



LEICESTERSHIRE ORIENTEERING CLUB

‘THOUGHTS ON PLANNING’

(Revised June 2007)

THE OFFICIALS

These notes are intended to be a guide for a Planner who has agreed to plan a full range of courses at an LEI Level 4 District / Colour Coded Event but they can also be used as a guide for Level 5 Summer and Winter League Events.

The Planner - is one of the three main Officials at an event, the others being the Organiser and the Controller. The Planner is responsible for everything between the start and the finish and all courses excepting any string course.

The Controller - is responsible for the event being conducted under BOF Rules and should be contacted if there are any queries or doubts as he/she will have wide orienteering experience and a good knowledge of the BOF Rules, Appendices and Event Guidelines. This Official is there to give guidance when required to the Organiser as well as the Planner, especially the suitability of control sites, the design of the courses and very importantly, event safety.

The Organiser - Within the BOF Rules the Organiser has a wide range of responsibilities including being in overall charge of the event on behalf of the Club and is responsible for signage, the assembly area (car parking, registration, information for new/inexperienced competitors, map sales, SI dibber hire at an ‘electronic’ event, SI download etc.), start and finish teams, the production of results including display of the provisional results on the day and publication of them post event, not forgetting the event finances including the payment of expenses.

THE COMPETITION AREA AND THE MAP

Research the competition area - is the map OK? Make allowances if the map is a bit out of date? Do not put control sites in what you and the Controller consider to be serious imperfections on the map. Always remember that the map is as produced by the mapper after hours and days of work both out in the area and at the computer using OCAD – even with the advent of ‘in-house’ laser printing do not make changes to the OCAD map file without having the courtesy to check with the mapper who will probably help correct and up-date the map for you if he/she has the time. Obviously there is a limit to what can be done in the time available and it is an expectation that no map should require updating in the last weeks or days just before the event is due to take place. Equally, if there are going to be pre-marked maps at the event an OCAD enthusiast/expert is a great help pre-printing in getting the courses accurately marked as

required. The Club Committee has agreed these **Protocols for Laser Printed Maps (December 2005)**:

In order to try and avoid problems that have occurred at events when laser printed maps have been used, the following protocols have been adopted by the Club and Planners, Organisers and Controllers are requested to follow them:-

1. Printing of Maps

For C3 and C4 events only maps printed on the Club's laser printer should be used. This is to ensure that a uniform and acceptable quality of map is produced. Map quality includes paper of the correct type and weight and that the correct colour table is used. (NB - in 2006 the Club purchased an A3 Laser Printer to replace the earlier A4 model to allow larger maps to be printed 'in-house').

Map files should be with Simon Ford at least 7 days before the event.

2. Bagging of Maps

For C3 and C4 events using laser printed maps, maps should be bagged. The Club's Equipment Officer holds a stock of suitable map bags.

3. Changes to Maps

Planners and Controllers are requested not to make changes to maps. Changes must only be made to maps by mappers authorised by the club. If you require changes to be made to a map then please refer to the Club's Mapping Co-ordinator who will arrange for the necessary changes to be made.

This protocol has been introduced to avoid the confusion of more than one edition of a map existing and to avoid changes being made to maps that produces other 'side effects'.

Plan your event to minimise disturbance to any wildlife or nests. Boggy areas are not nice to run in, and any surface vegetation is often particularly fragile. Are there any protected areas that have to be shown as 'Map Corrections' (and on Master Maps if used) as O.O.B? At traditional pin-punching/master map events 'Map Corrections' are often where the competitors will get their initial sight of the map when in 'pre-competition mind-set mode' and will not be too pleased to see a wide range of corrections as they will then begin to lack confidence in the accuracy of the map – if in doubt keep the corrections simple, as few as possible and appropriate to the courses i.e. there is no point telling White and Yellow competitors about road and fence/wall crossing points if they do not have to cross them!

Consider safe crossing points in walls etc. or on roads and plan your courses accordingly. If you open a gate don't forget to close it as it may be keeping livestock contained in a field - a gate open which should not be can allow farm stock to stray and, although all registered events have the BOF Third Party Insurance Cover the Club would rather not go down that road if at all possible – and certainly not the farmer's stock!

