HAWKES BAY ORIENTEERING CLUB

A guide for course planners, controllers and event organisers

We turn up at the event, have a pretty tidy sort of run, grumble a bit about the hidden controls and the fact that a couple of them were not really quite where they should have been (or where we first looked, anyway). We swap a few lies over a pleasant lunch in the sunshine and wander off home again, well satisfied with our day's efforts.

But someone has put in a great deal of time and effort to provide us with an enjoyable day at our favourite sport . . . organised the venue, planned the courses, drawn the maps, prepared the control descriptions, put out the controls, manned the caravan, put out the string course, collected the controls . . . and all of the rest that goes into planning and organising a smoothly run and trouble free event.

So let us have a look at just what is involved in preparing for a club event - it could well be your turn in a few month's time.

Types of events

Club events. These are the less formal events held during the year. They can be everything from street runs or novelty events, to standard orienteering competitions. Club events provide a good opportunity to learn about course setting and event organising. A novice planner can either learn by helping an experienced organiser, or can have a go at doing the organising, with an experienced member looking over their shoulder.

OY events. This is the serious stuff and the courses must be up to championship level. An experienced course planner can be assisted by someone who is learning the trade, or a medium level planner can run the event under the overall control of an experienced member.

Who does what?

The course planner, alternatively referred to as the setter, is much more than just that. At both club event and OY level, the planner is the one who really does most of the work - organises the event, plans the courses, prepares the maps and runs the event on the day. The controller's job is to offer advice and to see that the planner gets everything right.

In most cases, someone is also designated as the Event Assistant. They will help with the chores, such as putting out the string course, setting up the tables and any of the hundred jobs that need to be done around the start/finish area.

The planner's job.

1 Check with the landowner liaison person about permission to enter the properties on which the event is to be held. Contact the landowners well in advance of the event and again before going on to the properties. They may want you to avoid paddocks in crop, or the bull paddock! Ask about any special hazards that members should be aware of, or any requests that the landowners might have. Their goodwill is vital to the club.
2 Check on supplies of maps. You may need to arrange for special large scale maps at 1:7500 for the white course.
3 Plan the courses, put out the controls, prepare the master maps and the control descriptions. (more about this later)
4 Check the caravan and make sure that there are plenty of clipcards, start time sheets for runners to fill in and finish sheets for the person in the caravan on the day to record names and times. While you are there, also check on stocks of pens, staplers and staples, orange tape, plastic bags, string course tape, sellotape and all of the other necessities of life in the caravan. Contact the Equipment Officer if anything is needed.
5 Ask the Publicity Officer where the direction signs on the roads to the event should be displayed.
6 On the day, take the caravan to the event, putting up the direction signs on route. Put out the warning signs near the event site. Give plenty of advance warning as people approach a side road off a busy highway.
7 With help from your controller and assistant, put out the string course, the map tables and master maps (two for each course except red long), clipcards, control descriptions, RED pens, start time sheets (6 min starts for red long, 3 mins for everyone else) and start triangle. Re-set all clocks so that they agree, if necessary.
8 Dash back to the caravan, mop brow and sit there looking entirely composed, waiting for the first customer.
9 At the end of the day, repeat just about everything in reverse. Leave $30 change in the caravan and give the rest of the takings to the treasurer.
10 After the event give the clipcards and results sheets to the Publicity Officer. Also the master maps in the case of an OY. These are then passed on to the Statistician.

The controller's job.

Every OY event, the club championships and any other serious event during the year will have a controller. Controllers are members who are experienced in course planning and event organising and it is their job to provide guidance and assistance to the planner.

1 The controller should contact the course planner early and have a general talk about the event.
2 If the planner has not had much experience in organising an event, go to see the planner and discuss the principles of good course planning.
3 When the courses have been drafted, go over them with the planner and offer any suggestions that may be appropriate, where you feel that is necessary, to improve the quality of the event.

4 Visit all of the control sites in the field, preferably with the planner if that person is new to the game. Check the sites for suitability and make sure that the sites

on the ground are indeed in the middle of those little red circles on the planner's map!

5 When the courses are finalised, make a master map of all control sites, copying from the planner's courses (*not off any master map that the planner may have prepared - that way, it is too easy to make the same mistakes as the planner may have made).*

6 Check the control descriptions that have been prepared by the planner.

7 Make a final check on the ground when the control standards are out, to ensure that they are precisely where they are meant to be, that the numbers match your master map, the clippers work, the standards all have flags on them and the control descriptions still fit the actual site of the control.

8 Be ready to give the planner a hand with the physical part of organising the event. That may not be strictly part of a controller's job but it will be much appreciated.

Course planning.

Many books have been written on this subject. In these notes, we will just cover the most important principles involved in setting courses that are fair to all who take part, are fun to run and provide competitors with a good test of their orienteering skills.

1 You have been told which map the event is to be held on. It is up to you to decide just what part of the map you will use and where the start/finish will be. This can often be quite difficult, as you must have enough linear features (fences, tracks, streams and the like) to allow you to set suitable white and yellow courses.

