

Know your sport: Events, Competitions and Activities

Many people take part in orienteering as a personal challenge to get around a course - whether in a forest, on moorland or in an urban area. However as a sport, it is competitive with, at most events, the fastest person being the winner.

But how to structure the range of events and how to make the competitive aspects of the

sport more exciting for those seeking to reach the top? Also how should the events be graded so as to provide participants with an awareness of the likely 'quality' of the event? And how might 'quality' be defined?

The nature of the sport means that there is no single answer to these questions and, over the years, different event structures have been tried. So here is an attempt to make things a bit clearer based on the current system!

First we need to separate out '**activities**' (see box on the right). Essentially these are anything put on by a club that does not lead to results - there is no competitive element (except possibly for the personal satisfaction of the participants!). For BKO this would include our club nights and the summer Wednesday evening training sessions. Everything else is an '**event**'!

Events though come in many different forms and quality. To help participants distinguish between different events, currently these are classified into 4 different grades:

- **Level A** events are the most prestigious events intended to provide opportunities for competitors to take part in the ultimate orienteering challenges in the UK
- **Level B** events provide opportunities for more experienced competitors who seek a wider variety of terrain, challenging courses and competition. Competitors are prepared to travel longer distances to attend these events.
- **Level C** events provide opportunities for participants seeking competition at a wider variety of venues and against a varied group of competitors but without wishing to travel great distances.
- **Level D** events encompass a wide range of formats and types of event that clubs wish to stage to provide opportunities for participants to orienteer at a venue near to them. These events may be of any format and type in any terrain: clubs decide what suits the needs of the prospective participants.

It is worth noting that results from events in Levels A-C are normally used to generate national ranking points (*but that is another story for another time!*)

Definitions:

- An "**Event**" is an orienteering meeting that takes place. The term encompasses all aspects including the planning of the courses and the organisational matters. An event may include one or more competitions.
- An "**Activity**" is a gathering of people who intend to participate in activities related to orienteering: to practise, train or as an introduction to the sport and there is no intention to rank or publish the competitive outcome of the gathering other than results of the coach-led exercises for the purposes of training.
- A "**Competition**" is where persons compete under competition rules to determine the final results with winners and places. A competition may involve one or more races.
- A "**Race**" is where persons complete an orienteering course in the terrain and are ranked from fastest to slowest.

Much of this article is based on the latest version of the '**Rules of Orienteering**' available on the British Orienteering website at: <http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/page/rules>

The **Levels** help define the quality of the event. The requirements are laid down by British Orienteering and get more demanding as you progress from Level D through to Level A. For example, at the top end there should be an 'arena' with the courses finishing in it, there should be a public address system linked to radio controls and there should be a results display in the arena. The type of terrain is important and the officials need to be experienced and suitably qualified.

Another important factor is that Level A events are scheduled by the British Orienteering Events Committee, Level B by an less formal national Event Scheduling Group and Level C are agreed at regional level. Clubs are free to decide when to stage Level D events around these other events. These requirements are designed to avoid significant clashes between important events.

So where do '**competitions**' fit in? The definitions indicate that these involve '**rules**' and that the rules determine '**winners and places**'. These can in fact take place at any 'Level'. The most important ones, such as the British Championships, the Regional Championships and the JK, take place at Level A events. However many competitions use other levels: the Scottish 6 day competition uses 6 Level B events; the 'White Rose' weekend in Yorkshire uses 2 Level B events; the regional SCOA League is based on a series of Level C events staged by different clubs throughout a season (September-June); and our own Youth League uses our winter Saturday events which are Level D. Some of the regular 'competitions' are listed in the box below.

Some of the Main Competitions

The top competitions are generally regarded as the various British Championships (the Long Distance, Middle Distance, Sprint, Relay and Night) and the Jan Kjellström festival each Easter (comprising a Sprint, two individual events and a relay). More locally we have the Southern Championships (all BOF members can enter the event but the competition is restricted to members of SEOA, SCOA and SWOA) and various SCOA Championships - the 2014 SCOA Long Distance Championships was held in conjunction with the recent TVOC Chiltern Challenge event. Others include:

CompassSport Cup: This event (not defined by British Orienteering) is the main Inter-Club competition combining all ages. There are regional heats usually held in February and a national final, restricted to the clubs which get through from the heats, in October.

Yvette Baker Trophy: This is the premier Junior Inter-Club competition for English and Welsh clubs. It is named after Britain's first World Orienteering Champion, who won a Gold in 1999. There are regional heats (this year in the early spring) and a final (this year in July).



Level A events should provide **back up timing and results system**. This photo shows **Alan Yeadon** providing a video record of finishers and a digital clock (the 'emit' box displayed the time on the other side) at our recent Level A Southern Championships.

Harvester Trophy Relay: This is an annual fixture which is an extended relay run through the night and into dawn the following day. It is usually held in mid-summer when the nights are short. The main relay is designed for teams of 7 but there is also a course for teams of 5. The main open competition is for the Harvester Trophy but there are other categories with other trophies.

UK Orienteering League (UKOL): This is an annual, national competition for individuals and clubs based on a selection of high quality events. The purpose is to find the top competitors.