

Mt Laguna 2026

Course Notes & Event Guide

May 29–31 · Wooded Hill Group Campground · Mt Laguna, CA

Welcome to the Mountain!

Get ready for a fantastic long weekend of orienteering in the pine-scented highlands of San Diego County — about an hour east of the city and a world away from the heat. Mt Laguna offers sweeping views, a cool forest, and four very different challenges. Whether you're hopping on a bike Friday evening or hunting controls Sunday morning, there's something here for every skill level.

Camping is available Friday and Saturday nights at the Wooded Hill Group Campground — free, right on-site, and the best way to soak up the whole weekend. Just show up, pitch your tent, and sleep under the stars. ★

Weekend at a Glance

When	Event	Format	Start Window
Fri May 29, 5–6 pm	MTBO	Score-O (1 hr)	5:00–6:00 pm
Sat May 30, 9 am–5 pm	MTBO	Score-O (1 hr)	9:00 am–5:00 pm
Sat May 30	Middle	Traditional O	11:00 am–Noon
Sat May 30	Skills Camp	Orienteering School	2:00–6:00 pm
Sat May 30	Night Courses	Classic & Motala	8:00 & 8:15 pm
Sun May 31	Laguna Lark	Score-O (2 hr, mass)	10:00 am

Logistics

- HQ / Camping: Wooded Hill Group Campground, Mt Laguna, CA 91948
- Parking: Free, on-site. Plenty of it.
- E-punch: Required for all events. Rent one for \$5 at registration.
- Download: You MUST download after every course — even if you don't finish. No exceptions!
- Clinics: Free beginner clinics run 15 minutes before each foot event. New to orienteering? Come early!

Event Team

Event Director: Tad Gallistel

Course Setters: Mark Prior · Michael Noblett · Sergey & Misha Biryukov (LAOC) · Julien Ouellet

Every volunteer slot helps SDO keep these events running — thank you! 🙌

MTBO — Mountain Bike Orienteering

Course Setter: Mark Prior

Saddle up! 🏍️ The MTBO Score-O puts you on your bike and loose in the Mt Laguna road network with a map full of controls and one hour on the clock. It is self-start; instructions will be at the start. Visit as many controls as you can in any order — the more you find, the better your score. No two loops need to look the same.

This is a fantastic entry point if you've never done orienteering before: you're sticking to roads and tracks, so the navigation is approachable, and the bike makes the whole map feel reachable. Experienced orienteers will love pushing the limits of what's possible in 60 minutes.

Start Windows

Day	Start Window	Time Limit
Friday, May 29	5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	1 hour from your start time
Saturday, May 30	9:00 am – 5:00 pm	1 hour from your start time

Course Details

Format: Score-O — visit 12 controls in any order within the time limit. Detailed instructions will be at the starting area.

- **Map Scale:** 1:10,000
- **Contours:** 5 meters
- **Time Limit:** 1 hour from individual self-start
- **Entry cap:** 40 participants total — grab your spot before it fills up!

What to Bring

- Your bike (mountain or gravel recommended; roads may be rough)
- A helmet — mandatory for all MTBO participants
- Your e-punch / SI stick
- Water — carry enough for a hard hour in the mountains
- A way to hold or mount your map (handlebar mount or map board recommended)

Logistics

- Start and finish at or near HQ (Wooded Hill Campground). Exact location TBD.
- You **MUST** download at HQ after your run — even if you cut it short.
- Controls are AIR+ enabled. Listen for the beep to confirm a valid punch.

New to MTBO? No worries — swing by HQ before you start. Someone will walk you through the format and get you pointed in the right direction. 🗺️

Middle — Traditional Orienteering

Course Setter: Michael Noblett · Saturday, May 30

The Middle course sends you into the pine forest around Wooded Hill campground for your first real taste of the terrain. Traditional format means you'll visit controls in a set order — map, compass, and your own two feet.