2 If in doubt, check with the Fixtures Officer as to how many courses are to be set. For an OY you will need a red long, red medium, red short, orange, yellow and white. For a club event two red courses will do, instead of three. Just make them medium-long and short.

3 The actual length of the courses will depend very much on the type of terrain. Estimated winning times are laid down for the OY's - red long 70 minutes, red medium 50, red short 40, orange 45, yellow 35 and white 25. Have a look back over some earlier club magazines for events held on the same map or on similar country. Try to work out how long each course will need to be to allow the winner to complete the course in the prescribed time.

4 Carefully read the instructions on course navigational difficulty. These are set out later in these notes. They **must** be observed.

5 Get a few maps in front of you. Black and white photocopies are useful, and cheap, for preliminary scribbling. Then start drafting the courses.

6 Decide where the start triangle will be. People waiting to start should not be able to see where earlier starters head off when they leave the triangle, so put it over the brow of a ridge or out of sight somewhere.

7 The red courses may be the hardest to run but they are usually the easiest to set. So start with the white. If you want to set a 2.4km white course on a 1:10000 map, cut off a piece of string 24 cm long and drape it around a few

fences, tracks and creeks, to see just what 2.4 km looks like on the map. It is very important that every person doing a white course must succeed, so follow the instructions carefully. Just get a rough idea of the course, then come back to it later when you have had a look at the others.

8 Then try the yellow, which is just about the hardest to set to the correct degree of difficulty. Both yellow and white courses should be on maps with fences.

9 The orange courses are also likely to be on maps with fences so leave them meantime and go to the reds. Some of the red controls, which will be on maps without fences, may also be suitable as orange controls on fenced maps.

10 Red courses are supposed to be as technically difficult as you can make them, while still observing the other rules. Having decided on the approximate length of the red long, cut off another piece of string and start drafting the course. **Course planning cannot be rushed.** It takes a lot of time and experimenting to get the quality course that you are looking for.

Remember at all times that the main requirement of a good course is quality legs, not quality control sites. The controls just happen to be the features that mark the beginning and end of the quality leg. Look for your control feature **after** you have sorted out the leg you want to run.

That quality course you are planning will show the following characteristics:
Interesting legs - make the runner's brain work all the time. Orienteering is supposed to be 50% running and 50% navigation, so plan most of the legs through country that makes them keep their eyes open, constantly checking off features on the map as they pass them.

Vary the direction of the legs. A ninety-degree exit from a control site keeps them on their toes, otherwise they risk heading off in exactly the opposite direction.

Vary the length of the legs. Short legs in intricate terrain are quite in order and give the careful navigators a chance to catch up with the runners. As a rule of thumb, one third of the legs should take up two thirds of the distance.

Try to offer the runners a choice of possible routes, especially on the long legs. This requires them to make a judgement as to which route to take. If they get it wrong, they will lose time.

Do not worry if you have to fill in with a few short legs of lesser quality, between good legs. Far better to do this than to have all mediocre legs.

Controls must be placed on features that are actually marked on the map, not on something you just happened to stumble over out in the field!

Make sure that the control feature is accurately mapped, also the area around the feature in any direction that a runner is likely to approach from. Look at your control feature through the eyes of the runner. If you have difficulty trying to sort out just which boulder or re-entrant is which on the map, forget it and go somewhere else.

On red and orange courses, the control flag should be placed in such a manner that the competitors first see it only when they have reached the control feature, not from 200 metres away. Having reached the control feature and the correct position in relation to the feature (upper, lower, at the foot of, W side etc), the competitor should be able to immediately see the flag and get to the clipper.

If the control site is a point feature, such as a medium sized boulder, pit, tree, trough or small earth bank, draw your circle with the centre in the middle of the symbol on the map. The control description tells people where to look, relative to the feature. If the feature is a big one, such as a huge boulder, swamp, pond, longish cliff or patch of trees, draw your circle with the centre exactly where the flag is on the ground. On the NW side of the symbol on the map, if that is what the control description says.

Refer to the navigational difficulty instructions for red courses as well as for the white, yellow and orange.

11 There are some things which you should avoid when setting your course:

Dog-legs. People leaving a control and heading for the next should not be visible to approaching competitors. Try to ensure that the natural exit route is concealed from those following. A dog-leg is also created when you have two different courses approaching the same control from opposite directions.

Controls should not be sited on small features visible only from a short distance, if there are no other supporting features on the map. These are 'bingo' controls where luck plays too great a part.

Do not put controls on 'similar' features, within 100 metres of each other. The word 'similar' refers to how they look to a competitor. A knoll and a small hill are similar and a steep faced large boulder and a cliff may also look much the same on the ground.

Avoid allowing competitors to run tracks as the obvious route choice. If they want it easy, they should be made to pay by running much further.

