



## The OMM Festival 2019, Event Planners Report – LITE, BIKE and TRAIL RACE

This was my third year planning the OMM LITE & BIKE and was due to be my second bash at the Trail Race. I was hoping to re-run the events in the Forest of Dean but unfortunately our bid was thwarted because of Goshawk nesting activity, long story! Stuart then approached me to see if I'd be happy to run the events in Cannock Chase, although familiar with the terrain the distance from home would prove time consuming so I decided to see if anyone would help out and take on the Trail Race planning. After a couple of phone calls I discover Paul Dodd, ironically from the Forest of Dean, had some spare capacity and was willing to help. More from him later.

Cannock Chase is quite a bit smaller than the Forest of Dean, so in terms of scale I was happy it would work for the LITE but knew there wouldn't be enough real estate to keep the elite riders busy for 7 hours! I initially plumped for a 1:30,000 map which would include a large chunk of Footpaths & Bridleways on the farm land to the north. However following my first day of recceing I discovered the Rights of Way (RoW) network was poorly defined and a mud fest after wet weather. On reflection my thoughts were who'd want to come to an event titled Cannock Chase and spend most of their time running or cycling around muddy Staffordshire field, thinking cap back on.

With my mind made up to keep everyone predominantly in the Chase I had to opt for a complex course on a 1:25,000 map and try to place the Controls off the beaten track. However map accuracy would be key, the RoW in the Chase on OS base map are very poorly aligned and don't show type of track ie width & surface. What I had to opt for was a complete remap of the forest areas. There was a lot of FootO mapping of the area to give me a starter but this still left me with several trips up in all conditions checking and mapping of the area. Still kept me busy through the winter and I can think of worse jobs!

With the Base maps starting to come along and initial placement of Controls done I still had to work out how to keep the BIKE course big enough for 7 hours, complexity would slow riders down a bit but I needed another solution. Throughout the winter Black Mountains MBO based in South Wales run 3 hour Small Area Format (SAF) courses. This allows a course to be set on an A4 1:25,000 but requires two laps of the course if you are contemplating a course clearance. I checked the concept with Stuart and we made the BIKE Map SAF, it would have blue and red controls on it, riders choose which colour controls you want to collect first, then at any time swap to the other colour, but can't swap back. After setting the day one map in this fashion I measured the distance at 115km, similar to last year's distance so coupled with the complexity of the course it should work.

Following the initial recce Paul concluded that Cannock Chase offered a good variety of running terrain: pebbly tracks across open heathland, winding single track, biking trails, grassy and muddy footpaths in valleys, shady forest tracks, popular walking trails and fine vistas on open ridges (if you have time to look). Of course, as always in life, what you can achieve is ultimately a compromise and there were obviously limitations on what was possible due to the SSSI status of most of the heathland, the many roads in the area and access issues. Paul's said his trips up to plan the routes over the winter and early spring were an absolute pleasure, he was very happy with how it unfolded and was pleased with all the positive feedback you gave him.

Well done to all the runners and riders, some fantastic results were posted over the week end and I have enjoyed analysing the times on the OMM Website. Some fantastic efforts all round, I was particularly

impressed with all those LITE Day 1 runners who managed to bag over 30 CPs of the 36 on offer on day 1, more controls and SAF next year for you lot!

As mentioned before, I was anxious the Long Bike was not going to be challenging enough. With the trails running dry and many of the top riders on blistering form I did expect a clearance. I did breath a small sigh of relief as the 6 hour mark passed, when Ian Cartwright, Mark Rowley, Mark Morgan plus Liam & Rachel Drew all came back early I was glad we had the bonus point system in place.

Apologies to all those that stumbled on the Day 2 CP34, the two courses are taped up weeks in advance to make setting up easier for the volunteers. But in our defence the two locations were two ridges apart and about 600 meters away, so you were slightly out on you nav so we weren't able to award the points.

Now for the Oscars' Speech Bit – Firstly a big thank you to Stuart for trusting my judgment with the Small Area Format and allowing me to plan the events again and to Emma for all her fabulous support. To my helpers who set the LITE & BIKE courses, manned the Info Desk & the Start Line thanks to; Anne Nicholson, Chris & Paula Porter, Dave Tipper, Emma Battensby Gary Davies, Jeff Mew, Jason Bennett, Lisa Welbourne & Kate Darlington. A massive thank you to Paul Dodd for taking the bulk of the Trail Race planning from me and his team Mike, Den, Bry, Hils, Cherry, Gerry & Sue. Fantastic work and we couldn't have done it without you.

We'd also like to thank Steve Archer at Staffordshire CC & Joe Smith at the FC for assistance with making the permission process as smooth as possible.

Thanks to all for the positive feedback. We're glad you enjoyed it and see you next year.

Siôn James