Consider the proposed location, and any detailed restrictions, so that the event is likely to have the least possible impact on the land and wildlife or other users. Seek to avoid areas where vulnerable features are known to exist. Land owners will normally know of

environmental sensitivities, special sites and protected wildlife in relation to their land and it pays to consult with them at the beginning of the planning stage – it is very frustrating to plan the courses and then discover that certain areas and/or control sites are O.O.B!

Visit the competition area as often as possible and make yourself familiar with it. Walk and run around the area noticing the good and bad parts. Mark possible control sites on a map - these should primarily involve good legs with the actual control site being a secondary consideration.

Decide where you wish the Start to be – it is ideal if the Start and Finish are close together and reasonably close to the car park. However, these considerations are not the overriding factors and the best place to start your courses should be chosen. If this is some way from the car park do not spoil your event by trying to make life easier for Start and Finish teams carrying kit - if these locations are remote from the assembly area do try if at all possible to make them accessible to the event officials by vehicle. Many orienteers enjoy a reasonable but not too long walk or jog to the start as a 'warm-up'. Try to choose a Start site using most of the following criteria and then talk to the Organiser to see whether your choice of Start area is acceptable:-

Try and make runners pass out of sight of waiting competitors as soon as possible.

Ensure the vicinity offers a wide variety of first control sites to quickly disperse all competitors.

Make sure there is room to set up the Start as seniors don't want to be falling over juniors and visa versa.

Ensure that the Start triangle is located on a specific feature and, if at all possible, make it a site that is before rather than spot-on a path or track junction. For White and Yellow the path or track junction is then their first control.

Decide on a Finish location - It is better if it is as near to the car park as possible. Try to make the run in not too long as any dead running should be avoided. Make sure all finishers approach the Finish from the same or similar direction. Try to choose a good spectator point if one is available as this is the one time in orienteering where people like to watch and encourage their fellow Club members. Again, ask the Organiser if the Finish is OK with him/her.

PLANNING THE COURSES

Study the latest 2007 issue of the BOF Event Guideline for District – formerly Colour Coded - Events (available on the BOF website and down-loadable as a PDF file - see the next section 'The Actual Courses' for further details).

Is this an event using pin punches or, as is becoming more usual, an electronic punching event? Use of e-punching allows you to criss-cross the area without fear of competitor's cheating but this could clutter up the map with lines and numbers in all directions! There is scope for any shape of course as the technology ensures that controls cannot be

taken out of order. However care is still needed to avoid obvious dog-legs and to avoid competitors passing close to later controls on earlier legs in their course. Long courses can be squeezed into even small areas. On very small areas you may still need a second map to avoid clutter although both may be pre-printed back-to-back or the second half picked up or copied from a master map half way through the course.

Put equal effort into each of the courses. In many ways the White, Yellow and Orange courses are the hardest to plan. These three courses are allowed to pre-mark their maps at East Midlands Events, but in practice White and Yellow pre-marking is the norm. Agree this with your Controller.

Think about the shape of your courses, don't link together pretty control sites with boring legs, the leg the competitor runs is the most important part of orienteering. The control at the end needs to be of an appropriate level of Technical Difficulty (see BOF Rules Appendix B – the Principles of Course Planning – downloadable from the BOF website).

Do not compromise the quality of your courses to reduce the number of sites. However, the time spent at a control is now much less when electronic punching is used so more courses can visit a single control without causing congestion.

The technicality of a course is dictated by the hardest leg/control. It is not often possible to have all legs/controls at the top level permitted but as many as practical should be.

Course guidelines permit a range of distances within which allowance should be made for the type of terrain to try and target the correct time for a course. A rough guide on climb equates 100 metres of climb to 1 kilometre of running on the flat. Take care that, when making this allowance, the effective course length does not exceed the permitted range of course length and expected finish times shown in the table in Event Guideline A.

After your courses are planned try and run around them all and try to take on the attitude of a competitor at that level, i.e. on White and Yellow if you can go wrong do so - and then change the course, remembering at all times that many competitors are children not adults – if in doubt squat or kneel down to see a control site from a child's eye view! On Green, Blue and Brown if you have lots of time to think, it's too easy - change it if the terrain permits!