Courses come in three levels, so pick the one that matches your experience and energy. Beginners get a friendly route with a flagged assist on one tricky descent; advanced runners get 14 controls and 170 m of climbing. All maps use 5 m contour intervals.

Course Specifications

Course	Distance	Climb	Controls	Map Scale
Beginner	2.2 km	50 m	9	1:7,500
Intermediate	3.4 km	95 m	11	1:7,500
Advanced	4.5 km	170 m	14	1:7,500

Start & Finish

- **Start window:** 11:00 am – Noon
- Start location is a 10-minute walk south from the campground. Head south down the track, then take the left trail toward Wooded Hill — the route is flagged.
- **Finish:** Center of the campground.
- **Course closes: 2:00 pm.** All competitors must return to HQ to download.

Course Notes

- Control descriptions are printed on the map and available loose at the start. Check control codes carefully — some areas have multiple controls nearby.
- **The Beginner course** has a flagged section between controls 2–3 to assist the descent down a steep slope with no trail.
- Contours, rocks, and man-made features are great for detailed reading. Vegetation boundaries and density can be inconsistent and may overestimate runnability.
- Recent prescribed fires have significantly altered vegetation north of Wooded Hill — that area has not been remapped. No controls are placed there; no need to enter burned areas.

⚠ Barbed wire fences: The Intermediate and Advanced courses cross fences a few times. These are mapped. Watch your step!

SDO Skills Camp

Saturday, May 30 · 2:00–6:00 pm · HQ · Wooded Hill Campground

Sharpen your orienteering skills between The Middle and Night Courses! We've got hands-on table activities at HQ and short skill-building courses in the field — all designed to make you a better navigator. Drop in anytime between 2:00 and 6:00 pm.

Table Activities at HQ (2:00–6:00 pm)

Swing by the activity tables and try your hand at three fun challenges:

- **Understanding Contours** — Build small sand hills to match contour shapes on a map. It's surprisingly satisfying (and surprisingly tricky).
- **Control Location Match** — Study photos of control flags and match them to the right spot on a map snippet. Train your eye to read the terrain.
- **Traffic Light Route Planning** — Plan your route choice on longer legs from courses around the world. Color-code your plan: green for fast running with minimal navigation, yellow for moderate pace with careful map reading, and red for slow, detailed navigation off-trail near the control.

All three activities come in a range of difficulties — great for beginners just getting started and intermediate orienteers looking to level up. The route planning activity also includes some advanced (Red and Blue level) legs for experienced orienteers who want a real challenge.

Short Skill Courses (Starts 2:00–5:30 pm · Courses close 6:00 pm)

Head out on four short courses, each focused on building a specific navigation skill. All courses are 1–1.4 km, start and finish at HQ, and use detailed 1:5,000 scale maps.

- **Attack Point (two courses)** — Find a solid feature near the control, navigate to it, then use it as your launching pad. Take a bearing or navigate through your attack point to nail the control.
- **Contour Only** — Every feature on the map is stripped away except contours. Can you navigate using only the shape of the land? There's only one way to find out.
- **Bearing** — Take a compass bearing from each control to the next. Controls are close together and a straight-line route works best — pure compass work.

Pick up your map at HQ and talk through your plan before heading out. We recommend groups of 3 or fewer so everyone gets the most out of the experience. Controls have a manual punch you can use on your map if you like. These courses aren't timed — it's all about learning, not racing.

Do as many courses as you want within the time window! Beginners, we recommend starting with one of the Attack Point courses first.

 **Please sign yourself in and out at HQ for each course so we know everyone's safe.**

Night Courses

Course Setters: Sergey & Misha Biryukov (LAOC) · Saturday, May 30

Night orienteering hits different. 🌙 The forest gets quiet, your headlamp narrows the world to what's right in front of you, and every control punch feels like a small victory. Two courses are on offer — pick the one that matches your night-nav confidence.

