

# Embargoed Areas and non-competitive runners

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The subject of running / training on an area once it is known that it is intended to be used for an event has long been a topic for discussion. There are Rules and Guidelines regarding this, but they are open to interpretation and rely on the honesty of the individuals concerned. This document outlines the policy that Events Committee believe competitors should adhere to in order to maintain fair competition, whilst at the same time allowing the maximum use of areas for events and training purposes without compromising our largest competitions.

## Current Relevant Rules:

- Fairness:
  - 1.5.1 - The spirit of fairness and good fellowship shall be the guiding principle in all aspects of the sport, including the interpretation of these Rules.
  - 1.5.2 - Competitors shall not seek to gain any unfair advantage over other competitors.
  - 1.5.5 - Any search for the competition course or inspection of the competition area before the race is forbidden.
- Eligibility:
  - 3.1.2 - At Level 3 Events and above, competitors shall declare themselves non-competitive if their acquaintance with the terrain would give them substantial advantage over other competitors. Nothing that occurred more than 24 months before the date of the event shall be taken into account.
  - IOF Rule 26.7 - The organiser shall bar from the competition any competitor who is so well acquainted with the terrain or the map that the competitor would have a substantial advantage over other competitors.

## Current Relevant Guidelines:

- Regional Events:
  - The area should not normally have been used for an open orienteering competition in the 12 months preceding the event.
- National Events:
  - The area should normally not have been used for an open orienteering competition in the 24 months preceding the event.

## Changes Recommended and Approved by Rules Group

### Rules:

- Eligibility:
  - 3.1.2 - At all British Championship events (i.e. BOC, BRC, BNC, B Middle, B Sprint) and the JK, competitors shall declare themselves non-competitive if their acquaintance with the terrain would give them substantial advantage over other

competitors. Nothing that occurred more than 24 months before the date of the event shall be taken into account.

- 3.1.3 - At all other Level 2 (National) and Level 3 (Regional) Events, competitors shall declare themselves non-competitive if their acquaintance with the terrain would give them substantial advantage over other competitors. Nothing that occurred more than 12 months before the date of the event shall be taken into account.

Guidelines:

- National Events:
  - The area should normally not have been used for an open orienteering competition in the 12 months preceding the event.

How should these Rules and Guidelines be interpreted?

- 1) The Rules on Fairness cover anyone intentionally trying to gain an unfair advantage. In other words blatant cheating such as deliberately training on an area once it is known that it is to be used for a major event. Anyone behaving in such a manner will be disqualified.
- 2) The Rules on Eligibility only apply to Level 3 events and above, so include Regional and all the major events, but do not apply to District or Local events.
- 3) The reason for the 24 / 12 month Eligibility rule in Britain is so as not to penalise mappers, planners, controllers, etc. who may otherwise not take on roles which would bar them from an area for an unspecified period. (note: For a World Ranking Event (WRE) the IOF Rule applies and this has no time limit concerning when the advantage could have been gained. Furthermore, for a WRE action should be initiated by the event organiser by being pro-active in barring anyone who has such an advantage).
- 4) It is the responsibility of the competitor to decide whether or not they should declare themselves non-competitive. If they are in doubt then they can seek clarification prior to the event from the Chairman of Rules Group.
- 5) Any competitor who believes that someone has not declared themselves non-competitive when they should have done can make a complaint to the event Organiser. This will then follow the due process documented in the Rules.

So when does acquaintance with the terrain give substantial advantage over other competitors?

Event Officials

- Mappers, Planners and Controllers clearly gain a substantial advantage through working in the terrain so should declare themselves 'non-competitive' if they enter an event within the 24 / 12 months of the event that they were responsible for.
- The status of the Organiser of an event will depend on their involvement in the forest. Often the Organiser works only up to the Start line and from the Finish line and will see no more of the forest than the average competitor. As such they need not necessarily declare themselves 'non-competitive' at subsequent events on the area.

Competitors at previous events

- For British Championship events and the JK the 24 months of not being used since a previous competition means that anything related to previous events on the area should fall outside the 24 month eligibility rule.

- For all other Level 2 (National) and Level 3 (Regional) Events the 12 months of not being used since a previous competition means that anything related to previous events on the area should fall outside the 12 month eligibility rule.
- It is the responsibility of the individual Clubs not to organise any type of event, even a Local event, within the time limitations indicated. If they do so then any of their members who take part in such an event should declare themselves non-competitive.
- Sometimes events do take place within the timelines stated by the Guideline, with the approval of British Orienteering Fixtures Group, often due to late changes to event locations or dates. If you take part in a registered open event under such circumstances then nothing gained as a competitor at that event will be considered as a limitation unless clearly stated at the time of that event. e.g. if an area is to be used later for a selection race then those wishing to take part in that selection race would not be eligible to do so if a restriction was made known at the time of the earlier event.
- Two open events in a multi-day event on the same area are deemed to give the same advantage for all competitors so do not present a problem.

#### Other uses of an area

- Areas used for regular running or training, using paths that criss-cross the area (not forgetting walking the dog!). Likewise living on the map. In both cases as a competitor you would have familiarity with the area which could be considered a substantial advantage. If you find yourself in this position volunteer to be the Planner.
- Competing in a cross country race on an area. e.g. Gloucester League races in the Forest of Dean. If this follows a pre-determined and marked course through the area with no navigation, no route choice and no map then this would generally be deemed acceptable.
- Events such as the Cannock Chase Trig Point Race and the Surrey Hill Race with some navigation, some route choice and possibly a map are acceptable if the degree of navigation is minimal and the route is entirely along footpaths.
- Areas used for GCSE PE assessments - participants probably have no choice of venue/area chosen for their coaching exercises and examination assessment, and will be specifically restricted to the exercises that they are asked to do. This is acceptable.
- Areas used for national, regional or locally organised club orienteering coaching sessions - the Club on whose area the coaching is taking place should be aware of the fixture plans for their areas and not allow an area to be used that will place the participants in a situation that requires them to declare themselves 'non-competitive' at a future event.

In summary, competitors should use their common sense and, particularly where important events such as selection races are involved, avoid putting themselves into the position where they could be judged to have gained an advantage. Furthermore, the responsibility for doing this lies with the competitor themselves.

#### What is an embargoed area and when does this come into effect?

The purpose of an embargoed area is to give notice to prospective competitors of an area which it is intended to use for an event, in order that they can avoid accidentally putting themselves into the position of gaining a substantial advantage and therefore falling foul of Rules 3.1.2 & 3.1.3.

An area should be considered 'embargoed' once it is known that it is to be used, either through publication in the fixture list, event advertisements, or an official announcement through British Orienteering e.g. publication on the Embargoed Areas section of the web site.

Any activity on the area after this point would then be considered as attempting to gain an unfair advantage and the offender could be disqualified under Rule 1.5.5.

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