

SinS 2019 Day 3 The Wrekin Middle distance. Planners Report.

I have planned or controlled many events, large and small, on different areas over the last 40 years, ranging from Arncliffe to Wharncliffe and the Forest of Dean. Suffice to say that planning middle distance courses on The Wrekin was the most worrying and possibly least fun of all of them.

The available area can be split into two parts – the high ridge of The Wrekin to the North-East with the slightly gentler slopes of Little Hill to the South-West. The navigationally technical areas are high up on the ridge, while the lower slopes have more seasonal vegetation. There is an encampment, which is best avoided, in a key area linking the two parts. In the South-West area vegetation had a significant impact on choice of control sites for most courses. In the whole area access on and off tracks can be difficult. Some temporal vegetative estimation was needed about the height the plants would reach in the interval between sending the maps for printing and the race.

The major planning challenge was to plan courses at the correct technical level. The major planning consideration was balancing the amount of climbing with course length but giving changes of direction and avoiding the combination of fierce vegetation, excessively steep slopes and tricky rock features whilst considering the safety of all competitors.

Using two starts allowed courses up to Orange to use the track network. This was good for White and Yellow courses. The overall technical standard of the Orange course was a compromise between number of decisions on each leg and providing off-the-path options at an appropriate level of difficulty.

High Start courses had to cope with steep slopes from the off. The shortest Green courses set off, contouring along a path, before descending to the track network. Longer Green courses and above had a gradual ascent to the top of the ridge followed by a tricky descent into a technical area. All courses then went around, or over, the Little Hill area with some route choices to make about climbing or vegetation.

The results came out much as I expected with winning times close to the intended 35-40 minutes but most competitors were slower than usual. Winners were less affected by the challenges of the area than normal competitors. My biggest dilemmas were about Very Short Green, although these are not reflected in the finishing times, they are shown up in the number of d.n.f.s. Additionally, Blue 2, which I would have run, was a bit tough on the M60s, sorry chaps!

Do get in touch if you have any responses about any of this; email to adrian.pickles@gmail.com

I think I feel like competitors did at the end of the race....I am glad it's over and will avoid going back there for a while, except maybe to investigate elephant tracks, particularly ones from the last control which got closer and closer and eventually went past the finish as the race wore on.

Thanks to Andy Yeates, my very patient controller, Hassall and Lucking for prompt printing and my control team of Tony Callow, Andy Clough and Clive Richardson.

Adrian Pickles

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