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One challenge for City Chase participants in Chicago was wheelbarrow soccer. City Chase is in eight U.S. cities this year.

City Chase and Urban Dare: Let the urban adventure begin

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If you sit on the couch watching fast-paced reality TV competitions and say, "I could do that," now is the time to show 'em what you've got.

Seattle on Saturday will turn into an urban obstacle course for two adventure contests, City Chase and Urban Dare, in which teams of two people will make their way through the city completing outrageous challenges in the ultimate quest for glory. The games are part of a burgeoning industry in which "urban adventure" competitions are taking over cities across the U.S. and around the world.

With a premise that weds "Amazing Race" to "Fear Factor," the reality-TV-inspired City Chase competition is meant for the average schmoe who wants to embark on a full day of adventure, said City Chase USA president Jason Erkes.

City Chase started in Toronto in 2003 and has spread to 15 other countries. After hosting a Chicago competition last year, City Chase launched a full U.S. series this year in eight cities. Winners in each U.S. city will compete for the two-day national championship in October in an undisclosed city; the national champions will vie for the world title in a three-day faceoff in Morocco in November.

Seattle competitors will start and finish at Myrtle Edwards Park. After paying a \$170 entrance fee (per team), they will receive a clue sheet and King County Metro passes. Each team must finish 10 challenges selected from a larger list; the first duo to complete the challenges and cross the finish line will win smartphones and a trip to the national championship.

The specific challenges remain confidential until game day, Erkes said. However, he guarantees the activities will get competitors dirty and wet, push their fear of heights and test their resourcefulness. Teams will wind their way through downtown, Lake Union, the piers and Pike Place Market and experience every outdoor aspect of Seattle, he said.

"This is just a very different way for participants to experience a lot of unique challenges," Erkes said, adding that participants will get the chance to rediscover their city over the course of their adventures.

At last year's world championship in Rome, teams jumped off buildings onto mattresses, went crawling through caves and participated in a fashion show.

Kelly Smith, an advertising salesperson from Issaquah, said she jumped at the opportunity when she found out about City Chase and hopes it will help her discover new facets of Seattle.

"I'm a really competitive person and just love physical activity," she said. "This is a really neat way to have fun while doing physical activity."

Smith will be teamed with her boyfriend, and "hopefully we don't fight too much," she said.

There also is a challenge in which participants raise money for a local charity. The Seattle beneficiary is Seattle Works, a group that organizes volunteer projects, offers community leadership-training programs and promotes civic influence for local 20- and 30-somethings. All of the money raised by contestants will go straight to Seattle Works' general support fund, said associate director Tara Smith. The organization expects to collect \$4,000.

About 200 teams are expected to enter this year's Seattle competition.

Urban Dare, meanwhile, will begin and end at Victor Steinbrueck Park at Pike Place Market. Teams, which pay \$90 to enter, will have a maximum of five hours to figure out a dozen clues that will help them find checkpoints throughout the city where they either must take a digital photo or complete a dare.

Competitors in Urban Dare must have digital cameras and cell phones. The specific dares are under wraps until game day, but they might include eating something unusual or solving a puzzle, said Kevin Keefe, president of Urban Dare.

Urban Dare began in Washington, D.C., and Boston in 2005. It grew to 10 U.S. cities the following year, 20 cities the next and 30 this year. This is the second year for Seattle, Keefe said.

The teams finishing in the top three will receive trophies and \$300 will be awarded to the winner. As with City Chase, the location for the national championship has yet to be disclosed.

About 100 teams are expected to compete in Seattle's Urban Dare, Keefe said.

A similar contest, Great Urban Race (greaturbanrace.com), took place in Seattle on June 7. And Street Scramble (streetscramble.com), a city discovery competition started by two locals, takes place eight to 10 times a year at locations throughout the region. The next Seattle Street Scramble is Sept. 21 in the Fremont neighborhood.