

OA Tech Newsletter

Edition 2/2006

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Mapping News

IOF Print Tech report

In 2002 the IOF Mapping committee began a project examining the issue of digital printing. See details at <http://lazarus.elte.hu/mc/print-tech/index.html>

There have been two key outcomes from the project.

One is a list of comparisons of various printers – view at <http://ilm425.umb.no/~lanht/o/kartutv/printing/printing.html>

The other is the printing of a colour test sheet using Sort colours on an offset press. This sheet has standard IOF colours and can be used to test the colour quality of a digitally produced map. Interestingly the OA produced a similar colour swatch several years ago. This sheet was distributed to associations, but many orienteers involved in map

making may now not be aware of its existence. Copies of the colour test sheet can be obtained from state associations (if supplies are still held), or by contacting the OA Mapping Committee Chair, Noel Schoknecht, on 08 9335 4762 (sandyknoll@it.net.au). This colour swatch is an invaluable aid to ensuring the best colour quality output from digital printing.

Australian 3-day 2006 map standards

At the Australian 3-days in Victoria this year three map scales were used, and most notably for day 3 a variation to the ISOM 2000 specifications was allowed. The ISOM variation was the use of 1:15,000 symbol sizes at 1:10,000 scale (and 2.5 m contours), largely due to the precedent set in 1986 when Steve Key originally mapped the area. Although all maps were very readable there was some confusion on the different scales, contour inter-

vals, line weights and printing methods for the three days. The OA Mapping Chair has collated some feedback from competitors, and this stage would be recommending to OA that non-ISOM or ISSOM maps not be allowed for major events. In addition, consistent scales, contour intervals and printing methods for a given age group over a multi-day event would be preferable.

OA Mapping Committee Meeting

The OA Mapping Committee met at Easter, and discussed a wide range of issues. Edited highlights below:

Maps for National Events The issue of an appropriate approval process for maps for Group A events was discussed. This issue was brought to a head by the Chair of the Mapping Committee's unilateral decision to allow the map for Day 3 of the Australian 3-days in 2006 to be printed using non-standard ISOM symbols (1:10,000 map with 2.5m contours but 1:15,000 scale symbols). This decision was made unilaterally because there was no clear and simple executive within the OA Mapping Committee to make quick decisions, and indeed membership to the committee is fairly casual in some associations.

A two-pronged approach was recommended for the future. Firstly, each State will be asked to nominate a Mapping representative, who will disseminate mapping information within their state so that some of the principles currently applied to Group A events are applied more broadly. Secondly, an OA Mapping Executive of three people will be formed to decide on mapping issues related to Group A events. This executive would be composed of the OA Mapping Chair, a professional orienteering mapper and one other representative. For 2006/07 the recommended mapper was Eric Andrews, with the exception of maps produced by Eric where Alex Tarr will substitute. The other representative

will be elected by body of the State representatives.

Map scales There was general agreement that there needs to be more flexibility in the choice of scale for Group A events. In particular, the use of 1:5,000 for age groups 10-14? and 75+, and the use of 1:10,000 for elites at the Australian Championships Long Distance event should be considered.

Map boundaries It was considered essential that for development purposes, there should be easily identified boundaries (e.g. fence lines, roads, major water features, farmland, settlements land) at the edge of maps. With the increased use of digital maps and subsets of maps on small page sizes the logical boundaries are often lost, making it more likely that inexperienced competitors will go off the map.

Legends The majority view was that maps should have legends, with the exception of maps for elites as they should be familiar with standard ISOM and ISSOM symbols. It was noted that with digital printing there is a temptation to reduce map size, thus leaving no room for legend, or if the control descriptions go on the front (as is currently required) the control descriptions often obscure the legend.

In addition legends should be on all maps used by non-championship classes, especially where special symbols are used, or non-familiar symbol sets (e.g. ISSOM), and where practical on all maps. Legends must not be obscured by control descriptions for these classes.

