

BOC Planner's Comments – Junior courses (to M/W16) plus Colour Coded

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The planning of the Junior courses was allocated to me partly on the basis that I could be guided by the experiences of my own children, who are in or have recently been in this group.

I very much liked the idea of having a Junior only start, though with the addition of the extra colour coded courses, some adults did also find their way there.

Once the finish/assembly area had been finalized, the location of the White start was fixed by back-planning the TD1 (white) and TD2 (yellow) courses.

The thinning /felling which took place earlier this year, and the arrival of a protected bird, both in the blocks of forest near the finish, did mean that I had to have late re-planning of many of the courses I had responsibility for, with the changes near the end having a knock-on effect on the earlier parts of the courses, which I had to adjust to try to get the distances right.

There are a couple of principles which guide my approach to course planning:

- I tend to concentrate on planning legs and course shapes, and then look for suitable control sites to turn courses or to end legs, though as with many events, compromises had to be made to accommodate numbers through control sites and direction of flow in the forest.
- I try to visualize individuals tackling the terrain I am intending to take competitors through, and frequently crouch down or kneel, to view the terrain from a child's perspective – billberry and heather is hard going for adults when it is knee high, but this would then be chest high for younger children, and could be very daunting!

The course which proved most difficult to plan was Course 25, the TD3 (Orange) course, for two main reasons:

- The course has to cater for M/W12A and M/W14B – the difference in size and strength between a 10 ½ year old girl and a 14 ½ year old boy is significant, even though they may be navigating at the same technical level
- The most recent BO rules define the course length by an absolute distance (4.5km) rather than a ratio of the M21E course, unlike most other courses.

Although the map shows many suitable looking rides, walls and streams, the physical nature of the going (see above) meant that using those features for the W12A's was unfair, and the late felling and thinning near the finish meant that several suitable control sites were lost.

In the end, I had to emphasise more challenging route choices or execution, over using more challenging control sites off the line features – 8-9 was of particular interest, as retracing your route to get to the next control is counter-intuitive in forest orienteering, though today's youngsters have become familiar with this idea from their sprint and urban courses.

Adult comment on the 'Orange' course appear to range from 'too easy' via 'unimaginative' to 'total c**p' – I would be interested to hear from the youngsters!

The TD4/5 Colour Coded courses (light green, green and blue) were deliberately planned to be entirely different to the equivalent Championship courses, so that parents could support their offspring before the start, but not be a distraction whilst out in the forest.

Finally, many thanks to my co-planners for their assistance in co-ordinating and consolidating our courses, and for doing most of the legwork planting controls when I was unavailable in the week leading up to the event.