

ONET Articles

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The following are articles that were written on Onet - an early internet orienteering blog/digest from the 90s. Some extra details have been added.

Did You Know?

by Bill Teahan

What are 3 important orienteering innovations that were first to appear in Australia?

1. The Thumb Compass.

Dave Miller was the first orienteer seen orienteering with his own home-built hand-wired thumb compass. He probably wished he'd patented the idea!

2. The first Computer O Map.

In the October 1990 issue of "The Australian Orienteer" Bill Fisher claims that he produced the first O map in the world (called "Gap Creek") to be completely drawn by computer (back in 1981). The way he describes it in the article, he deserves a medal for sheer perseverance.

3. Rogaining, the other map sport.

Even Australians can come up with a totally new sport without calling it Australian Rules. (But the inventors did name it after themselves - ROd, GAIL and NEil Philips). Rogaining developed out of 24 Hour Walks in Victoria in the early 1970s. The "how-to-wreck-your-body-in-just-one-day" sport. Great idea.

The Orienteering Car

By Bryan Teahan

1. It accelerates at a phenomenal rate.
2. It travels faster in all gears especially reverse.
3. It can take 'ramps' at twice the speed of ordinary cars.
4. The floor is shaped just like a rubbish bin and the outside is never clean.
5. It can be driven for up to 160kms with the oil warning light flashing.
6. The suspension is reinforced to allow the carriage of 100 controls, 2 tents, 3 toilet tents, and other heavy materials.
7. It has been adapted to allow reverse gear to be engaged whilst the car is still going forward.
8. The tyre walls are designed to allow it to withstand winding metal roads, slippery grass slopes, deep fords and humungously steep hills.

Do you have you an Orienteering Problem?

by Bill Teahan

Many people today slide into addictive behaviour without realizing it. Only objective evidence can persuade them that they indeed have a problem. To help with one of today's most common problems, here's a short test you can take.

DO YOU HAVE AN ORIENTEERING PROBLEM?

1. Have you ever experienced a loss of memory for events that happened while you were orienteering?
2. Do you ever orienteer before noon?
3. Have you ever felt remorse after orienteering?
4. Have you ever told yourself "I can stop orienteering any time I want to?"
5. Do you get cranky and irritable after a few days without orienteering?
6. Have you ever spent time on orienteering that you had budgeted for other things?
7. Have you ever had a "short O run" turn into a major binge?
8. Do you ever orienteer alone?
9. Do you associate with a lower class of people when you're orienteering?
10. Do you believe you can't have fun with your friends without orienteering with them?

If you answered "yes" to two or more questions, then you may have an orienteering problem. Call the Orienteers Obsessed Organization. Let us help. We care.

What Is An Orientarur?

By Bryan Teahan

"An Orientarur is something that grugs around in the woods looking for little brightly coloured markers. When they find them, they do some kind of weerd dance around them with a funny looking piece of paper and a plastic tool which they grip with great reverence. When they don't find them they walk around all day like they are lost. Sometimes you see them squashed by cars along rodes, espeshelly in the summer when all the other bugs are out. An Orientarur usually walks bent over all the time which is why they look so stooped. Their face looks like old lether. They cusses terribul. They can't read because they have to take pictures with them to help them out. They also measure between things and then puts downa mark on a lettel piece of card which is difrint than wat the markers sez. They are not too brite because they are always getting lost and have trouble to find their way home. Their pants are always tore and their shoes look like they were made of mud. People stare at them; dogs chase them and they always look wore out. I don't know why anyone wants to be an Orientarur."

Organising an Event - APOC 1994 Adventures

By Bryan Teahan

I have just come back to work after being one of the organisers at APOC (I mapped two maps (North Island & Individuals), drew two maps (Individuals and Model), vetted the Individuals and was organiser for the computer processing of results.

I will long remember APOC for:

- Coping with thunderstorms spiking computers.
- Faulty generators killing my computer 1/2 hour before the relays (the backup computer was running 5 minutes before the first finisher).
- the results book produced 1 day after the event and in the hands of competitors at the Auckland 3-day event the Saturday after APOC.
- Starting at 8am in the morning in thick peasoup Wellington mist.
- wiping a control tag clean to see the number after a cow had poohed on it.
- APOC travel firm manager about his assistant:
'She's my laptop computer - I couldn't have done it without her'.
- First day comment overheard:
'I reckon New Zealand would be one of the largest countries in the world if they flattened it out.'
- Mad cow on the rampage stung by bees.
- Language problems in a Chinese Resturant where Japanese APOC competitors try to pay using English with lots of '8 dolla'.

The whole event was fun. It has taken years from my life. I am now going back to work for a rest.

Here are some of my thoughts on Organising an Orienteering Event:

Common Orienteering Organiser's Event Stress:

- constant and often unrealistic deadlines.
- too much to do by too few too often.
- frequent peaks in workload.
- high visibility of mistakes and narrow margin for errors.
- potential and frequent conflict with competitors - you can be abused at any time.
- growing work backlog around home - little jobs keep being put off.
- long, irregular work hours.
- need to adhere to tight standards.
- disappointment from competitors when event fouled up.
- little or no contact with members of family.

Who would be an Organiser, Planner, Mapper or Controller?

Tips on How to Handle the Stress of Organising Orienteering Events:

(Author : Anonymous)

- Jam tiny marshmallows up your nose and try to sneeze them.
- Use your mastercard to pay your visa bill.
- Pop some popcorn without putting the lid on.
- When someone says, 'Have a nice day', tell them you have other plans.