Mapping workshop Eric Andrews will be running a mapping workshop in association with JWOC 2007. This workshop will cover the latest developments in digital/GPS mapping as well as traditional methods.

Photogrammetry Eric Andrews advised the

OA mapping committee at Easter that Kodak were going to cease production of the photographic film used to produce photo-diapositives – an essential input to Chris Wilmott's analogue photogrammetry.

Eric advised that Qld were buying a supply to last a few years, although it was pointed out that photographic film has a shelf life, and this is only a short-term solution. It was also becoming increasingly difficult to get companies to photograph using film as film cameras are replaced with digital cameras in aircraft.

There is scope to look at alternate technologies like laser for elevation for example,

and the use of software to create contours from digital photography.

Chris Wilmott will investigate digital photogrammetry options with contacts in Norway. In addition, Mike Morpheus is interested in pursuing the digital opportunities. This is a world-wide issue, and we should follow what developments are happening internationally. The committee indicated some support for assistance funding to ensure that there is a capacity in the orienteering fraternity to deal with digital photogrammetry.

— Noel Schoknecht
Chair,
OA Mapping Committee

IT News

Orienteering Australia Web Site

A number of state web sites have recently migrated to use the OA Content Management System (CMS). ACT, WA and very recently NSW have been upgraded to use this CMS. TAS and SA may migrate in the near future. QLD has recently developed a new site using another CMS although some components (results) remain on the old site.

The OA site is continuing to develop in several ways, including a searchable or indexed news listing, online entry and discussion forums.

Results and Participation Database

Event results currently maintained in various ways on the state and, in some instances, club sites. Blair Trewin has compiled the most complete record of major event results, and this has now been migrated to the OA site.

QLD have a searchable event results system via the QOA web site. This is based on a database maintained by Dane Cavanagh and Tim McIntyre and to which event organisers submit results in a pre-defined file format.

OA is looking to offer an event results service, which will enable all Australian results to be posted at the same site. The goal is

have a searchable database, which can also be used to calculate participation trends (to meet ASC requirements and to help development and sponsorship proposals). OA may be able to leverage off the QOA database — at a minimum, application of the database schema used by QOA may be possible. The participation database will need to integrate with the online event entry system which is under development.

To assist development of the OA database, the following will be initial steps:

- Develop complete events listing using the existing event calendar tool on the OA website;
- Review QOA schema and investigate potential input/integration with this system;
- Compile current Australia wide membership database SA is offering to do this as it will support the 2007 Australian Three Day Carnival entry system;
- Develop requirements of participant database to ensure it will support statistical reporting to ASC.

— Robin Uppill
Chair,
OA IT Committee

Technical News

Major Events Guidelines

The Technical Committee meeting at Easter covered a few interesting issues. One, which will affect many controllers over the next few years, is that we resolved to write a new set of guidelines for organisation of National orienteering carnivals.

The problem we are trying to address is that of different organisers re-inventing the wheel every six months with the next major carnival. The idea is to provide suggested timelines, procedures, personnel requirements, budgets and technical suggestions for organisers.

Three people put their hand up to coordinate writing the first draft of these guidelines – Dick Ogilvie, Julian Dent and myself. You may not be surprised to know that we haven't yet had time to even make a start!! But this is high on a list of priorities for the next six months. In the meantime, anyone with ma-

terial which they can contribute to this effort, please send it to me; and those with a bit of time to help on this task we would love to hear from you.

Controller Accreditation

The only significant news on the controller accreditation front this year is that we are negotiating with IOF to hold an IOF Event Adviser accreditation workshop alongside JWOC in Dubbo next year. This workshop is necessary because of the high workload currently placed on a small number of IOF EAs to service our World Ranking Events. The workshop will obviously depend on finding a suitable presenter.

If the IOF workshop goes ahead, then the next Level 3 Workshop will be deferred until 2008.

