-to-point (1 THOMASS box)	Stars
April	Knock Out	Three-stage knock out (3 THOMASS boxes)	TOC

- O-Cup events are meant to be accessible to participants of all ages and are not intended to be designed specifically for elite level orienteers and thus should cover a total distance roughly equivalent to a traditional middle-distance event. A separate beginner, or kids' course may be paired with an O-Cup event but will not count to the Series points total.
- The appropriate length of courses, based on a participant's THOMASS handicap, can be determined using the *Score-O Handicap System* factors. For example, if a participant has a handicap value of zero and their straight-line course length is 4 km then someone with a handicap of six should have a course length that is 50% of that, or 2 km, while a handicap four racer would be expected to have a 2.7 km long course (67%)
- A successful O-Cup event should result in a wide variety of age and gender athletes finishing in the top ten of participants, assuming a broad spectrum of entrants
- Organizers are encouraged to use different race formats in order to add variety to the Series. Past events have included a time-limited score-O, one or more traditional THOMASS boxes, THOMASS boxes with dog bones or loops in them, a knockout format with multiple elimination stages with decreasing length of courses and/or changes in course scale, for an added challenge, etc. Some examples:

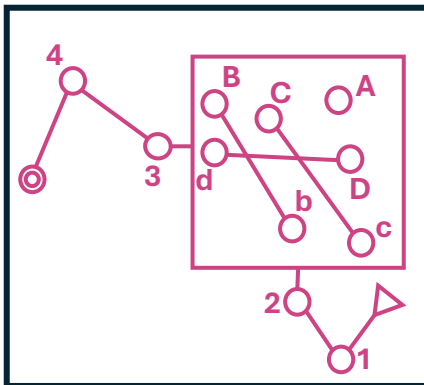


Figure 1 - THOMASS box with dog bones

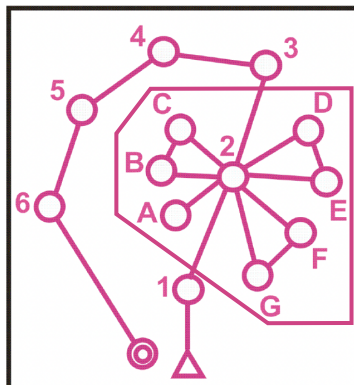


Figure 2 - THOMASS box with loops

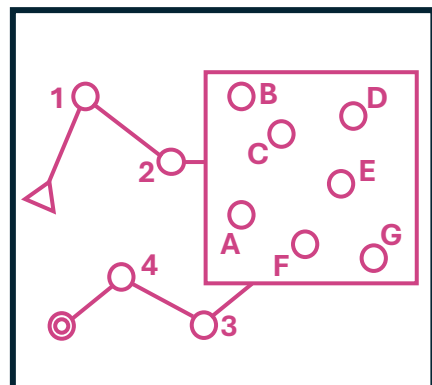


Figure 3 - Traditional THOMASS box

