



DEESIDE ORIENTEERING
CLUB
LEVEL 'B' NWOL
AINSDALE DUNES
16th November 2012
Officials' Comments



Organiser's Comments (Norman Hall)

A nice flat parking field, a shortish walk to and from the marvelous competition area, an awkward road crossing, a brilliant group of helpers, a very amiable farmer and a fantastic Natural England warden, all added together gave 400 runners a very good orienteering experience. Sorry the weather couldn't have been better but even so, well done Deesiders.

My thanks go to all the volunteers, without whose efforts events such as this wouldn't take place. The EOD and SI team, under the eagle eye of Anna Nilsen, dealt with about 80 entrants with the usual efficiency and all starters were counted home. The parking officials manoeuvred 180 cars with precision. A fine signaling system on the road crossing ensured a safe passage for runners and the start teams did their usual magic to get everyone off.

Special thanks go to Barry Barnes, who despite having an operation earlier in the week, volunteered to roam the southern fences to deter would be infringers and then spent the rest of the event manning the finish – a very long stint. Oh yes and then he and Jill brought in all the tapes and signs at the end on their way in – 'above and beyond'.

I should have put in an order for water wings which would have helped Steve, Elaine, Darren and Alan in collecting controls.

None of this would have been possible without the help of Dave Mercer, the Natural England warden, to whom nothing was too much trouble. He even provided the wood for the fence stiles and then transported it to the sites, even helping Alan and myself in their construction. We are grateful to him and Rachel Northover of the Sefton Ranger service for granting us access to such an area.

Well done to Steve Ingleby for his excellent planning efforts. The fenced off paddocks do not aid free flowing courses but runners all seemed pleased with their courses.

What a map! Well done to Controller Graham Nilsen for its production and update, one day I might get to run on it.

PS. I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the injury to the young competitor who had to go off to hospital, was not a break but a badly sprained ankle

Planner's Comments (Steve Ingleby)

Despite the rain and the heavy undergrowth, I hope you still enjoyed your 'run' at Ainsdale. Certainly many of the people finishing went out of their way to thank me for planning the event - this was much appreciated and made the last 12 months work all worthwhile. Unfortunately the restrictions on the open area mean that we can only use it for an event in August or September - months when vegetation growth is at its peak. I visited the Natural England section of the map for the first time in September 2011 in order to judge how the undergrowth was likely to affect courses at this time of year. I then used the results from the only other event to use the full area, the 2008 Junior Home International, to judge the appropriate length for the Black course. Unfortunately there has been unprecedented growth this year with the terrain generally being more strenuous the further north you are on the map. My apologies to competitors on the Brown and Black Courses (the only ones to enter the 'Sefton' part of the area). With hindsight I would have reduced usage of that area - especially around control #253, which was pure grot!

For the courses that used only the Natural England Reserve, the winning times appear more reasonable although, given the technical and physical nature of the area, there is inevitably a large spread of times taken for each course.

I note that a number of competitors have been disqualified for omitting to punch controls located at the crossing points. Following the experience at the British Relays this year at Helsington Barrows, I made special note in the Final Details of the need to punch at crossing points, where appropriate. Only those courses that would benefit from avoiding use of the crossing point, made use of these controls and hence if they were not punched then unfortunately disqualification must be our only option.

We had officials at what were considered the most vulnerable sections to deter people from crossing fences rather than using stiles/gates. I am pleased to say that no one was observed by the helpers trying to cross a fence directly. Less pleasing was the fact that one person was seen by another competitor crossing the boundary fence between the Natural England and Sefton areas. There was no possible reason for doing this as both courses that crossed this fence had a control at the crossing point. This was most embarrassing, as the person in question was a fellow club member. The individual was reported as male, aged 40-45, wearing a red O-top with DEE in large letters on the back, and looking totally lost. In view of the importance about not crossing fences that was stressed in the final details, please can anyone fitting this description report to the Organiser so that they can be disqualified?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Event Controller, Graham Nilsen, for his helpful advice during the course of the event - somehow he managed to keep me on the straight and narrow! Graham was also responsible for the superb map of the area. Although some changes in vegetation screen are now required in places, the contours remain a delight by which to navigate - presenting an accurate picture of a very complex area.

I would also like to thank the Organiser, Norman Hall, for his outstanding efforts in preparing for the event - nothing ever seemed too much trouble to him and no requests for help were turned down. Norman and Alan Mullock (aided by Natural England's Dave Mercer) also gained a gold medal in the synchronised stile building competition. The crossing points made are so professionally built that they are likely to remain as permanent features to assist with Natural England's operations.

Finally I must make mention of the heroic trio of Elaine Sutton, Darren Baker and Alan Mullock who despite helping at the event and having a tiring run, all went back onto the area in torrential rain to pick up controls. I certainly would have struggled without their marvellous efforts - thank you!

Controller's Comments (Graham Nilsen MEROC)

Congratulations to all of you who navigated your way around Steve's excellent courses yesterday: Ainsdale was always going to provide plenty of technical challenge, even with its fences. This was the first time that the woodlands have been used for an open event. Most of the area is a national nature reserve, and access is restricted.

Steve approached the planning with enthusiasm – I am not used to being consulted on draft courses 12 months before an event – which meant that he was well placed to cope with my fleeing the English summer and not returning until a fortnight before the event. Nor did he quibble when I insisted that all of the control site tapes be checked a week before the event, so that he could replace the missing ones. My arrival to recheck them was greeted with a fly-past by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight – I assumed that Steve had arranged even this until I realised that the Southport Air Show was on.

Our apologies to competitors on the Brown and Black courses: currently the vegetation in the north of the area is significantly more lush than in previous years – anyone would think that it has been a damp summer ... Bath time must have been interesting.

Norman proved to be a remarkably thorough organiser, already having dealt with everything before I got chance to ask him about it. For instance, take the stiles, which he built himself – I had expected step-through ones, not ones which needed planning permission. Only the weather escaped his control, and he was last seen, dripping in the field, saying "I think I'll leave the tent until tomorrow."

It was Steve, however, who put the finish 20m from the car-park ...