Mark all your control sites and write the code on them. Check description sheets against the codes on your personal master maps then do it again - and then again! Avoid similar codes near to each other and similar features within 60 metres. No matter how you view a particular feature if it has been seen by the mapper and can be seen by the competitor as a re-entrant then you must treat it as though it is one – the map legend and the map drawing is the guide and the control description should be exactly the same i.e. if there is no vegetation boundary shown on the map then the control description cannot be 'Vegetation Boundary' with the same going for, for example, clearings and similar features.

If you are using electronic controls decide well in advance in conjunction with the Controller who will program the controls. This would usually be an E-coordinator or another experienced helper appointed by the Club but it is your responsibility to ensure it is done and, if you have been trained to do so, you might want to take this on yourself.

Consider what help you might require to put out controls bearing in mind that the Controller needs time to check them. This is especially important with electronic controls and the Controller should be involved in these considerations.

Where a helper or helpers are involved in putting out controls it may be possible for them to participate in the event afterwards e.g. get the helper to put out the White and Yellow controls which should not compromise them if they want to run a longer and more technical course later in the day. The Controller can then decide whether they ought to be treated as 'Non-competitive' or 'Competitive'.

Many controls make heavy work and remember it is your responsibility to hang them out. Controls can be grouped together but placement must adhere to the Rules – not closer than 30 metres to each other and not within 60 metres if similar features are used (see BOF Rule 6.2 Control Sites). Make them as secure as possible and make them easy to reach. See what your Controller thinks.

When retrieving controls after the event secure any gates opened during the duration of the event and remove all tapes and tags at control sites. Getting help from one or more orienteering friends, acquaintances or volunteer Club members is vital at the end of what can be a long and hard day. Discuss this with the Organiser – he/she may be able to allocate a helper or two for this task from their on-the-day list of volunteer helpers.

THE ACTUAL COURSES

The distances given below are in the current Event Guideline A: District Events (Issue 3 January 2007) and are to be used alongside the BOF Rules and Appendices (Issue 2, 2007), especially Appendix B: Course Planning (Issue 1 December 2002). All of the BOF Rules, Appendices and Guidelines are available at:

<http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/asp/sitemap.asp>

Click on the 'Members' link to go to the appropriate page on the website and then click on to the link for 'BOF Rules and Appendices' and 'BOF Event Guidelines'. Also available is a 50 page 'Course Planning Guide' book by Graham Nilsen downloadable as a 12.7 mb pdf file.

It is good practice to see when a particular area was last used at a similar time of year and to then ascertain the times taken for the distances offered – because of the differing nature of the terrain in LEI areas 'minutes per kilometre' times can vary area by area.

The Club will normally decide what courses it wishes to see subject to the Planner and Controller feeling that they are possible on the area. A District Event will have White, Yellow, Orange, Light Green, Green, Blue and Brown courses – very, very rarely, due to the terrain and lack of suitable paths, a White course may not be provided but if the event is an EMOA League Event then a full range of courses needs to be provided from White through to Brown but not including Red. It is currently Club policy to include a Red at all Level 4 Events to encourage members of running clubs etc. If the Club has decided that the event is to be classified as 'Limited Colour Coded' then only four courses may be on offer e.g. Yellow, Orange, Green and Blue.

Where an area will not sustain the Technical Difficulty normally required for Green and

above, i.e. TD 5, these courses should be put on with the highest level of TD achievable (normally TD 4) but Light Green (TD 4) and those below (TD 3, 2 and 1) should not be made any easier. This situation because of the nature of the terrain should be explained in event notices but more often than not it isn't!

White: TD 1: Length 1.0 to 1.9 km: Expected times for most competitors = 15 to 35 minutes

Make it very easy as normally attracts young children. If any competitors go wrong then the Planner has failed. Make the legs of similar length and quite short, preferably no more than 200 metres between controls - children enjoy finding controls. Make the first control very close to the start. Use paths and tracks wherever possible. If competitors have to go off-path ensure event notices warn parents of this and ensure that the off-path route is marked with red and white tape. There must be no route choice at all and try to avoid any sudden change of direction. Put controls wherever you do change the direction of the course - children will always charge straight on unless you stop them and there must be a control at every decision point. There is a strong case for making the next control visible from the one the competitor is at if at all possible. There should be no need for a compass. Remember little legs will not jump as well as you and low heads do not see as far. Don't make your control descriptions an endless list of path junctions. Try to use a bit of imagination if at all possible.