- During your next meeting, sneeze, and then loudly suck the phlegm back down your throat.
- Find out what a frog in a blender really looks like.
- Make a list of things you have already done.
- Dance naked in front of your pets.
- Put your toddler's clothes on backwards and send them off to pre-school as if nothing was wrong.
- Thumb through National Geographic and draw underwear on the natives.
- Go Shopping. Buy everything. Sweat in them. Return them the next day.
- Drive to work in reverse.
- Read the dictionary backwards and look for subliminal messages.
- Start a nasty rumour and see if you recognise it when it gets back to you.
- Bill your doctor for the time you spent in his waiting room.
- Get a box of condoms - wait in line at the check-out counter and ask the cashier where the fitting rooms are.

Double Trouble

(The following is a long-winded story about the trials and tribulations of being identical twins, with an orienteering twist to the story).

By Bryan Teahan

Once upon a time...in a little town out in the boondocks identical twins were born to the Mahunga family. Their father went around in a daze for a day saying 'Where am I going to put them?'. They were named Kua and Kapa.

Now Kua and Kapa Mahunga had a wild upbringing out in the bush country. At the age of 9 months while taking their baby photos, one played up so much, the photographer got so brassed off he took two photos of the angelic one and combined them to make one portrait. At the age of three, they were the bane of their parent's life. One would keep a scout out, while the other would perform some mischief. At ten, when asked to do some chores, each would say 'Oh - but it's his turn.'

At school they would perform countless tricks on their hapless teachers. Their girlfriends would have a hard time too - one brother would answer the phone and listen to his brother's girlfriend for a few minutes then say 'Oh, you want my brother...'.
.

Only their closest friends could tell them apart - even their older brother was known to forget which was which. Some people would look for tell-tale spots on the face; others would say 'Hey you' or 'Twin'. Others would try to deduce their name by the process of logical thought. 'Who's the one most likely to be here at this time?' and take a stab - Of course, 50% of the time they would get it right.

After their early life, they settled down a bit. They were naturally gifted athletes always competing against each other. They tried most sports but finally settled on Orienteering as their passion - this was a sport that tested their intellectual/physical powers against each other - Orienteering evened up their minor differences.

They spent a long time learning the intricate art of navigation. At first it was a bit suspicious that they were never on form together - one did well, the other didn't, and it invariably was the one who started first who bombed out - was this telepathy? The worst thing that could happen to them in a race would be for them to join up - they could never get separated, they would make similar mistakes, take the same route choice and one could not outrun the other.

One was heard to comment once about the other: 'The person I like to beat most is my brother... On the other hand, the person I most like to see win (other than myself) is my brother!' And if you can understand that then you're a better man than I.

After a while they started to produce some good results in their own country. One would win a national event when the other would do well in trials. Eventually both got selected to run in a world cup together overseas.

In the world cup lead up races they came up against a thoroughly nasty individual from a rival country. If you were near a control with him which he had just clipped he would shout 'It's over there!' pointing

in the wrong direction. He was also renowned for sitting down with quiet introspective competitors in buses going to the start and would talk away loudly trying to put them off.

His taunts were the hardest thing to put up with. He would say 'You punks are no good, I can beat you any day' and: 'You will be still going to the first control as I'm finishing' or making jokes at our black O suits: 'Whose funeral are you going to?' or disparage members from our country: 'You run on farmland all the time - you're no good in the forest...' or 'You've got one leg shorter than the other from running all those steep hills'.

Now our meek and mild-mannered and on the whole 'nice' lads were put out by the antics of this fellow - they had never come up against such an arrogant, aggressive 'know it all' before - he was fast and liked to brag about it. Well, all these taunts started to get to our two lads, they wanted to hit back - but how could they? He was ranked 15th and they hadn't even qualified before. However, they would try their best and hope to get even one day.

During the race, Kua was caught up by the nasty bloke and they ran together for a kilometre or so through very rocky terrain. The two of them were looking for a control at the southern foot of a cliff coming from the north. They split up, Kua running above and our 'friend' below. Kua was unsure where the flag was and thought it was at the bottom of the cliff below. Now our 'not-so-nice' fellow did the classical con job and went running straight through, punching the control, and running smoothly away. Of course, Kua, who couldn't see the control, thought it wasn't there, and went running after him. It was quite a while before Kua came back to clip it.

But fate lent Kua a helping hand this day. Half an hour later, after their arch-rival had fooled Kua and was feeling very pleased with himself he spied what looked like the same person way off in the distance at least a half a kilometre in front of him. He was so put off he couldn't concentrate and blew the next 5 controls and finished last.

Of course, the person who was in front of him was Kapa, not Kua - but who's telling?

After the race Kua came up to the nasty bloke who was looking beaten and haggard. The nasty bloke said:
'You totally blew me apart. I was all over the place after that. I thought I had you sucked in too...'

Kua quipped back to him 'You know that funeral you were talking about - it was yours!'

It is fun being an identical twin in an Orienteering race...

Disclaimer: The characters and situations in this story are entirely imaginary and bear no relation to any real person or actual happening.

Bill's Addendum:

Some "facts" (my brother will probably kill me for this):

Kua is Bryan, and Kapa is Bill (me). I had the misfortune to map and set

the infamous ANZ challenge in 1987 on a map called Kapamahunga. A few years later, Bryan mapped and set a New Zealand trial on a map called Kuamahanga.

It's true that our father after our birth went around saying "Where will we put them?". He didn't know there was going to be twins until they phoned. I'm told the doctors only knew there was going to be two when my mother went into labour again about 10 minutes after Bryan was born, with another 10 minutes before I appeared. However, even though my mother was adamant, I suspect I was the one born first, and they swapped us sometime later without knowing. I can't verify this story, despite being there, as I wasn't in a fit state to comprehend at that time.

