

British Night Orienteering Championships

Controller's Report

Open moorland with plenty of features and not too much slogging through deep heather has always appealed to me, so to be asked to control BNOC at a nicely technical Ilkley Moor seemed like a treat. Last time I competed there was at the JK in 2006 and I felt it was about time I reacquainted myself with it.

I knew that the event would be presented by a seasoned team of competent Airienteers and would present me with a straightforward task.

As soon as I picked up the details, I could see that the planning by Tony Thornley and the organisation by Richard Foster was already in full swing and I could inspect the high-quality map, course lengths and quality, control sites and general logistics 9 months ahead of the event. All looked very promising.

We did have several issues that caused concern. The weather – February in the Pennines could be a bit inclement (would you believe). The darkness – would we have enough time between 'Nautical Twilight' and a reasonable 'last-start' time? The hazards - of rock features that would need to be negotiated by runners in the dark.

The weather. We lost out regarding wet snow underfoot but we were lucky that the wind, temperature and precipitation weren't too bad on the night. The conditions for the control hangers (Tony, Richard and Anne were less than favourable but they persevered and everything was ready for myself and Chris Mackenzie (Assistant Controller) start checking by mid afternoon.

The darkness. We couldn't release the runners until after 6.30pm as determined by the Almanac and we didn't want the start window to extend beyond 7.45pm if we could help it, so it gave us a window of 75 minutes. Keeping seeded runners on each course 4 minutes apart may sound OK in theory but doesn't work well with a large entry and multiple classes on some courses.

The hazards. We all survived! But the safety team were prepared for anything.

I left the event at about 10.30pm. I left with an even more favourable impression of the hard working and smoothly efficient Airienteers team. I must also thank all the competitors, most of whom seemed to enjoy the challenge of taking on the rigours of Ilkley Moor on a winter's night and the opportunity to socialise in the excellent event centre.

My 2-hour drive home was eerily quiet.

Paul Taylor

(A disappointing post-script. We have had accusations of people breaking the embargo rules. This situation is ongoing.)