— Andy Hogg

Age Classes

Last edition I noted that the number of age classes for many events appears to be pretty excessive, and asked for other opinions on this issue. Here is what I have:

Orienteering competitions cater for an extensive range of age classes and abilities, and relative to the number of competitors, I suspect there are too many classes, and courses.

The simplification of the age structure particularly, would continue to offer participants the opportunity to compete, and reduce the workload of coursesetters and organisers. And larger classes will give 'winning' a class greater meaning and satisfaction. The current practice of also having numerous AS and B classes merely adds to the workload, because the reality is that there are few competitors in most classes. More combining of classes should occur in this regard. At the end of 'run,' it is the enjoyment from successfully participating which is as important as winning a 2 person class.

And let us not forget that many a person

comes orienteering, not only for their run, but also the social aspects, both at the event with rivals and friends, and to/fro the event where many a course/control is thoroughly analysed through the eyes of a coffee/tea or drink of choice.

To assist in promoting a healthy discussion of this issue I suggest perhaps it is necessary to reconsider age classes, particularly post M/W21 level to 10 year intervals, i.e. 40/50/60 etc., while offering, say, 40 and 60 for AS and Open Age B. Junior age classes are more difficult to simplify due to widely differing abilities, but the recent move to Junior E class for the 17–20 class shows it can be done successfully. To comply with international rules/events, age classes can be varied for them as needed.

I look forward to hearing and reading other opinions.

May your compass always point north.

— Andrew Calder (VOA)

I support those who like to run in bigger

groups.

I have been running W35A for over 20 years. This is because I have, until now, had no trouble with the distance, haven't made a total fool of myself, and haven't wanted to travel for miles to enjoy only 30 or so minutes in the bush.

However the disadvantage of running this course is that there are never many people to compete against. One of the attractions for me of the Xmas 5 days is that with a smaller number of courses, I have far more people than usual to compare times with. There is usually quite a large number of friends all doing the same course as myself, and I love being able to see how close I can get to a fit, able-bodied guy some 10 to 15 years younger than myself, or a female 20 or so years younger, etc. And there are private bets on all around, between friends, with maybe a bottle of wine or a beer hinging on day five's result. It makes for a great atmosphere.

So I am completely in favour of reducing the number of courses, from a competitor's point of view.

As a course setter/ controller it goes without saying that I support the reduction in work this would mean.

— Mary Enter (VOA)

You raise a point in the recent Tech Newsletter about age classes. Although this matter is dependent on field sizes, you may be interested in some views in a NZ context.

The NZOF rules give (non-obligatory) tables for course/class combinations, and lengths as a percentage of M21E from extensive analyses. For events over 200 total competitors, these assume the usual 5-yr veteran age groups; for events under 200 they assume 10-yr age groups, starting at 40. I'm talking A-Long classes here.

Start Triangles

Again, this item is a hang-over from last edition, where Jenny Hawkins asked whether there is a rule specifying whether one has to

Though regional championships are rarely over 200 competitors, a few years ago most regions were still using 5yr age classes, albeit with adjacent classes on the same course. This can produce the ludicrous result that the older class beats the younger class as often as vice versa. Of course this doesn't mean that orienteers are getting faster as they age, but it does mean that there is no statistically significant difference between adjacent classes, and therefore no point in separating them. The gory details are in:

www.mapsport.co.nz/tenyear.html

Last year I repeated my analysis on the NZ Champs (about 400 competitors). I reached the same conclusion - where they were comparable, the older class beat the younger class slightly more than the younger beat the older. In NZ then, 10yr age groups would be appropriate even at the nationals. But there is a huge attachment to 5 years, based on nothing more than tradition and a certain degree of pot-hunting.

Of course in larger events I would expect the 5-year age difference to become detectable. But I note that even with 15,000 competitors at O-Ringen, they don't go any finer than 5 years:-))

Best regards,

— Michael Wood (NZOF)

In summary, there are some good arguments for reducing the number of age classes offered at smaller events. The technical committee is currently considering a proposal for a new recommended class/course structure. This proposal is available upon request, and further opinion is invited – either to me or via your state technical representative. The goal is to make a final decision at the OA Annual Conference in December.

