

Overall I was happy with the way both of the weekend's events went and grateful for the nice comments people graciously made to me and other members of NATO.

Saturday at Simonside was, however, marred a little by a controversy over two adjacent control sites and I cannot comment on the event without reference to it.

The sites involved were 235 (Hill, Top) and 237 (Boulder Cluster, 1m, East side). 235 was before 237 on the most logical approach. 235 was on the easier to find feature and was only on the Light Green (TD4) courses.

We received a protest against a mispunching of 235 (instead of 237) on the grounds that the controls were too close together (within 30 metres) and infringed BO rules. This was initially turned down by the Organiser in consultation with the Controller. An appeal was then lodged and referred to a Jury. Jury members visited the sites, measured the distance between them as best as they could and decided they were, indeed, less than 30m apart, upheld the appeal and reinstated the competitor involved.

Accordingly, all competitors who had mispunched either control were reinstated – what's good for one is good for all.

Those who know me, know I'm never short of an opinion, so I'll give you it now. I was, frankly, disappointed with the decision – and this is why:

When I was planning the courses I was faced with trying to combine an enjoyable challenge and avoiding some ferocious undergrowth. The area of those controls was a "pinch point" in that all the courses had to go through a very narrow corridor before an inevitable common "dead" road run of 300m or more.

In order to reduce the "dead" element, I decided to introduce a small decision prior to the road run of how far to go back to join the road thus avoiding the thick undergrowth (bracken) and that meant a control was needed. As all the courses (bar White, Yellow and Orange) were to go through a small area I needed multiple controls to give a degree of separation and remove the advantage that would be given by a runner coming out of a control. I decided upon 3 sites to split the courses and combined them with approaches from different sites before them as well. The third site was 236 (Gully) another 40 or so metres beyond 237.

I found what I considered to be three sites which were on (in my view) significantly different features both on the map and visibly on the ground. Was I aware that two of them were within 30 metres? I could see they were close but also that they were quite different – **and were in accordance with rules!** Did I measure the distance between them? No. Would you?

(webmaster's note: This discussion can be illustrated by reference to RouteGadget)

continued

The relevant section of the rules is:

22 Control sites

22.1 Features used as control sites must be clearly defined, distinct from the surrounding terrain and marked on the map. Control sites should be uniquely described.

22.2 Control sites must be chosen so that the competitor is able to locate them with an accuracy consistent with the scale of the map and the amount of detail shown near the control.

22.3 Controls should not be sited within 30 metres of each other or 15m for map scales 1:5,000 or less.

22.4 Controls within 60 metres of each other must not be positioned on similar features or on features that appear similar in the terrain. This is reduced to 30 metres for map scales 1:5,000 or less.

The features were clearly defined, distinct and marked on the map. They were uniquely defined.

Competitors could locate them accurately given the scale and detail on the map.

Note the word “should” about not being within 30 metres.

Note also the word “must” about similar features within 60 metres. They were not similar features which could be visibly confused.

There is a common misconception about the “30 metre rule”. It is not a “hard” rule as the wording shows. The 60 metre rule is the “hard” rule.

In my view, considered at the time of planning, the control sitings were not only within the rules but also fair to competitors.

There is further information of control siting in section 6 of BO Rules Appendix B Course Planning which I am and was aware of when planning this event.

I considered the allocation of control codes and made the adjacent controls such that they would not be confused – although this presupposes that competitors check!

If anyone has any views I would be pleased to hear them – although I will not accept any accusation of not knowing or following the rules.

Right, hopefully that’s cleared the air a bit and we can move on.

The version of courses you were eventually presented with was number 9. I drafted my first version quite early this year based upon my previous knowledge of the area. As I was quite ill at the time, I asked some other members of the club to test run being unable to myself. The first report was that it was probably too tough and that the undergrowth was likely to be an issue in the later stages. So, I shortened everything a bit and started to think of alternative ways to get around the worse undergrowth.

I really like that area immediately encountered by courses from the main start. It is not overly complex but has some nice looking features. It is made technically challenging as the rough going and low visibility make it difficult to stay on line and relocation is very tricky.

Moving on to Slaley Hall: the first time I saw the Allout Adventures site, I knew it would make a super relay arena, so, although the area is not hugely technically demanding, I made every effort to use it effectively.

The Middle courses for the OO were quite similar to the relay courses. There was little scope, I felt, for anything else.

I want to say thanks to everybody who helped make the weekend.

- Organisers and all the NATO helpers who took my wildest ideas and made them work. I'm not going to name them as I don't want to forget anyone (you all know what my memory is like!).
- Controllers (Blair Young and John Biggar) who didn't pressure me when I was struggling but quietly suggested improvements and headed off a few "issues".
- My co-mapper and co-planner (Fred Miller) who was content to let me largely run with things and be there when I needed support – even though he had his hands full with the Newcastle City race in late August.
- Morpeth Lions (led by Les Brindley) for organising and manning the JHI evening social.
- JHI Coordinator (John Crosby and his Boss, Margaret) for looking after the teams arrangements allowing me to concentrate on the races.

Adrian Barnes