Yellow: TD 2: Length 2.0 to 2.9 km: Expected times for most competitors = 25 to 45 minutes

Yellow should be well-nigh as easy as White but longer. There should be no route choice or use of compass. Some controls could be just away from corners. Use only strong line features for routes, e.g. paths, walls, hedges, fences, streams or very obvious ditches. Start very easy, save slightly harder controls until later. Make the legs of largely similar length, preferably no more than 350 metres and with no more than 2 decision points per leg.

Orange: TD 3: Length 2.5 - 3.5 km: Expected times for most competitors = 35 to 60 minutes

Offer some route choice with large catching features behind the more difficult control sites. Give the brave orienteer a chance to strike out across country but allow the timid to navigate on paths to a good attack point - however, reward bravery! Use more difficult control sites - large point features e.g. thicket, large depression or pond or use more subtle line features e.g. on a ditch or a gully bend. Introduce some different length legs, some simple compass work and very limited contour reading.

Red: TD 3: Red length 5.0 to 7.0 km: Expected times for most competitors = 45 to 75 minutes

Really a long Orange course aimed at older or more confident novices who may be experienced runners and wanting a longer run. Controls should be of the same degree of difficulty as on Orange but longer legs can be introduced and with slightly more physical challenge.

Light Green: TD 4: Length 3.0 to 4.0 km: Expected times for most competitors = 35 to 60 minutes

This course is aimed at helping competitors progress from Orange/Red to Green. It should be technically medium-hard encouraging compass and map reading techniques. Give significant route choice wherever possible. Controls can be on any point or simple

contour features with collecting features behind controls. Errors should not be expensive in terms of time lost. Many mature competitors choose this course expecting reasonable technicality but without wishing to tackle lengthy or physically difficult courses.

Green: TD 5: Length 3.5 - 5.0 km: Expected times for most competitors = 45 to 75 minutes

The course should provide difficult navigation with a mixture of skills. Use widely different length legs offering as much route choice as possible. Make any path route alternative much longer to reward ambition. Concentrate on planning the leg and be prepared to move the control site to improve the leg. Avoid dog legs and dead running whenever possible. Avoid line features linking controls or attack points. Introduce contour navigation not just for control sites but also on route choices. A Green course competitor should be able to use a compass well. In all LEI areas a Green course should be as difficult as the terrain permits.

Blue: TD 5: Length 5.5 - 7.5 km: Expected times for most competitors = 55 to 90 minutes

Brown: TD 5: Length 7.5 – 10.0 km: Expected times for most competitors = 65 to 105 minutes

Again, make the Blue and Brown courses as hard as possible given the constraints of the area. Offer multiple route choices with few paths or easy line features to follow direct to a control. Make the orienteer think at all times, even making them navigate to the last control just before the finish. Try for some long legs but don't devalue the course. Avoid long path runs - use more controls to avoid these. Offer long compass runs but don't use bingo controls. Use complex contour routes and control sites.

Black: TD 5: Length 10+ km: Expected times for most competitors = 75 to 120 minutes

There is limited demand as Black courses of this length do not feature in the EMOA League. BOF, however, are keen to keep Black courses listed in the Event Guidelines even though they are rarely put on at Level 4 Events.

SOME THINGS TO AVOID DOING WHENEVER IT IS PRACTICAL TO DO SO

Dog legs - people leaving controls can give the site away to other competitors. Not all dog legs are apparent as the route is drawn but are a give-away on the optimum route on the ground! Similarly some dog legs are no problem as runners departing the site are out of sight of runners coming to it.

Gold rush - where the runner at the control shows all the other competitors who are also lost where the control is! A typical 'gold rush' control is a pit in a rough open, often bracken covered, area.