About the photographer being brassed off - he persevered and did manage to get a photo of us both. In another photo when we were about ten, Bryan was sitting hunched down, so it looked like I was taller than him. He was quite upset about it. (All my life I have been just a centimetre or two shorter than him. BTW, it took me 6 months longer to walk than him, and 18 years to beat him in a race. The first orienteering event we competed in I won, so I was hooked).

We never did any mischief like the story says. Well, some, but not much. We were two little angels. And no, we never played the fool with our girlfriends. We haven't had any.

About our "older brother" being known to forget which was which - we do have an older brother actually. Six of them. Only one of them orienteers competitively (Graham). It was he who introduced us to the sport. And it's not true that my brothers forget which is which - only some of our sisters-in-law.

The "thoroughly nasty guy" was Warren Key (Aussie, of course). He didn't go around shouting "It's over there!" but he did sit right down in the bus next to the then World Champion who was starting two minutes before him in the World Cup in Tasmania and tried to put him off by talking loudly at him.

It was Maurice Ongania (another Aussie, it figures) who taunted us about our black O suits (and how we are no good in the forest, and have one leg shorter from running around hills all the time). When he asked, "Who's funeral are you going to?" Bryan quickly replied "Yours".

The double-take trick out in the forest was actually with Ted de St. Croix from Canada on Mt. Alexander [Australia] in 1985. He did catch Bryan up and sucked him in by punching while running through a control below a cliff. About half an hour later he caught me up, and he sure had a strange look on his face. He didn't blow the next 5 controls though, and certainly didn't finish last.

And if you really want to know, I'm the one with the spot on my face (underneath my left eye).

Bill's Addendum to the Addendum:

I've had it pointed out to me by my esteemed older brother that some of my "facts" weren't. I'm probably putting my foot in it further, but I have it on good authority that:

a) at least one of our older brothers sometime in the past couldn't

tell us apart; and

b) at least one of us may or may not have had girlfriends.

So, you learn something new every day.

Are you a Nerd Orienteer?

By Bryan Teahan

Score one point for each time you answer 'yes' to the following:

- When did your last holiday not involve Orienteering?
- Have you ever said,
 'Not tonight honey, there's Orienteering tommorrow.'
or 'Not tonight honey, I'm too tired from Orienteering.'?
- Have you ever waken up at 3am face down on a map?
- Do you ever take maps to the toilet with you?
- To the doctor's office or dentist?
- Is your compass always within handy reach?
- Have you ever reached Nerdvana? (The blissful state in which you have run on 3 new maps in 3 days.)
- Do your kids teethe on string and novice courses?
- When you look at the countryside, do you see contours in your head?
- Do you ever wonder, 'Why am I so lucky having so much fun?'
- Do you have a bumper sticker that says 'I'd rather be Orienteering than working.'?

Tally your score, then cuff yourself around the ear with your compass 12 times, regardless of your total.

A Short Course in Orienteering

By Bryan Teahan

The Most Important word: Map

The Least Important word: Lost

Six most important words: Traffic Lighting: Green, Amber and Red

Five most important words: Simplification: Look for Big Features

Four most important words: Plan Ahead Route Choices

Three most important words: Orientate the Map

Two most important words: Attack Point

Two important words: Use Handrails

- As you get better at Orienteering it enables you to make a higher class of mistake.
- It is a very humbling experience to make a half hour mistake, but it is also very memorable.
- Experience is what enables you to recognise a mistake when you make it again.

The Three Laws of Infernal Dynamics of Orienteering:

You might be headed in the right direction.

You might be in the right place.

The time required to confirm these two states will always be greater than the time used for being sure of where you are and where you are going.

Onet Comment: (Allen Witt)

These times are one and the same. Perhaps it should read:

'The time required to confirm these two states will (almost) always be greater than the time used to get to where you are going'.

An Ode to an Orienteer

By Bryan Teahan

Here is an article I wrote 7 years ago in memory of an Orienteer from my club who died tragically crushed by a forklift. The club now holds an annual Orienteering event in memory of his name. The event is a Blodslitet long distance event (3 or 4 loops) called the Wayne Cretney Winter Classic held in the middle of winter.

I just won the long course (in 3hrs 13) on the weekend and the course typified Wayne's type of courses - I pulverised my lip by running into a stump and at the end could barely run as I was cramping up. There were 3 finishers among 10 starters on my course.

I knew Wayne since the beginning of the club 12 years ago - it seems like I knew him for much longer. I feel it appropriate to write a few memories about this very special man.

Wayne will be sorely missed in many ways as he was the mainstay of our club and I will remember him forever for the incredible amount of work he put into Orienteering.

For the 7 years he was a member he has indelibly left his mark forever in the lifeblood of our club. He was the rock on which the foundations of the club were laid. I remember him for:

- the very first day I met him - the very first event of the club - he ran all 3 courses and came back with that gleam in his eye knowing he was hooked - 'this is the sport for me'.

- walking around hills and valleys in rain or shine carrying hundreds of controls. For the countless, thankless tasks he did.

- for the advice and guidance of an experienced person for a club in its infancy; for being club president for 2 years and a steadying influence to shape our club's future.

- for the titanic battles he had with the members of the M40 brigade; the grade will not seem as competitive now that he's gone.

- for the trips away especially the companionship of all-night relays with seven members of a team.

- he was the perfect member of a club - always giving; always working hard in all aspects of the sport far beyond and above the normal - even sometimes to the detriment of work commitment and family life.

- for his large smile as he thundered around on his courses with map and compass clad only in his running pants and his thick bear rug of a chest.

