

A new National Rankings Scheme for Orienteering in the UK

In the Autumn of 2008 the Board established a working group to investigate and make recommendations as to the purpose and nature of a Rankings system for orienteering. Interim recommendations were presented to the Board in February 2009, which were accepted, and since then the wider membership has been consulted on the underlying principles of the proposed scheme, and work has been undertaken to develop the computer software which will allow the Ranking Scheme to integrate with the British Orienteering website Results system.

The recommendations in this report are very much in line with the direction presented in the interim report, which the Board supported. The results of the consultation (reported to the Board in October) influenced the final recommendations in relation to a number of the rule variables discussed in the interim report. Whilst the volume of feedback received from members was not great, that which we did receive was detailed and considered, and the Working Group would like to thank all those who took the trouble to respond.

It has not been possible to try out (using test data) some of the rule variables on which members were consulted to determine the impact such options would have on rankings. To do so would have involved additional time and cost in terms of software development, and the Board has been concerned to get the new Ranking Scheme established in time for 2010 without undue expense.

The recommendations presented in this report therefore provide the set of “rules” by which the Ranking Scheme should operate. These rules will be integrated into the database such that ineligible event/course data cannot be uploaded to the Rankings system. Detailed procedures for event organisers to upload results data to the British Orienteering website to facilitate population of the ranking dataset will be published when the system goes live.

The recommendations concerning the use of the Ranking System for a Badge reward and recognition scheme, and for a UK League competition, will no doubt need to go before other committees to consider and implement (although there’s nothing to stop “unofficial” competitions based on Rankings data which may spring up).

The Board may wish to evaluate the success of the new Ranking Scheme in due course. The RWG considers that the recommendations for the Ranking Scheme meet the Principles and Operation objectives that were set out in the Interim Report to the Board in February. The recommendations include a suggested straightforward and low cost mechanism to monitor interest in and usage of the Ranking Scheme, and the Board may wish to undertake a more qualitative evaluation at some point in the future.

This report is clearly not intended to summarise all the work undertaken by the RWG in this review, but merely presents the group's conclusions. However, considered alongside the interim report, consultation document, and report of the consultation feedback, together the documents to provide a trail of the work done. The bulk of the RWG's deliberations have been done on-line using the British Orienteering Sharepoint website. This site provides a comprehensive record of all the work undertaken by the RWG and there is no reason why this information could not be made public (other than perhaps to remove names from the responses to the consultation document). Should the Board consider there to be sufficient value in a comprehensive report being prepared to record all aspects of this piece of work, then this can be done. However to do so will inevitably involve considerable time and effort and therefore I would ask that such a request is not made lightly. Let's face it – how many of us would actually read it?

Martyn Broadest
Chair of the Ranking Working Group
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Recommendations of the Ranking Working Group

1. The Ranking Scheme should be a benefit of membership of British Orienteering and therefore open to members only. This is in fact also a practical requirement as an individual's BOF number will be a key identifier in the Rankings database.
2. The Board has already approved the interim recommendation of the RWG that the core of the new Ranking Scheme should be a web-based single scale of rankings across all age classes, with ranking points calculated according to relative performance at an event, normalised according to the strength of the field at that event and the spread of times. Work has been ongoing to create the software to achieve this on the British Orienteering website.
3. All Level 1 and Level 2 cross country style events (including sprint and urban races) should be eligible to be Ranking events. Night, Relay, Score and other mass start events should be excluded, as past experience indicates that such events can produce anomalous results that could distort the ranking scale. The exclusion of Level 3 events is on the proviso that Clubs continue to be encouraged to register properly Controlled "colour coded" events with an appropriate range of courses at Level 2 so as to increase the number of potential ranking events. If Level 2 events instead remain largely the preserve of more significant "regional" style events, then Ranking events should instead be determined by the criteria set out in the RWG's interim report, the purpose being to maximise the number of Ranking Events.
4. International events taking place outside the UK should be excluded from the Ranking Scheme. This is because it is not currently possible to automate the uploading of such event data.
5. All competitors [who are members of British Orienteering] running TD4 and TD5 courses (or the highest technical level of course available at sprint/urban races) at Ranking events should score Ranking points. There should be no exclusions based on age or any other factors.
6. All Ranking events should receive the same points weighting. There should be no premium for BOC, the JK or other prestige events.
7. The Ranking Scheme should comprise a single scale based on all Ranking events, with a default view being by age class (see point 10 below). There should not be separate ranking scales for Level 1 and Level 2 events, for example – although it should be possible to view scores filtered on this basis.
8. A competitor's overall Ranking score should be based on the sum of their top 6 race scores at Ranking events within the previous 12 months (calculated on a rolling date basis)
9. Clubs should be required to upload results to the British Orienteering website within 7 days. Results not uploaded in that time should be excluded from Rankings calculations. This is to prevent points scored at subsequent events being altered by the late addition of results from previous events. The Rankings system should be automatically populated from the Results system – organisers should not be asked to upload results twice.

10. The Ranking Scheme should be presented on the British Orienteering website in two main ways. Firstly, a default view which allows viewers to quickly look at overall rankings and rankings by Age Class. Secondly, a self-selection filter view which allows the viewer to filter the overall ranking list by any combination of age, gender, club, association or event type. Multiple selections or ranges should be enabled (eg. All those in Club A, Club B and Club C; all male competitors between the age groups of 21 and 45; all urban sprint races [as opposed to the longer urban format]). Other filters may be developed in due course, but these are considered to be the most relevant for the time being. It should be possible to download the data from the website for offline analysis, should the viewer so wish. This function will be useful for club leagues, etc. particularly if it is possible for clubs to “subscribe” to a customised filtered view a link to which could then be embedded within their own website.
11. The Ranking Scheme should be used to bridge the gap between the proposed Challenge Awards for new-comers to Orienteering, and the Championship Badge awards available at National Events. Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards could be available each year to those competitors scoring in excess of pre-determined benchmark points totals for their age class over a given 12 month period (suggest 1st June through to 31st May as this roughly equates to the domestic O’ “season”). Awards should be administered by National Office, and comprise a token certificate or badge, initially to be sent automatically to all members with their membership renewal as a means to raise the profile of the new scheme. Once established, awards could be claimed rather than sent automatically.
12. A National League should be created, as a subset of the overall Ranking Scheme, based on Ranking Points scored at Level 1 events during the pre-determined 12 month period (1st June – 31st May suggested). Trophies to be awarded to the winners in each age class (which could be Open, Veteran, Super Vet, etc. rather than M21, W45). The aim would be to create some additional prestige for taking part in the Level 1 events.
13. British Orienteering should give priority to publicising the Ranking Scheme on an ongoing basis on its website home page and in each edition of Focus. In terms of the latter, it is recommended that class leaders be published in each edition, and League winners (if recommendation 12 is accepted) be celebrated at the appropriate point in the year.
14. The usage of the Ranking Scheme should be monitored automatically using “hit” counters on the web-page. This would be a low cost and accessible method to gain quantitative data to indicate the popularity of the scheme.