

AOA/Docs

27 Mar 09

All BAOC Members

ARMY TEAM SELECTION

GENERAL

1. I have been approached on several occasions regarding the selection for the Army Team for the Inter-Services. I thought it would be useful to reissue the notes that Chris Sanderson wrote last year regarding the importance of racing a civilian events as well as military events in order to broaden your experience and opportunity to compete for your Service.
2. Note that the Inter-Services Match serves as the selection race for the Combined Services Team, if personnel are unable to run due to other commitments/operations, then the Combined Services Team captain will make a judgement as to how those places are filled.

DATES AND EVENTS

2. Dates for the Inter-Services and Combined Services events are linked to the 'November Classic' and 'BUCS Championships' respectively.
 - a. Inter-Services - Sun 01 Nov 09 in the New Forest area.
 - b. Combined Services - tbc
3. Key national and regional orienteering events can be found on the BOF website <http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk>, although the key ones are probably the British, JKs, Scottish 6-days and Compass Sport events. Any local or regional events will also provide useful experience.
4. I'd strongly commend you to go on a skills course/planners course held at Longmoor throughout the year. Both Chris and I attended the Adv Skills course (run by Dave Rollins) and it was extremely beneficial. Dates and details can be found on the BAOC events page or contact Colin Dickinson directly.

SUMMARY

5. Many BAOC members will be already competing at the British Long Championships, British Relays and other national and regional events (including the JK next month). The results give the team captains the opportunity to select a strong team for the Inter-Services – so don't think your efforts are going unnoticed! Keep up the great work

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NOTES¹ ON SELECTION FOR THE ARMY ORIENTEERING TEAM FOR 2009

1. It is notoriously difficult to select an orienteering team, as everyone is capable of a disastrous run when all other indicators, such as fitness and mental preparation indicate that everything should go well. Team managers, therefore, and we are no exceptions, tend to look for two key qualities:
 - a. Consistency.
 - b. Quick recovery from mistakes.

2. Given the varied nature of orienteering terrain and the infinite combination of factors that can trip up even the best orienteer, these qualities are rarely gained without considerable experience. The Inter-Services Match always takes place in conjunction with a civilian event, usually at Regional (age group) level, although occasionally at a District level event, in which case a longer (Black) course will be put on for the men's race. As a sound grounding, the military leagues are hard to fault. However, they rarely use terrain or courses of the same quality as the civilian events used for the Inter-Services Match. When they do, a combination of local knowledge, few courses out and a need to make them achievable for the average competitor can favour the fast but less capable orienteer. We have noticed that the expected order on a military event has often been reversed when the same runners attend civilian events, and the more capable orienteers are able to use their skills to better effect. A number of runners, who perform well in the Divisional Leagues were not included in this year's team, as there was no evidence, and considerable doubt, as to whether they could complete a difficult civilian event successfully and ahead of the other Services' runners.

3. How, then, do we tell whether you are likely to perform well on challenging, unknown terrain? There are a few combat indicators, in order of preference:
 - a. **Championship Standard.** British Orienteering awards the Championship Badge to those who perform consistently well at the highest level of national competition each year. To be awarded the badge you must get a qualifying time (roughly, within the winner's time + 25%) on the Elite, Long or A courses in your age class in at least three of the National Events. One qualifying event must be either the British Championships or one individual day of the Jan Kjellström (JK) Easter event. In 2008, only two people eligible for the Army Team appeared on the Championship award list, which is a noticeably worse situation than in previous years. Performance at this level indicates a high level of ability in coping with the most extreme orienteering terrain whilst, importantly, producing peak performance when it really matters: against the toughest competitors in the biggest competitions.
 - b. **Gold Standard.** British Orienteering awards a scale of badges (Bronze, Silver and Gold) for consistent performances in the Regional and National events. To qualify at Gold level you must get within 125% of the base time for the course in at least three events over a two year period. The base time is the average of the first three runners' times. Gold is currently the minimum standard considered for selection for the Army Team. Note that simply achieving the award once is not enough, as it is relatively undemanding for a

¹ Taken from the 2008 notes by Lt Col Chris Sanderson dated Nov 08

competent and fit orienteer: we expect to see consistent performances within the Gold time range.

c. **Split Times.** Split times are very useful in identifying how bad individuals' mistakes are and how well they recover from them. Fast splits, with a few long times in between, worry us. They indicate that you may be quick but that you probably aren't tailoring your speed to the difficulty of the control and that, having made a mistake, you are not recovering well from it. As an example, Dave Rollins won the night event at Bulford on the 17 Oct 07 without recording a single fastest split, indicating a high degree of consistency and the ability to adjust his speed to the navigational demands. On the rare occasions he made a mistake, he recovered quickly. By contrast, someone who managed to win one leg (and clearly has the basic speed) actually finished in 32nd position, after other controls saw times roughly 600%, 600% and 100% slower than the fastest; with 24 minutes lost in total.

d. **National Ranking.** In an attempt to compare orienteers' performances across the whole country, British Orienteering produces a national ranking list. It is based on performances at Regional and above events during a rolling year. It is not used extensively for selection purposes because of systemic difficulties in comparing events, which can lead to some orienteers gaining proportionally more points from relatively easy, poorly attended events than from good quality ones. It does, however, tell us who is regularly attending civilian Regional events, so that we can examine their actual results in more detail.

4. Ultimately, if you don't challenge yourself by taking part in more demanding competitions, we find it difficult to judge your potential. Our top tips for increasing your chances of selection in 2009 are:

a. **Get out to civilian events.** The more, the better, and make sure that they are both challenging and relevant. A District event in the easy terrain of Thetford will be assessed as less demanding than the British Championships.

b. **Run the Long courses.** There's no need to run M/W21E, especially if you're M/W45, unless you really feel that that is where you belong. However, the Inter-Services Match will be run on M/W21L courses and it is no good doing well on courses half that distance/winning time. We don't encourage the older runners to run down an age group regularly, but the odd run on M/W21L will help us judge fitness and the ability to cope when tired.

c. **Recce.** Once the area for the 2009 Inter-Services Match is known, make sure that you get to as many events as possible in similar terrain. As it may only be announced fairly late on, cover your bets earlier in the season by getting around to different areas.

d. **Get on Army and Corps tours to multi-day events.** These are often abroad in very different conditions to the UK.

e. **Show that you can perform when it really matters.** Select a few key events and aim to peak for them. Nothing impresses us like a good performance at the British Championships.

f. **Don't wait until the last minute to stake your claim.** Establish a strong position early in the season and let the others have to try to displace you. We are more impressed by

those who can produce consistently good performances throughout the year than by those who can do it for a month before selection.

g. **Most importantly, talk to us about your goals and results.** That way, we are better able to judge your actual performances and advise you. Try, however, to avoid just making excuses for poor results either before or after the event. We accept that everyone has a bad run every now and again, and sometimes it is outside of their own control. Ultimately, though, we are only interested in performance, irrespective of any mitigating factors. The truly great still have problems, but they perform well despite them.

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