

JK Day 2 – Wass Forest

By Paul Butt

It is Saturday night and I am sitting in the bar of my hotel, watching the rain beating against the window outside and wondering how I have come to feel quietly contented with myself.

The people around me have no idea how much of a relief it was not to be kicking myself with disappointment. Six months and 15 events ago I had not even picked up a compass, and to be fair it took me 3 events to work out how to use it. How crazy was I to think I could even attempt an event like this. Certainly over the last few weeks I have said, not only to myself, but out loud, “What am I doing?”

Well, as the pioneering man from Sweden, in whose memory the event exists, sadly knew only too well: life is too short not to get involved. Surprisingly it is an infectious sport. I am hooked and don't want to let go.

So, extremely naïve, very unfit and just a little bit crazy, I find myself first off on day 2 of the 2016 JK; yes, first off!! Now that is funny. The walk to the start was more complex than some of the events I have done, and yes, I did get lost on the way. My thoughts rushing around in my head: “What am I doing?” But strangely, the nerves and the tension of others around me at the start, seemed to help and calm me a little. Maybe it was the sense of not being alone in my feelings after all.

The BEEP BEEP BEEP rang in my ears, deafening the silence. We are off! “Do not follow them”, “Look at the map”, “think think”, “count steps”, “damn gone too far”. Yes Yes Yes (Harry met Sally) found my first control, one better than Horsham, all up from here. No, damn, it really is up hill from here. Surely 2 cannot be up there. Got 2 and 3, on a roll, improved on King's Forest.



Rod Mansel gathers his thoughts before the Day 2 start

Oh no, look that control it's fallen over and is hanging off the edge of the cliff. What!!! How the hell am I supposed to get up there? It did not say in the notes, bring climbing ropes. 5, Hello Rod, 6, 7, 8... this is going too well... Surely this must implode soon.

Along the road, think I will have a walk. What was that? Louise maybe, gone in a flash of fluorescent green. 23 controls... can't do it... I am dying here, Lord take me now... I am not going to make it. 9, Okay, Now you are having a laugh. That must be 60 degrees. Is there a cable car? 10, 11, 12... Oops gone too far. It's always the shorter ones that get me, 13, 14 looks easy, 60 degrees down. Well what goes up must come down, "grab tree, slide, grab, slide"...

What's that noise? Holy Moses!! The trees chasing me!! Dive... no duck... scream. It's okay. Everything is in slow motion now, push it away before it cracks your head open Dopey. 14, what, dogs!! First the tree, now I'm going to be mauled to death. Bad day to give up smoking.

A lost girl asks me where we are, and for the first time ever, I knew. Although I am not sure "Yorkshire" helped her a lot.

15, 16, 17 and 18 were all in a loop of steep boulder infested terrain, tough climbing. My legs are killing me. There seems to be people everywhere, like ants in a honey pot. 19, end of the loop. Ha, been here before must have gone the right way, or I am just used to going around in circles?

Home stretch now, I think I am going to do it, 20, 21, still hard work... those hills are draining, 22, in the thicket. No, not that one, the next. Got it.

Last one, why is everyone going that way? Surely you just go down here. Oops, bump, ouch. Yep, should have gone the other way. 23 and finished, I think I will just lie down here for a bit.



Weary competitors making their way back from the Day 2 finish