- in the first 6 months of his Orienteering career he did the incredible: he mapped, drew, printed, and set a course - a monumental feat for a new person to Orienteering - only a person of Wayne's enthusiasm, drive and determination could have achieved this.

- for the special moments of family togetherness - the very real love between Wayne and his family - the trials and tribulations of a family

Orienteering together.

- for the courses he set - he never was the running sort of Orienteer; he loved a meaty sort of course in the most difficult part of the map - in the light green and grubby stuff, in the intricate parts of the forest and in the steep physical parts of a map. You certainly knew that when you finished a Wayne Cretney course you had passed the most exacting test possible and you could henceforth take on any challenge.

His courses were rugged, but they were the best courses I have competed on and my skill as an Orienteer will be poorer for not having him to keep me up to scratch.

It is tragic that Wayne cannot be with us anymore and enjoy many more years competing in the sport he loved. He has left many sad people behind, but we are forever thankful for having met and for having shared many moments of joy and toil with this special person who I regarded as a very dear friend.

An Approach

By Bryan Teahan

Howard Head once said 'Most people look at a tree and see a shape. I look at a tree and can feel its sinews. I feel the tree's limbs bending, its fibres bending, its lower fibres compressing. The tree is Alive for me.

I look at a map and I don't just see a shape. The contours seem to jump out to me and become hills and valleys, knolls and gullies. I can picture the roads turning. I can see fences, buildings, forest, and clearings. A map is alive for me.

What then do you see?

'As a poor map is a shabby collection of dangerous lies, so a good one is a thing of beauty and rugged integrity.'

- Earl P. Hanson

Learning without thought is dangerous.

If I hear it, I forget.
If I see it, I remember.
If I do it, I Know.

There is no better way to learn than by practical experience and exercises.

'Most Orienteers get 'LOST' pretty easily. The Art of Orienteering is in finding yourself in the quickest possible time.'

'Not till we are lost... do we begin to understand ourselves.'
- Henry David Thoreau

If you're not sure where you're going,
you're liable to end up someplace else.

Nerd

By Bryan Teahan

Orienteers asked:

"Are you an Orienteering Nerd?"
(**N**ever **E**ver **R** Dnf)

Base: 88 club members

I probably am a NERD. 10.3%

It is possible I am a NERD. 16.1%

I am definitely not a NERD. 2.3%

I am definitely a NERD. 71.3%

Source: LOSTcorp 1992

(LOST is an acronym for 'Learned Orienteering Specialist Team')

(PS. I come under the NERD category and try my hardest to never, ever, DNF no matter what the sadistic course setter has thrown at me.

However I must confess to having DNF'd. The event was the infamous 1987 Kapamahuna Australia New Zealand Challenge and I was a member of the New Zealand team! Needless to say, the course setter was my brother.

The event was held in howling southerlies ('If I step outside I'll get frostbitten weather'), where the winner of my course (M21E) did 8kms in 2hrs 20min and the last 1.5km was straight uphill into the teeth of the storm. I DNF'd after 2 hours when my map disintegrated.

I can vividly recall being totally numb and running down a raging, icy stream bed and suddenly plunging into water over my head and my map started floating away...

I also remember we had a control near a cannabis plot in the bush and I suspect my mind started wandering at about this point.

Toxicity

By Bryan Teahan.

'How Toxic Are You?

Take this test and find out.

1. Have you felt fatigued now and then for no apparent reason?
2. Have you ever felt "wooden" or lifeless?
3. Have you ever experienced drug "flashbacks"?
4. Do you have trouble thinking clearly?
5. Do you sometimes get a feeling of light-headedness or a feeling of being "spaced out"?
6. Do you feel irritable without reason or cause?
7. Do you have unexplained aches & pains?
8. Do you find it difficult to get excited about people and things?
9. Do you find you feel anxious but don't know why?
10. Have you ever experienced shortness of breath for no reason?

Drugs, chemicals and environmental poisons don't just go away. They stay in your body and can even affect you years later.

If you answered yes to 3 or less, you could have a low level of accumulated toxins in your body, affecting your ability to think clearly.

If you answered yes to 4-7 of the above questions, you could have considerable accumulated toxins, making you feel dull, lifeless and "wooden".

If you answered yes to most of these questions, you could be experiencing heavy body pollution.'

(Reference: Church of Scientology car window advertisement)

Can you believe these ads? Who would be gullible enough to respond?

Orienteering is the solution to your problems.

Go out Orienteering today and purify your body!

(Although I could truthfully say that I experience fatigue, lifelessness, woodenness, being spaced out, and aches and pains after most Orienteering races.)

Operation Desert Storm

By Bryan Teahan

'For the Gulf War, Operations placed 150 mapping workstations at various sites on duty seven days a week, 24 hours a day, from mid-November 1990 to February 1991. Working from satellite imagery, military needs were translated into maps producing image maps from Landsat data.

During Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. Department of Defense requested more than 10,000 new or updated hardcopy and digital products for mission planning, mission rehearsal, and land, sea and air operations. Covering a theatre of operations one million square miles in size, 100 million map sheets were printed in six months.'

- Intergraph Computer magazine

If we only had the same resources, we could produce 10000 Orienteering maps in 6 months!

The Devil and St Peter

By Bryan Teahan

It was the night before Christmas, 40 above in Purgatory.
The Devil and St Peter were having a drink.

The Devil was constantly challenging St Peter to an Orienteering competition between Heaven and Hell. St Peter refused until one day he discovered that quite a few great international Orienteers had entered the Pearly gates.

"Now we can arrange an event," smiled St Peter confidently.

"You'll lose, you'll lose", chortled the Devil.