Night Classic — Beginner

New to night-O? This is your on-ramp. The Beginner Classic starts at dusk and mostly follows footpaths around camp. You'll get a genuine taste of navigating after dark without venturing deep into the forest. Confidence builder, guaranteed.

- **Mass start:** 8:00 pm
- Distance: ~2 km · Climb: ~40 m · Controls: 9
- Map scale: 1:5,000 · Contours: 5 m
- Primarily on-trail — great for those not yet comfortable going off-trail in the dark.

Night Motala — Advanced

This one's for the experienced orienteers ready to earn their controls the hard way. The Motala format uses multiple loops, all radiating from a single central control. Every runner completes the same loops — just in a different order. Punch the central control every time you start or end a loop. Your assigned loop order will be on your map and control description.

- **Mass start:** 8:15 pm
- Distance: 4.2 km · Climb: 160 m · Controls: 14
- Map scale: 1:7,500 · Contours: 5 m

Important Notes for Both Courses

- **Bring a quality headlamp** — SDO cannot loan extras. A backup light is strongly recommended for Advanced runners.
- **Course closes: 10:15 pm.** All competitors must return to HQ and download by this time. If you leave without checking in, volunteers will search the course for you.
- Control flags are reflectorized — they'll catch your headlamp beam. Controls from the Middle event may be in close proximity; always check control codes.
- **No water on course.** Carry your own.

⚠️ **Barbed wire fences: The Motala course crosses fences a few times. All are mapped.**

Laguna Lark Score-O

Course Setter: Julien Ouellet · Sunday, May 31

Welcome to the 2nd annual Laguna Lark! 🎉 This is the big Sunday send-off — a 2-hour mass-start Score-O with 30 controls spread across 10 square kilometers of Mt Laguna terrain. Visit as many as you can in any order. Every control is worth 1 point, and handicap scoring gives everyone an equal chance to win. Will Mark Prior be dethroned as last year's winning Lark?

Format & Scoring

- **Mass start: 10:00 am** from the center of the campground
- Maps handed out 2 minutes before start
- Finish: Same location as start
- **Time limit: 2 hours.** 2 points deducted for every 5 minutes (or part thereof) after 12:00 pm.
- Course closes: 1:00 pm. Overall winner announced around 12:30 pm.
- Handicap scoring: Each competitor scored based on gender and year of birth. The winner is whoever achieves the highest percentage of their target score. No math needed — just find more controls!

Map Details

- Tabloid-sized paper, double-sided, at 1:10,000 scale with 5m contour intervals.
- Control descriptions printed on map and available loose. Be sure to check control codes as controls from prior events may be in close proximity.
- **Safety bearing:** Due south to the County Road.
- A water station is planned near the middle of the map, but bringing your own water supply is recommended.

For Beginners

The first 8 controls are designed to be beginner-friendly — close to the start and to linear features. Separate textual control descriptions are available for those 8 controls.

Terrain Notes

- Contours, rocks, and man-made features lend themselves well to detailed reading, but vegetation boundaries and density are often inconsistent and overestimate their runnability.
- Recent prescribed fires have significantly altered the vegetation (and may still be smoldering!) in some areas which have not since been remapped, but these are away from controls and very unlikely to affect any route choices.

Handicap Target Scores

Final score = controls found ÷ target score × 100. Highest percentage wins!

Year of Birth	Female	Male
2016 or later	11	13
2014–2015	16	18
2012–2013	19	22
2010–2011	21	25
2008–2009	23	27

Year of Birth	Female	Male
2006–2007	24	29
1992–2005	25	30
1987–1991	24	29
1982–1986	23	28
1977–1981	22	27
1972–1976	21	26
1967–1971	20	25
1962–1966	19	24
1957–1961	18	23
1952–1956	17	21
1947–1951	16	20
1942–1946	15	18
1937–1941	13	16
1936 or earlier	11	13

Questions? Visit sandiegorienteering.org or find us at HQ. See you out there! 🗺️