

Assessor's Report Ainsdale Dunes Sunday 16 September 2012

Summary

I attended the event myself, and I received comments from 13 competitors. The comments were overwhelmingly positive and I would like to thank DEE for putting on such a good event. There are a number of minor suggestions for improvement which individual people mentioned and DEE should consider whether any of them can be addressed for the future. I think most would agree with the person who said "May I, through you, pass on my congratulations to the organising team for such a delightful event; let me know when the area is chosen again."

Courses

I thought the planner did very well to maximise the use of the delightful forested areas as well as making good use of the open dunes. The calf-high vegetation made running in the open quite hard work, but that simply added to the enjoyable challenge in that one had to look ahead and pick the slightly more runnable lines as well as navigating accurately.

Also, the minor technical aspects were perfectly fine such as:

- IOF Control descriptions were correctly used.
- Uncrossable fences were clearly indicated.
- The map was well printed and circles were broken where necessary
- There were tapes from the last control and the finish punch had a control flag on it

It is noticeable that the times on the brown course are rather long, but I suspect that was due to the fact that some older faster runners decided to get their money's worth on such a good area and ran the black instead.

Comments I received included

"Thought it was a gem of an area and in places Culbin-ish in quality. Pity about the fences carving up the open, but enough intricate contouring to make it challenging at the micro-level."

"Great area, good course (Blue) and map. Nothing to fault."

"Just to let you know that my run, (though seriously not record breaking) was sheer delight.

I don't think that I've ever before run in what seemed to be almost "virgin" forest, I thought that the landscape was inspiring and the course planning excellent. "

"Best event this year! Comparison with this year's White Rose just shows what a difference excellent terrain can make. Sometime you can put all the effort and expertise in but the courses will always turn out crap. Really enjoyed the course [Short Blue]."

"...enjoyable orienteering on a fantastic technical area"

"a great event worth driving to"

"I competed on the Short Green course on Sunday, and feel I really must comment that I thought it was an excellent course, well planned and kept to the technical difficulty expected. It is disappointing when short greens are sometimes 'dumbed down' and often are not at TD5 level. However, Ainsdale was one of the best short green courses I have done for a while."

"Very good planning to use technical features of the terrain."

"Excellent event, courses and terrain."

Map

The map was good and sand dunes are notoriously difficult to map well. It certainly appeared to benefit from the input of professional mappers (Stirling Surveys).

In many places it was very difficult to determine what was up and what was down; the addition of more tags on the contours might help considerably.

In the woods, the green was perhaps one shade too dark. It seemed to more show visibility than runnability and was usually more runnable than one would expect.

Three older competitors on the longer courses commented that they found the map difficult to read at 1:10000 and would have benefitted from 1:7500

Organisation

The organisation overall seemed excellent and comments included:

“Good organisation and pre-information fine. Appreciated early publication of results.”

“I thought it was a really well organised event.”

“A well organised event run by some friendly and helpful orienteers.”

“Great road marshalling”

Several people mentioned that they very much appreciated the flexibility the start team showed in altering start times.

A couple of people said that they had problems with signs. One felt the signs to the car park off the main road were missing or not obvious. Another said that the point where the route to the start diverged from the way back from the finish needed to be signed - it was easy to end up at the finish instead of the start.

There were minor queues at download and I think this was at least partially caused by the painfully slow Splits printer. My guess is that it was incorrectly configured – possibly it was being asked to print in the wrong font. This is well worth addressing before the next event as the paper should whizz out of these thermal point-of-sale printers.

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