"Don't be so sure", replied St Peter. "We've got a huge number of former great Orienteers in Heaven now."

"You'll lose, you'll lose", repeated the Devil.

"Why do you say that?" queried St Peter.

"Because", laughed the Devil, "We have all the planners and controllers down here."

Merry Christmas, my friends.

Onet comment: (Ed Kobos)

'I don't usually comment on your articles, but I got yelled at work for laughing too hard at your current article. Thanks'

Versatile Word

By Bryan Teahan

Orienteering: A most versatile word. By its stress and inflection, it can describe many things.

It can be used:

- as a noun: 'I love Orienteering'
- as an adjective: 'It's an Orienteering world out there'
- as a verb in its transitive form: 'I was Orienteering well'
- and its intransitive form: 'I'll be Orienteering tomorrow)
- in the past tense: 'I went Orienteering'
- and in the present tense: 'I'm Orienteering'.

Many everyday situations show its true versatility:

(Story of a man who gets away from his wife to go Orienteering when he is not allowed, gets lost, asks for directions and arrives just in time only to find it has been cancelled).

Apathy : There's no Orienteering events coming up. Life is boring.

Wonder : When is the next Orienteering event?

Suspicion : Is there an Orienteering event on this weekend?

Perplexity : I know that Orienteering event is around here somewhere.

Greeting/
Salutations :

May you spike all your controls when you go Orienteering.

Derision : You're not an Orienteer? You haven't lived until you've gone Orienteering.

Directions : The Orienteering event is over that way...

Panic : I've got 20 minutes to find that Orienteering event.

Disbelief : The Orienteering is cancelled! What am I going to do?

Resignation : Oh well, I know there's Orienteering on next weekend.

Denial : I didn't go Orienteering. I was just going for a drive.

Epitaph : I hope I end my life by Orienteering into a sunset.

The Weekend Warrior

By Bryan Teahan.

The Reasons Why I don't like Mondays:

- neckache from straining to keep awake at work on a Monday afternoon.
- heart palpitations from the 12th coffee in the last 3 hours.
- sore leg muscles - almost impossible to get out of bed in the morning.
- backache.
- headache from dreams of being an Orienteering superstar.
- nose abused from sunburn and running into trees and fences.
- laces always knotted and usually untied.
- ankle swollen from being twisted.
- body tired and hurting.
- numerous small wounds from scratches.
- equipment needed - needle to dig out all buried thorns and thistles.
- hair matted and unkempt.
- beard unshaven.
- eyes bleary and bloodshot.
- knees aching.
- joints cracking.

Why do I ever go Orienteering?

Calvin: 'My elbows are grass-stained, I've got sticks in my hair, I'm covered with bug bites and cuts and scratches...
I've got sand in my socks and leaves in my shirt. My hands are sticky with sap, and my shoes are soaked! I'm hot, dirty, sweaty, itchy, and tired.'

Hobbes: 'I say consider this day seized!'

Calvin: 'Tomorrow we'll seize the day and throttle it!'
(Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson)

The final Word in Rat Races

By Bryan Teahan.

Lately there's been a kerfuffle in the Orienteering World on the issue of 'What is the best Orienteering Area in the World?'

First came those reports detailing how 'independent' tests proved that four out of five Orienteers prefer Scandinavia as the best area.

Then an Orienteer named Contrary challenged these tests complaining that the test was only carried out on an unrepresentative sample of 24 people. Contrary argued that only the purists loved Orienteering in Scandinavia and that novice or less experienced Orienteers from other countries found the maps from Scandinavia completely frustrating and unforgiving - only enjoyable if you lived in the area. He felt that countries like Germany, Poland and Switzerland with its more Continental terrain was a better, fairer place for most Orienteers. Other areas were the untapped potential of USA and Canada, the lovely forests of the Scottish Highlands, the granite wilderness of outback Australia, the sanddunes of France and New Zealand, the rocky areas of the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the flattish forests of Denmark - there were plenty to choose from. In fact, he noted that no two maps were alike and maybe it was better to ask the question 'What is the best map in the world?'.
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At this point, the independent consultants 'Learned Orienteering Specialist Team' (LOST) stepped in to settle the situation once and for all. LOST chose a sample of 100 laboratory rats and set them loose in a water maze. They had the choice of swimming to one of several paper platforms, constructed out of paper maps from various areas. As a control, LOST built another platform with DANGER! Bosnia! written on it. The results:

- Two swam around a bit then drowned
- Eight developed the ability to survive for up to ten minutes under water in suspended animation
- 13 formed a synchronised swimming team
- 77 swam to the Bosnia platform.

LOST trusts these conclusive results will be the last word on the matter.

Bryan Teahan

PS What is the best Orienteering Area in the World? The Worst?
What is the best Orienteering Map in the World? The Worst?

Note that this article was written during the Bosnia war. To keep it current instead of Bosnia, insert the country that is currently at war - unfortunately there always seems to be at least one war waging at any time in the world.

Onet comments:

Magnus Davidson (UK) :

My answer is that the best area in the world is any one which I have never been to before. One of the greatest joys I get out of orienteering is that when I travel to another part of the world, I find that the

'playing field' has completely changed. Sandstone in the Czech Republic, Granite terrain in Australia, Sand Dune terrain in France, Alpine terrain in Austria, etc. etc. all require a subtly different bag of orienteering skills to get through. Each part of the world has its own unique challenges, unlike many other sports in which great care is taken to ensure that the 'playing fields' are all exactly the same, wherever you are.

But if you *really* want nominations for areas where I have had the most/least fun, I will stick my neck out and say:

Best: The French Coast, SW of Bordeaux

Worst: Moorlands in the English Peak District

Blair Trewin (Australia):

I'll confine this to areas I have run on.