— Andy Hogg

pass through the start triangle. Two responses here:

Re the letter on Start triangles, the apparent correspondence from the BOF re IOF rules

is incorrect. If there is a marked route to the “start triangle” (i.e., “the point where orienteering begins”), it must be followed. The relevant IOF rules are reproduced here.

22.6 The start shall be organised so that later competitors and other persons cannot see the map, courses, route choices or the direction to the first control. If necessary, there shall be a marked route from the time start to the point where orienteering begins.

22.8 The point where orienteering begins shall be shown on the map with the start triangle and, if it is not at the time start, marked in the terrain by a control flag but no marking device.

17.3 Compulsory routes, crossing points and passages shall be marked clearly on the map and on the ground. Competitors shall follow the entire length of any marked section of their course.

Further, the implication is that the route must be marked – otherwise, there is no point in the “start triangle” being separate from the timed start. Note also that the practice adopted in some Australian events of using a triangle of some sort to mark in the terrain the point where orienteering begins (if it is separate from the time start) is not in accord with IOF rule 22.8 which states that a control flag without marking device should be used.

Regards,

— Barry McCrae (VOA & IOF)

My brother Colm probably has the distinc-

tion of being one of the few people disqualified for not passing through the start triangle. In every event that he did in NZ subsequently he used to go through it and then do a couple of laps of it before setting off!

I also vividly remember an Australian Championship at Dunga Mount where I, and many others, did a 180 from the triangle because the route was actually about 180 behind us – in other words we had run 200m in precisely the wrong direction when getting from the timed start to the triangle itself. This was compounded because only some of the courses had that – most of the others had to go straight on. In my view that is trickery rather than being “presented with problems right from the start”.

It comes down to poor planning – there are 3 options for setters if the best route is not through the triangle:

1. Place the triangle at or very near the timed start
2. Advise competitors that the marked route to the triangle is compulsory
3. Hope for the best (that the majority will go to the triangle)

Sometimes (1) can't be applied, for example, in an area where there is high visibility and you need competitors to “disappear” out of view of the others as quickly as possible - in this case (2) is the best option.

— Eoin Rothery (OAWA)

Soapbox

Soapbox is a section for anyone to raise concerns or voice ideas. Contributions welcomed.

M/W 12B Classes

M12B and W12B classes have been offered at most (all?) Group A and B events for many years.

However, we (I was Controller for Day 1) inadvertently did not offer these classes at the 2006 Australian 3 Days, since they are not

listed as classes which must be offered under Rule 5.7 of the OA Competition Rules.

We only became aware of the omission in the month before the event (after entries had closed), and it was too late to go back and offer the classes.

M12B and W12B are arguably the most important B classes to offer, since there needs to be an alternative for inexperienced 11 year olds, in particular, to the more challenging navigation of M12A and W12A. This is particularly important at the Australian 3 Days when the 11 year olds will have had limited ex-

perience (if any) in the January–March/April period with the 12A courses. Although the numbers in 12B have been small, it is critically important to not have bad experiences at that age by having a course that is too difficult for the child's ability.

I suggest urgent action to add M12B and W12B to the classes which must be offered under Rule 5.7. I suspect that their omission from Rule 5.7 has been inadvertent.

I note that the Australian Champs Organisers have also not offered these classes in WA this year. I assume that they have done what we did, and just gone by the list in Rule 5.7.

There is also scope to rationalise the other B classes. Based on our courses and entries at Easter, the following would suffice:

M&W12B on M&W10 course (Very Easy)

M&W14B on M&W12A course (Easy)

M&W45+B on shortest Moderate course

W15-44B (W Open B) on W14A course

M15-44B (M Open B) on M14A course

A possible (less preferred?) variation would be 13-16B on the 12A course, and the Open B classes being 17-44B.

Regards,

— Peter Jackson (VOA)