12 Some of these things cannot be sorted out at home. Having drafted your courses, the next step is to go out into the field and see if it all looks the same on the ground. It never does. Look at the approach and exit for each control site. Check the accuracy of the map. Fiddle with the courses to make everything fit better. Make a note of the dimensions of the feature where that is relevant and also the exact placement of the control flag in relation to the feature. Fine tune the courses in the field until you are satisfied. Check the white and yellow courses carefully, through the eyes of a child who is half as tall as you are! Make sure that the white, yellow and orange courses do indeed meet the strict requirements of their colour labels.

13 Then go home and draw up the master maps for the final courses. Make up the control descriptions for each course. Either do them by hand or use a computer program such as Condes. The club owns a copy. Make full use of

the columns that identify the feature and give its dimensions. The white and yellow courses should have English descriptions, the others international symbols. Show the course length on the course description. It is calculated by measuring in straight lines between the control circles, unless there is a bluff or lake in the way, in which case you measure around the obstruction. To calculate the climb, work along the route that a skilled orienteer would take, counting every up contour that you cross. Run the final courses and the control descriptions past the controller, if you are working with one. Prepare a master map showing all of the controls, with the numbers beside each circle. Once the courses have been checked and agreed by the controller, absolutely, positively try to avoid changing anything. About 80% of mistakes arise from last minute changes to courses or control sites.

14 Keep in touch with the landowners, just in case someone decides to put a herd of cattle in the paddock where you have set up your white course. Landowners will usually oblige by even turning off the electric fences for the day.

15 Allow yourself plenty of time to put out the controls, usually a full day at least. Set off with an armful (sackful?) of control standards and with exactly the same number of flags in your pack. This way you are unlikely to leave a standard without a flag. Take one spare flag, separate from the others, in case one falls to bits. Place the control exactly where you had marked it on the map. You may have already identified the spot on the ground with a peg or a coloured spray can. Definitely do not hide the controls. Having got to the right place on the map, the competitor should not have to grovel around among the thistles or the blackberry to find the flag. Put it out in the open, consistent with the description you have given. Be extra careful to make sure that the control with the right number is put at each control site. Check the clipper before leaving.

If you are working with a controller, he or she will probably help out with this part of the job.

16 We do not provide water on courses for club events.

17 At some stage, prepare the control collection maps. Photocopies of your 'all controls master' map will do. Mark groups of controls for collection by different people after the event.

18 Then sit down and think your way through everything that you have done over the past few weeks. Read these guidelines over again. Think carefully about the areas that are likely to give rise to errors - right control sites but wrong control standards, master maps prepared for the map tables do not agree with your own masters, control standard numbers on the course descriptions do not agree with the numbers in the field . . . . If in doubt, check. In a serious event such as an OY, there must not be any mistakes.

19 You have done everything that you can. Just relax and accept the compliments of the competitors for the great courses and a wonderful event.

For further information on course planning, controlling and event organising, refer to: NZOF Rules for Orienteering Events; IOF Principles for Course Planning; or Course Planning, *by Claesson Gawelin and Jagerstrom Nordstrom*

Course navigational difficulty labels.

The New Zealand Orienteering Federation has laid down standard degrees of difficulty for each of the colour coded courses.

White course
Courses **must** follow drawn linear features (tracks, fences, streams, distinct vegetation boundaries etc). A control site must be placed at every decision point (for example, a turning point, a track junction or a change in the type of linear feature - from following a track to following a stream). All control markers must be visible from the approach side. Where a course has to deviate from the handrail feature (for example, to cross a forest block), the route **must be marked all the way** until a new handrail feature is reached. The start triangle must be on a linear feature. If no such feature is available, then there must be a taped route all the way from the start to a linear feature (that is, the first control). Compass use is limited to map orientation only. **No route choice** is offered. Doglegs are permitted.
Used for: M/W -12A, M/W -14B

Yellow course
Control sites must be on or near (less that 50m) drawn linear features (tracks, fences, streams, distinct vegetation boundaries etc) but preferably not at turning points. This gives the opportunity to follow handrails or to cut across country (that is, **limited** route choice). Control sites must be visible from the approach side by any reasonable route. Compass use is limited to rough direction. Contour recognition is not required for navigation but simple contour features may be used for control sites. Doglegs are permitted.
Used for: M/W-14A, M/W-16B, adult C classes.

Orange course
Course shall have route choice with prominent attack points near the control sites and/or catching features less than 100m behind. Control sites may be fairly small point features and the control markers need not necessarily be visible from the attack point. Exit from the control shall not be the same as the entry (doglegs not permitted). Simple navigation by contours and rough compass bearings with limited distance estimation required. Use of a chain of prominent features as "stepping stones" is encouraged.
Used for: M/W-16A, M/W17-20B, adult B classes

Red course
Navigation should be as difficult as possible with small contour and point features as preferred control sites (no obvious attack points, no handrails etc). Control sites shall be placed in areas rich in detail. Route choice shall be an important element in most legs. Doglegs are not permitted.
Used for: All other A classes including and above M/W18A (includes both long and short courses), also elite classes.

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