Best area: Surebridge Mountain (US). Honourable mentions: Amiens and Kooyoorra (Australia), Knottingly and Perimeter Road South (New Zealand), Valdemarsvik (Sweden), plus a few other Scandinavian areas whose names I have forgotten.

Worst area: A tie between Kapamahunga (New Zealand) and Perham Down (S England). Kapamahunga's joys are well-known to those on this side of the world: to others, I think the M21E result from the 1987 Australia-New Zealand Challenge, won in 139 minutes for 7.2 km with 850 metres climb, says it all....Perham Down gains a guernsey for being 80% ploughed fields, singularly unpleasant to run on and uninteresting to navigate across.

Dishonourable mentions: Anything north-east of Melbourne, any NZ farmland area with climb exceeding 10%, Pinjarra Hills (W Australia), Pheasants Brush (New South Wales, Australia).

Bruce Arthur (Australia):

Deciding on the best orienteering area in the world is very difficult. This is partly because new and different areas are usually more enjoyable than old familiar areas. Consequently, I have no particular favourite map.

Australia had many great areas, including granite terrain near Bendigo and Canberra, gold mining terrain near Ballarat, the sand dunes of Cantara in South Australia, and the Pagoda areas in New South Wales.

New Zealand also offers great orienteering, especially on the sand dunes. The forests of Poland are hard to beat for pure enjoyment. Runnability is supreme, and retaining concentration is difficult due to the beauty of the forest. And of course, for orienteering at its best, Scandinavia is hard to beat.

Deciding on my worst map is a much easier task. My vote comes from a recent event organised by my own state association, less than 2 weeks ago. The map is called "Bailey's Rocks" and is on the Victoria / South Australia border.

My reason for nominating this map is that there was a stupid log between controls 6 and 7, which I managed to land on awkwardly. I heard a loud crack as I landed and a sharp pain in my ankle. The crack turned out to be the sound of my right medial malleolus cracking away from the rest of

my foot. Consequently, I now have a broken ankle with 2 screws inserted into it. This injury may now keep me out of any elite races in Australia for the rest of 1995.

Does anyone else have an injury from orienteering that can beat that?

Terje Mathisen (Norway) :

To make a serious reply to your tongue-in-cheek question:

What is the best O area? is in my mind intimately connected with the second question; what is the best O map?

I cannot really enjoy an event unless both the area and the map is good.

The best area in the world might be located on one of the maps used for the '78 WOC in Norway, outside Kongsberg.

I particularly enjoy the extremely accurate 2.5m contour lines on this map, which sometimes (when the O part goes effortlessly) makes it possible to orienteer not only to the middle of the control ring, but to know before you see the control flag, exactly where the course planner has placed it.

This way, it is possible to avoid all time loss, even those normally unavoidable 20-40m final swings to the flag.

James Pearce (UK) :

Best : Ljintjern, Halden (NOR) - the contour equivalent of sex

Newborough Forest, Anglesey (GBR) - best terrain and
map in GBR : wooded sand-dunes and a nice beach

Eggwald, Fiesch (SUI) - fast, easy, and hell fun (+ great
views of Alps)

(highly rated : any Rob P maps in Victoria, AUS, and of course WOC93
maps - all of them)

Worst : Any forest areas in North Wales (apart from Newborough!)
Any native bush areas in New Zealand
Anything in Belgium
...and yes, the Peak District moorland maps in Yorkshire!

Hope I haven't offended (or omitted) anyone!

Snakes I Have Met, Dragons I Haven't

All this talk of snakes has got me thinking of my own close encounters...

Coming from New Zealand where we don't have snakes, I was a bit nervous at first at running in the Aussie bush. (After about 50 events I now know that the chances are very remote of getting bitten).

- The first time I deserved all I got as I was 500m off course and got totally frightened by a snake sunning itself on a track. I think I did the last few km of the course in record time.

- On one of our trips to a map for training we found a discarded tiger snake skin which we hung on our window wipers.

- In the Mountain Marathon in Tasmania which was sprinkled with lakes and infested with snakes, my brother Bill and I would find it disconcerting to hear this shuffling noise near our feet.

On one occasion we had a choice to go between two big rocks or wade thigh deep around the side of a lake. Between the rocks was a big fat snake. Guess which route we chose... we got wet.

- I wondered why in the middle of summer in the beautiful Studley Park on the banks of the Yarra River in Melbourne why there were hardly any people in the park. I found out the hard way. One day running down a track I had to jump over a snake. Always curious about how a snake would react to stimulæ I stopped 3 metres away and threw a small stone near it. It pounced on it like the viper it was. My hypothesis was proven - DO NOT go near or disturb snakes.

- The surveying department where I was taking my post-graduate course also told me a lunchtime story of them taking students for fieldwork training in Studley park and having to kill an irate snake they had disturbed with a shovel after it kept repeatedly attacking them.

- Mapping an urban park in Cape Town, South Africa, I came across a snake which was only 20m from residential houses. Knowing that some people would not believe me, I took a photo keeping well away from its slowly slithering body.



- Also near Cape Town, I was mapping a sand dune scrubby area and seeing lots of field mice and I kept reminding myself - 'Lots of mice, must be

snakes'. Walking down a track, I almost trod on a snake - I instantly catapulted myself backwards 5m, and thankfully the snake also instantly went sideways.

- On safari, in Botswana, our open-air 4WD vehicle came across a vicious black mamba on the track in front of us - our driver was petrified and drove 400 into the bush to get around it. Here's a picture of our friendly driver:



So much for snake stories - what about other wildlife?

