

Assessor's Report
Twin Peak 2012 in the Lake District
High Dam, Newby Bridge
Saturday 19th May, The Northern Championships
Sunday 20th May, Middle Distance Races

In addition to verbal discussions with competitors at the events, I have received 49 emails, raising, in total, 24 separate issues, of which I am detailing only about half in this report. The remainder, each of which was raised by only 1 competitor, I have passed on to the event officials.

There is no doubt that this was a very successful weekend of orienteering, much enjoyed, I think, by everyone. Points appreciated by many respondents included the car parking and its proximity to assembly, the excellent catering and the wonderful terrain, which several people suggested should have been used instead of Dalegarth for the recent British Championships. Of course, the weather helped; I don't think there was any wet weather parking alternative.

Of the critical issues raised, those mentioned by most people were the map scales used on both days and the use made of the area of green forest and marsh on the Saturday. A lot of people did not appreciate having to struggle through the latter; some wondered why they had to go through twice, when alternative, more interesting, terrain to the east could, perhaps, have been used. On the other hand, a few competitors complimented the planners on their use of the green area, demonstrating that you can't please everyone.

Several respondents had difficulty distinguishing on their map between open marsh and runnable forested marsh, which might have been easier to distinguish between on larger scale maps. Some users of both 1:15,000 and 1:10,000 scale maps would prefer to have had a larger scale map, arguing that orienteering is not a test of eyesight. Some feel that it was not correct to have excluded some very complex terrain from the Saturday event, because of the map scales used.

I understand that the planners of both events would have preferred to use larger scale maps. An application to the Chairman of Map Group was made for the Sunday event and rejected. The controller of the Saturday event did not support such an application, so none was made.

There was a lot of comment on the cost of entries, this factor being blamed, in part, at least, for the comparatively low entry figures. The tiered entry fees were not appreciated by people entering late and no doubt some didn't. Some people came only on the Sunday because of the entry fees; one lady told me that she is boycotting all very expensive events, so didn't go to Dalegarth either. Yet I am advised that the weekend has probably made a loss, the principal costs being access, with 5 landowners to pay, offset litho map printing for the Northern Championships, the BOF levy and high officials' expenses.

Are we in danger of reducing participation by charging too high entry fees for major events? Next year, the BOF levy will be much lower for larger events, which will help. I wonder if BOF should consider relaxing its Rule on the use of offset litho map printing. Did you notice any difference in the quality of your Saturday and Sunday maps; the former were offset litho, the latter laser? At very large events, like the JK, offset litho is not that expensive, but at Area Championships, with much smaller entries, offset litho costs per map are very high. Perhaps consideration might be given to going back to using bagged maps, laser printed on non-waterproof paper, to give better quality at a much lower cost, at least for 1:10,000 scale maps?

Several competitors have reported instances of important detail being obscured by the purple overprint, either marking the uncrossable boundaries or their course. At least the uncrossable boundary line was legible, though, which it wasn't at Dalegarth.

Some people have wondered why the courses on Saturday seemed to be shorter than they expected, whilst those on Sunday were rather long for middle distance racing. Another comment was that the control flags on Sunday were more hidden than they were on the Saturday, necessitating careful reading of the control description, which is, I presume, a compliment.

The organisers are already aware that several campervan owners would have appreciated knowing, before reading the final details, that they would not be able to park at the event, and would have a long walk to assembly.

I have received a scanned copy of the back of a control description sheet for the Northern Championships. Loose sheets were printed on unused waterproof maps, but this one unfortunately shows on the back the complete control description sheet for the earlier event, which could have led to a protest, perhaps!

Finally, I'm including three suggestions which I think are worthy of further consideration. Since there are generally very few young juniors at major events, do they have to be given start times or could they have a punching start, providing greater flexibility for their parents? Secondly, could there have been more prizes for juniors, particularly the younger ones; juniors like getting prizes. Thirdly, wouldn't it have been a good idea on both days to have had a clear station where competitors left assembly to go to the start? The long walks to the start were unavoidable, but a reminder to people to check they had their dibber, before they set off, would have been a good idea.

In conclusion, I feel these were excellent events, providing really good courses, on superb terrain, in wonderful weather. The trial of the assessor scheme has identified a number of points, some of which are worth publicising more widely, whilst others perhaps need further consideration by others.

Dick Towler