

2018 League Proposals

Introduction

There has been considerable debate over the last few months over the future format of the NGOC League. Over the last couple of years we have expanded the league programme first to 12 events and now to 10. We have added variety in the form of urban and sprint events, sociability in the form of the cafe, and a regular string course for children.

There are two principal areas, (one a concern, one an opportunity) that we have not yet addressed; excess physicality for older runners is an increasing concern. The other area is a perceived lack of a suitable development path for both improving youngsters, and fit newcomers looking for a good run, but with simple navigation. The range of courses we offer currently provides a TD3 Orange, and then a big step to TD5 Green and Blue courses.

The purpose of this note is to lay out proposals for the 2018 NGOC league, for discussion now and at the AGM, with a view to agreeing a format for the 2018 season.

Current Status

In 2017 we will have organised 12 league races, including a forest sprint event. The current plan is to offer 10 league races in 2018, one potentially a forest sprint.

The league format consists of 4 courses – Yellow (TD2), Orange (TD3), Green and Blue (both TD5), with 7 events to count towards the league championship. We have maintained this format unchanged for many years, and it has proved very successful in attracting good numbers of regular attendees. For a 10 event league 6 events will count towards the league championship.

We have consciously pushed the length and physicality of the Blue course towards the top end of British Orienteering guidelines for this course, in order to provide a good challenge for younger, fitter, runners. This has sometimes led to similar increase in the physicality of the Green.

League events are now classified as Local events, (rather than “Level D”), which for the purpose of this proposal means that they do not require a Controller, do not qualify for BOF ranking points, and require minimal infrastructure. They should however conform to BOF planning guidelines.

Although the format of the league has not changed significantly for many years, the resources required to run each event have increased hugely, so that where 3 or 4 people could run a league event a few years ago, now we typically have 12-15 helpers at each event, and sometimes more.

One other consideration that needs to be taken into account in this discussion is the range and diversity of other events that we now organise. Where once we offered a New Year's Day and Chairman's Challenge Score events, a few 'Informals', a couple of WNL night events, and a SWOA Galoppen, we now provide all these, with training days taking the place of Informals, Summer evening and Winter night street events, and R2T2 trail/biking events. All of these activities place a significant burden on the club's volunteer resources.

Club Objectives

One other consideration needs to be taken into account in looking at the future of the NGOC league. We have tried a variety of strategies to maintain and improve the vitality of the club, by increasing membership and participation. Our current strategy is two-fold: to target active runners, and families who might fancy having a go at orienteering, and to provide facilities at our events which help to improve the sociability of the sport, and offer something for all family members, not just the active parent or child. What we do for the league needs always to be aimed at delivering something towards to these objectives.

2018 League Proposals

We plan to organise 10 league events in 2018.

This note proposes the following changes to the league:

1. We add a fifth course, either Short Green or Light Green, to bridge the gap between TD3 Orange and a long-ish TD5 Green. **Which we add can be discussed.** It's worth bearing in mind that although Light Green is a TD4 course, and Short Green TD5, in practise, in our areas, very few courses and legs actually achieve TD5 standard, particularly at the lower end of the distance range, where there are very few long legs. We could argue, therefore, that whatever we call it, the course will in effect be a Light Green course (length guidelines for the two courses are identical).
1. Where facilities permit, we make league events Regional, (formerly "Level C" events), rather than Local events. The principal consequences of this are that a Controller is required, as are toilets, and competitors who are BOF members in the top year of classes M/W16, and older running TD5 courses only (i.e. not Light Green or below) would qualify for ranking points.
2. Again where practical, we add a 'trail' course – of long yellow standard, it would be perhaps 8-10km in length, and would cater for runners for whom navigation is either disliked, or simply not a skill they currently have. It would form a development pathway for R2T2 competitors.
3. We review progress at the end of next year, with a view potentially to expanding the range of courses further to match the 8 offered at Galoppens.

Why the change?

1. It recognises that the current Blue has evolved to challenge younger, fitter, runners, whilst the Green is often too taxing for older ones.
2. It creates an 'intermediate' course – Light/Short Green, usually TD4 - to act both as a shorter course for older competitors, and a development step for improving orienteers. Whilst older runners may feel that a TD4 light green is 'easier' than they would wish, bear in mind that most of the legs on our current Green and Blue courses are only TD4 anyway.
3. It enhances the scope of league events and helps to sustain Regional status for those events where we can meet the infrastructural and organisation requirements.

What does this mean in practise? Given our constraints in volunteer resources, we would need to ensure that we accomplish what may look like a significant increase in effort with minimal extra demand on those resources.

Given current levels of league event staffing, there is no reason why this change would necessitate having more helpers at league events. It is unlikely, in the short term, to result in a large increase in participation, and if/when it does, the current staffing levels will probably be sufficient for most events.

Looking specifically at event roles:

1. Planning/Organising etc: not significantly different from today, other than formalising the current adviser role into a Controller role where required. Where a Trail course is offered, this would have a separate planner, but would share the overall infrastructure, organisation and possibly some controls of the league event. We would need to look in detail at how this would work in practise.
2. Course setting: Planners would have to be encouraged to stay with current control numbers when setting courses. There is no reason why a modest increase in the number of courses offered should result in many more controls being needed.
3. Parking, assembly set up etc: No change.
4. Registration: Initially no change, but if participation grows then an additional helper may be required.
5. Technology: Again no change unless numbers increase dramatically. For Regional events, there is more post-event work required, to submit ranking data, and this skill needs to be disseminated to

more people.

6. Start etc: no change, unless numbers explode, which is unlikely. The trail would be managed separately.
7. Download: covered by technology.
8. Control collection/wrap-up: No change, provided planners stick to sensible numbers of controls.

Other Considerations

The number of league events will not change. This will, however make it easier for our Galoppen also to be counted as a league event, as the range of courses available will be closer than it is today. This is intended to be an evolutionary rather than revolutionary step. It should not place a significantly greater demand on volunteer resources than at present, particularly if managed carefully.

If we adopt this change, wholly or in part, we should also look separately at how we also enhance the sociability of our events, and so help draw in people by whom orienteering is currently seen as a bunch of old people wandering around in funny clothes by themselves, and then going home. An enhanced cafe, and of course things like the string course, will always help in this respect.

The club planning guidance and event checklist would need to be updated. We would schedule some informal courses to help planners understand how best to minimise the effort required to organise/plan a league event, and to ensure a consistent standard for the league.

Summary

This proposal arises from a number of conversations in committee and in the NGOC cafe at events. We are always looking to try and improve our events, and to encourage more people to come and have a go. There are no doubt lots of other things we could be doing. Please do take time to think about what we do, and how we do it, and come to the AGM prepared to discuss, comment on, and criticise these proposals, and help us come up with a plan for next year.