Bingo controls - a control where luck plays just as much a part in finding it as skill does - a 2 metre wide clearing or a small pit 100 metres or more from an attack point. If in doubt hang the control a bit higher.

Beacon controls - a control visible from 100 metres or more – often a control on a facing hill side in open country which the competitor can see from the other side of the valley.

Catch-before feature - a large path junction just before a difficult point feature makes the control easy. Similarly on technically difficult courses a large feature just past the control is a soft option for experienced competitors.

Path running - If 90% of the leg is along a path or fence etc., it means only 10% is orienteering!

Unnecessary control - is the control there for a reason? Can you take it out? It is not advisable to compromise the quality of your courses in order to reduce the number of sites. However, less sites tends to give more route choice.

Leg across or a control in an area with badly mapped runnability - keep well clear of it – basically, is the route through the forest as clear as it looks? The only answer is to test run/jog/walk/fight through the area to see for yourself!

Too much climb - avoid long climbs just for the sake of it. Also, long descents are very hard on the knees and other joints of competitors, especially mature ones.

Dangerous areas especially vertical descents - if any possible route goes near such an area it must be taped off using black and yellow tape – this two-coloured tape must only be used for this purpose and no other purpose during an event.

An invitation to cheat - avoid tempting competitors to cross out of bounds areas – this is not only against the principles of the sport and is unfair to the law-abiding competitors but, just as important, the Club could lose the area – Belvoir Castle is a classic example of this from the early 1980s and a lot of lost years and hard work ensued before the Club could get permission to be able to use the area again, albeit with certain restrictions

Crowding controls - avoid too many competitors arriving at any control at the same time. Where course design means several courses will do so, consider putting out a duplicate set of punches/SI boxes. However, with electronic punching the time spent at a control is now much less, so in these circumstances, more courses can often visit a single control without causing too much congestion.

ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF – “WOULD I LIKE TO RUN THESE COURSES?”

Notes for Summer and Winter League C5/Local Informal Event Organisers/Planners

These 'Thoughts on Planning' notes have been written with the Planners of C4 District 'Colour Coded' Events on LEI areas mainly in mind but if you have volunteered or been asked to organise and plan three courses for an LEI Summer League C5 Event then these notes are applicable to your event i.e. the 'Short/Easy' course will be of approximately White/Yellow (TD 1 – 2) standard, the 'Medium' course will be of approximately Orange/Light Green (TD 3 -4) standard and the 'Long/Technical' course will be of approximately Green/Blue (TD 5) standard, available terrain permitting. To repeat the information given earlier in these 'Notes' – *“Where an area will not sustain the Technical Difficulty normally required for Green and above, i.e. TD 5, these courses should be put on with the highest level of TD achievable (normally TD 4) but Light Green (TD 4) and those below (TD 3, 2 and 1) should not be made any easier”*.

You will not have a Controller as such for your BOF Registered C5 event but any experienced LEI Planner or Controller will be willing to give advice and help as to the suitability of the courses planned for the area and terrain to be used at the mid-week mid-day or evening event – if in doubt contact the Summer League Co-ordinator who, together with the Club Chairman, the Club President and the Club Captain, will put you in touch with someone happy to help and advise.

It is also very worthwhile to have an assistant during the mid-day or early evening to look after registration and entry procedure however self-help or informal these may be – after all, if you as the Organiser/Planner are in the woods putting out controls then an assistant will be able to deal with the competitors arriving early and keen to get out and about as well as being available to help during the event itself.

As all Club Events are registered with BOF - an absolute essential in order that the BOF Third Party Insurance Cover is available - you must be a member of British Orienteering in line with BOF Rules 2007 Section 4.1 i.e.:

4.1 General

4.1.1 The Organiser and Planner of an event shall be either National or Local Members of British Orienteering.

4.1.2 Grade 3 Controllers shall be either National or Local Members of British Orienteering.

4.1.3 Grade 1 and Grade 2 Controllers shall be National Members of British Orienteering.

4.1.4 The Organiser, Planner and Controller of an event shall meet the requirements set out in Appendix C (Event Officials).

Good Luck with your future planning!

Ernie Williams, June 2007