- I did see a blind kangaroo once - it had to be blind as soon as it saw me (I'm not that ugly!) it zoomed off and crashed into a tree, bounced off, diverted course and promptly smashed into another... and another...

- Watch where you put your feet when having lunch after an Australian event as big ants can give you a nasty bite. They were also a curse in the home as they would find any hole or crack in my two storey flat in Melbourne where I lived for 10 months. Unlike the New Zealand ants which like sweet things, these Aussie ants went for the meat. They particularly liked coming up through the air conditioning.

- I was completely lost once on Kangaroo Crossing (a Steve Key special map), I couldn't come to terms with all the fly specs of rocks. I stopped and looked at a 2m (6 ft) goanna lizard which was at the top of a small tree.

- Seeing a fox on a Swedish map.

- Mapping at a military school for youngsters in Cape Town, an adult was always present with a rifle to scare away the baboons from the young students. I wondered what I would do if a baboon decided they didn't like me as I was mapping all by myself.

- Having to report a 'Moose Alert' when I saw a big mother moose with baby moose at Oringen. (The organisers subsequently went out and chased the mooses away from the competition area.)

- I have never seen a live wombat. Only squashed ones on the side of roads. Maybe humans can be the worst wildlife of all.

- Finding ticks in embarrassing places after a Scottish event.

- Behind a bathroom mirror in a lodge in the Boyd National park (Australia again) I came across a dirty great big spider as large as my hand. (One of the Kiwi girls wouldn't even train when told there might be spiders on one of the Aussie maps)

- Mapping in New Caledonia, coming face-to-face with a huge huntsman spider at eye-level. An encounter like this certainly gets your heart pumping.



- I was having a shower with other competitors after one of the events in APOC 92 in Canada and I heard the story of one of the runners chased by a bear and having to shimmy up a tree.

Thank God we don't have any nasty wildlife in New Zealand - only the occasional bull, cannabis grower or hunter.

Close Encounters of the 'Friendly' Kind

- funny to watch my brother Bill doing a reverse backwoods summersault over a fence to get away from a raging bull as we went on a training run
- having a team member in a night event rescuing a girl stuck down a huge pit - she was standing on top of a live cow
- eyeballing a deer as hunters tried to shoot it
- seeing three little wild pigs with no mother - thankfully I was on one side of a fence as I was scared that the mother would go for me
- shots going off within 50m of me - I had a permit to map so I knew it was a poacher, so I silently disappeared
- finding lots of cannabis plots and hearing motorbikes nearby
- mapping a farm which had several thousand pheasants (game birds for hunting) - twice having to fight stropky males with kicking feet, beaks and spurs.

Here be Dragons

I have never met dragons but always wanted to draw one on a map to mirror what happened on some of the earliest ocean maps for unmapped/unexplored areas - the map below shows an unmapped fight area ('tiger country') with the latin phrase 'hic sunt dracones' - here be dragons - short for: you would be mad to venture into this black (white) hole on the map - the equivalent of falling off the edge of a flat earth.



Tall Stories

Bryan Teahan

Orienteering is a sport which can have some great true (tall) stories. At nearly any event there will be some competitor telling in great length and detail to anyone who will listen what happened on the course - mostly explanations of how they came to make an error and usually not their fault.

Here are some of the more unusual stories I have heard (most of them in night events and relays):

- At one night relay one team member came in late because she had to come to the help of a girl who had fallen down a deep tomo (pit) and couldn't get out. What made this rescue story more interesting was that the girl in the pit was standing on a live cow also stuck!
- There once was a world-renowned follower who at one night event was shadowing another competitor very closely for several controls. However, for some reason he lost contact and waited around for others so that he could carry on. He thought he was lucky as he quickly latched onto a group of runners, and they ran very fast on the rest of the course to finish in what he thought was a good time. He looked around the finish area and couldn't recognise anything. He soon realised his mistake - he had followed runners that were competing on the same map but for a different club and he was actually 7 kilometres from his own finish.
- At one night relay a pack of 20 runners came to a high fence that was almost impossible to climb. The lead runner spotted what looked like an old, abandoned car next to the fence. In a flash he jumped on the bonnet, onto the roof and hopped over the fence. Every single one of the pack did the same leaving the car with its roof caved in and bonnet dented. To this day the irate landowner and owner of the car whenever he sees Orienteers runs and gets his shotgun and tries to shoot at them.
- Again, the herd instincts of a pack of Orienteers came into play in this story. A group of runners were running very fast trying to keep up with the leading runner. The leading runner was running very fast and trying to keep ahead of the pack. He was not reading his map and went on the wrong side of a lake. By the time the group realised something was wrong they were 500m off course and facing a 2km extra run around a long narrow lake. One of the runners hit on a good idea and the rest followed. They 'borrowed' the canoes from a small village to get across the lake.
- Still another lake story. A small pack again were led astray by the herd instinct and ended up on the wrong side of a long narrow lake. They decided to all swim the 10m or so across the lake. This relay must have been a grudge match between competing clubs because the runners had to win at all costs. Everyone threw their maps across the lake so as to not get them wet. There was a ferocious battle to swim across the lake. The first one out of the lake picked up all his competitor's maps and threw them back across the lake.

- Another Night Relay. It was the start of the first leg of a huge night relay. All the runners had to run a small distance to collect their maps. On GO, everyone rushed to get their maps but ran in the WRONG direction. Only a few had the presence of mind to realize their error and turned around to go the right way. The spectators started yelling hysterically at them to 'go back, go back - you have to follow everyone else!' The pack ran for 1 kilometre before they realized they hadn't picked up their maps yet. The radicals who realized early what had happened and who had to overcome almost insurmountable opposition from the crowd and fellow runners ended up 5 minutes in front.

