

British Schools Score Championships

By Barney Steventon Barnes

Today was the day of the British Schools Orienteering Championships, but this time the orienteering had a nice twist...A score event is very similar to a standard orienteering event but requires a very different skillset. Instead of being given a planned out course on the map, you are just given the map with lots more checkpoints (31 rather than an average of 12) and told to get as many as you can (each control is worth 10 points) in a time limit (45 minutes). If you go over the time limit, you lose points (5 per minute or part of a minute).

I was in the start box at -6 minutes with a few butterflies in my stomach. I was in the box with another girl who looked a bit younger than me. A lady was giving out dibbers. Beep. "Step forward into -5." A man cleared our dibbers and told us good-luck as I warmed up. Beep. -4 minutes. A lady checked our dibbers and quickly made sure we knew what a score event was. Beep. -3, we could pick up loose control description sheets but I wasn't wearing my control holder and as it is a score event, there isn't really much point in them. Beep. -2, a man was telling us that it doesn't matter which map we pick up. Beep. -1, we could look at the maps now! Beep. GO!

Dashing along the path, easy 1, 2 and 3. Scrabbling down the slope to 9 then back up again. Increasing my speed, I pushed further up the hill to 4 and then dived off the path and ran along the ditch through the scattered forest to 10. Then across the path I was on and down the other side of the hill through some tough brambles to 25. Up again and back on the path to 5 then 6. I then made a mistake of going for 11 straight away when I should have got 7, 12, 31, then 11. Fortunately, I had no need to regret this mistake later. So, up yet another hill to 11 then left and down the hill to a crossroads. Left, up the umpteenth hill to 31 and then back down again (missing another chance to get at 7 and 12). Another left back at the crossroads hoping to get 22 but missed the chance and just ended up at 23. Now I ran onto the forest road and continued up north. Right, left, then right off the path to the holly bush to get 19 then back on the path, right, left, 27. Then at this huge crossroads, I ran right and then right again beneath the power line to 21. Back to the crossroads then right and right again to 20. I made a fatal mistake of running beneath the power line again. Yes, open land. No, there was no path. Yes, everywhere was waist high nettles and yes, I ran straight through them. I can still feel their stings now!

I finally got off the power line's path and ran north. I got 24 then through the woods to 28. Then I ran south all the way back to the forest road. Right fork to 30. Then right, left and a long run to 17 then 29. Right to 13. My timer went off, I had 10 minutes left! Then I turned right again to 26 and 15. I then should have gone north again to 14 and maybe even 12 and 7 but now was the time to sprint to the finish. Putting all my remaining energy in, I got 8 and then finished!

Later was the reward ceremony. My school didn't win anything. Oh. But I won a GOLD MEDAL. A NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL!!!



Barney on the podium