Onet Comments:

Ian Davidson (UK):

A mapper had put in a tender to map an area of which he was particularly fond. However, the orienteering club rejected his tender in favour of another company. He was very upset at not getting the contract, so he went out and built some cairns, (piles of stones), at various places on the hillside.

When the map was finally produced it had his initials in large dotted letters right across the middle.

Simon Errington (UK):

Haven't heard some of those since Bryan told me them in Denmark this summer :)

Anyway, here are a couple of moments from LOK folklore. I promise you they are both true (he would say that wouldn't he)

1) The British Championships for 1990 were held near Sheffield, about 250km north of London. A certain person drove to the event, and arrived to find there were no signs up. He then realised he had come one week too early. He drove home, and then went back the following week. The mistake on its own is bad enough, but we never understood why he told anyone about it.

2) The area around Bordeaux in France is known for its sand dune areas on the Atlantic coast. At one event the cartographer had got a bit carried away, and drew a blue border all around the mapped area. A certain LOK orienteer got a little lost and decided to relocate by running until he hit the "sea" at the edge of the map. Unfortunately, he decided to set off east. The first sea you come to by running east from Bordeaux is the Adriatic, after about 1000km.

Jean-Joesph Cote (USA):

I'm not certain about some of the details of this story, because I wasn't there, and I heard the story about four years ago from Janos Soter of Hungary, whose English is somewhat limited. If you know this story, please feel free to correct anything that I got wrong...

It was sometime in the early 1970s, and a relay event was being held at some Romanian resort town on the Black Sea. There were a couple of tall hotels adjacent to the start area, and the balconies on the upper floors provided an excellent overhead view of the start area. This was a pretty

large event, with several hundred Men's teams, and a large number of Women's teams as well. The mass starts for both divisions occurred simultaneously, from slightly different spots. I don't know if it was intentional, but the first leg of the Men's course **CROSSED** the first leg of the Women's course. The view from the hotel was...

At this point Janos had to pull out his dictionary and thumb through to find the word he needed: "spectacular".

Jordi Villar (France):

Three guys were running their first race on an IOF map in the nice but difficult site of Font Romeu (French Pyrenees). Before that, they had been running on photocopied black & white maps around Barcelona. As main information, someone had told them that roads were marked in brown on the "true" maps. So, they took their maps and ran. Two of them finished in a couple of hours. They were quite angry with the map: "There are lots of non-existing roads that lead to nowhere!". The third one did not arrive till night was coming. He had a smile on his face as he explained: "It was O.K., considering that by the 6th. control I realized that the brown lines closing on themselves were not existing roads but contour lines!".

That was four years ago. Nowadays they are classed as Elite in Spain.

Mark Sylvester (Italy):

What do I make of the story from one of the kids who I took orienteering today? He was doing his second-ever orienteering race, in the Appennines, south of Bologna. I found my course fun, but thorny. He reports jumping down what he thought was just a bank and ending up suspended in a bramble bush over a gully, unable to move. There he stayed for ten minutes, while other orienteers dashed by, until somebody noticed his cry of "aiuto" and hauled him out.

Horoscopes

By Bryan Teahan

The new year is coming up and I wonder what it will have in store for me in Orienteering in the future.

It is always fascinating to read and hear horoscopes. There must be a real art to creating them - they have to apply to anything and anybody. The horoscopes are generalised so much and over time they are bound to come true - like the prophecies of Nostradamus.

I thought I would make up some horoscopes myself.

If your sign is:

Aries:

Just now is a dangerous time for you. You are bound to be led astray by a fellow competitor. Keep your mind on the job. Do not get too flustered when the map isn't what you expect.

Taurus:

Take extra care in the trickier areas and watch out for those parallel features.

Gemini:

You must be willing to change your mind with your route choices and new paths will start to open up for you.

Cancer:

Look at all the alternatives before you decide. By going a little bit slower you will make less mistakes.

Leo:

You have the edge and the will to go on and win as only a Leo can.

Virgo:

Less haste will result in more speed. Don't be too impatient.

Libra:

You are asked to organise an event; say yes - it will turn out fine and you will benefit and learn from it.

Scorpio:

The conjunction of the planet Mars and Jupiter means it is an auspicious time for you. Your biorhythms are at their peak.

Sagittarius:

Set your sights on obtaining your Orienteering goals. Perseverance will win through.

Capricorn:

You will feel camaraderie with kindred spirits in the sport of Orienteering. Put some purpose and zest in your life - get lost in the bush with a friend.

Aquarius:

Stay mentally alert; concentration is the secret of success.

Pisces:

You have an inquisitive nature - use it to its full potential. You also have a brilliant mind which needs to be nurtured. Go Orienteering often.

Happy Christmas and New Year to all you out there.

How'ya Go? (Shona's Theory)

By Bryan Teahan

How you ever asked an Orienteer the vitally important question 'How did you go?' You are bound to receive all sorts of answers, excuses and stories. However, finishers can be placed into only a few categories:

- One that slinks away straight to the cars without talking to anyone - these ones you give a wide berth to.
- Others that walk around the finish area looking cool just waiting for others to ask how they went - these ones know they have done well.
- Others go straight to the results board hoping that they have done well but want to confirm it.
- Others wait around the results board soaking in the feeling of winning, revelling in the feeling of seeing their name at the top of the list.
- A rare few will abuse the organisers - keep well away from these until their fuse has been put out.

What sort of finisher are you?

(For these fascinating insights into the behaviour of the strange lifeform called an Orienteer I thank Shona - a spectator of many Orienteering events)