

British Orienteering Rankings Workgroup (RWG)

Interim Report to the Board – 25 February 2009

Explanatory Foreword

This interim report presents a summary of the discussions to date by the RWG. The report provides an overview and an indication of the direction of travel in which the RWG is moving, but not a final destination as there remains further work to do to finalise various operational aspects of the scheme. The Board is invited to comment on this direction of travel, which the RWG will then take into account in completing its tasks. Further explanation of the thinking behind each of the conclusions that the RWG has drawn will be provided in the final report.

However, the RWG has reached a conclusion about how the core of the future ranking system should operate, and this report seeks the Board's approval to proceed with aspect of the new scheme without delay. This work can be conducted without prejudice to the elements of the scheme which are still to be finalised.

The RWG has conducted the majority of its work on-line through the British Orienteering Sharepoint website, but members met last Saturday for their first face-to-face discussions. I apologise for the short notice of which Board members will receive this report, which is as a consequence of the timing of that meeting. David May and Neil Cameron who both attended the meeting on Saturday will be able to speak to the report at the Board meeting.

Given the short period of time since the RWG meeting, the Board is asked to treat the information contained within this report with discretion for the time being, until the RWG has had the opportunity to shape the proposals (if accepted by the Board) into a form suitable for wider consultation.

The RWG comprises Martyn Broadest (Chair), Scott Collier, Barry Elkington, Jon Hollingdale, David May, Steve McLean and David Rosen. The Board is asked to note that Mike Forrest and Owen Lindsell who were originally nominated to the group have withdrawn due to other commitments.

Martyn Broadest
Chair of the RWG

Shortcomings of the existing Ranking Scheme

Broadly speaking, these can be summarised as follows:

- incompatible with new event structure
- little competition in certain age classes devalues rankings
- relatively small proportion of orienteers compete in sufficient ranking events
- generally limited interest amongst orienteers, possibly arising from poor promotion and recognition

The Event Structure Review Group made recommendations as to how they saw a new Rankings Scheme operating in future. The RWG has considered these recommendations in the context of the wider scope of the group's Terms of Reference.

Recommendation 1:

The RWG believe there is considerable merit in providing a credible and authoritative national ranking scheme for orienteering, and British Orienteering should invest appropriately to achieve this.

Purpose and Objectives for the Ranking Scheme

PRINCIPLES

The ranking system should be...

- Inclusive
- An overall measure of ability
- An incentive scheme that encourages participation and links with existing or future other incentive schemes
- Fair, credible, authoritative and widely accepted representing an accurate assessment of comparative performance
- A single ranking scale
- As simple and understandable (as possible given the above criteria)
- Up to date and responsive to recent performances

OPERATION

The Ranking system should be...

- Used for publicity and public relations
- Filterable, including the capability to use data for other purposes
- Have content that is downloadable which can be used flexibly
- Easily accessible
- Of use in seeding for major events
- Can provide data on a subscriber basis, with user defined reporting / filters
- Able to produce aggregate data such as a club league
- Able to produce individual / group progression data over a given period of time, based on snapshot data recorded at pre-determined intervals
- Fully automated and easy for event organisers to upload information
- Updates of results can be uploaded
- Integrated with events and results systems

- Updated after each event uploaded, but snapshot taken once a week at a pre-determined time

Core of the Proposed Ranking Scheme

There is unanimous agreement amongst 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. This would be a development of the maths behind the existing ranking scheme and indeed the IOF World Rankings.

This approach is compatible with the new event structure, addresses many of the shortcomings of the existing ranking system, and is flexible to accommodate those areas yet to be finalised which are described below. Development and testing of the algorithm and software programming is likely to be a time consuming process, and given that the operational aspects of the system (discussed below) can be finalised independently, there is no reason why the development and testing work cannot proceed straight away.

Recommendation 2:

It is recommended that the Board endorse the single ranking scale approach and instruct the RWG in conjunction with the Chief Executive, to draw up a detailed specification for the algorithm and software programming, and to discuss and progress implementation with British Orienteering's website designers.

Presentation of the Ranking Scheme

The ranking scheme as proposed above would result in all orienteers who complete the requisite number of ranking events, being entered into a single ranking scale.

The RWG envisages that the ranking scheme will be presented on the British Orienteering website in an interactive fashion such that users can filter the database by a range of different criteria. Such criteria might include age class, club, association, event type, event level, and so on. The RWG also envisages that there will be the facility to set up and store user-defined reports, even down to selecting individual competitors to create mini-leagues. As well as this interactivity, the RWG envisages that a number of default views or lists will be available at the "click of a button".

The interactivity described above will also provide the facility for individuals, clubs, associations and others to download ranking data which they can use for their own purposes, eg. Gallopen leagues, offering significant time savings compared to how such leagues are calculated currently.

Recommendation 3:

It is recommended that the Board instruct the RWG to consult relevant committees and the membership in general on the range of criteria by which the ranking database can be filtered, the default views/lists to be available, and the wider uses to which the data could be put.

Designating Ranking Events

The RWG has considered the new event structure as implemented in the context of its objective to increase participation in the ranking system and by association, the number of ranking events available. It has concluded that it cannot widen the range of events available and keep within the simple confines of the three level event structure as it stands.

Therefore, the RWG proposes that Ranking Events be designated according to whether the event meets certain key criteria, and not according to event Level. The RWG has given consideration to what these criteria might be and has concluded that they should include the following:

- accurate timing and punch checking by officials (normally through an electronic punching system)
- Cross country format (excluding mass and chasing start events)
- Results to be provided in electronic format and uploaded within target timescale
- Maps to be pre-printed
- Event to be run in accordance with British Orienteering Rules and Guidelines.

These criteria have been identified as those which specifically impact on the nature of the race and the factors included in the ranking points calculation.

All level 1 and 2 cross country events will automatically meet these criteria. A proportion of level 3 events could also meet these criteria, and clubs would be asked to self select events as Ranking Events, on the understanding that results will be uploaded in the required format and timescales. The RWG estimate that between 300 and 400 events per year could meet these criteria.

The RWG does not propose, at this stage, that any events should receive a greater weighting for ranking points purposes. To do so effectively marginalises points scored at the lower weighted events to a very significant extent. The RWG considers that there are other more effective ways of encouraging participation at premier level events. However, we recognise that weightings may be required in future, and therefore the software should be developed so as to allow this flexibility in future.

The RWG proposes that results on all TD4/5 courses at eligible events be included in the rankings (to include all adult courses at Sprint/Urban races which might be of a lower technical difficulty). Courses of a lower technical difficulty are considered to be aimed at beginners and/or are likely to produce results which would disproportionately affect ranking point scores. The RWG also consider that other incentive schemes (such as the colour standard badge system) provide a more appropriate recognition of competitor achievement and progression at this level.

Recommendation 4:

It is recommended that the Board instruct the RWG to consult relevant committees and the membership in general on the criteria to be used to determine whether an event can be a Ranking Event, whether weightings should be applied to particular events, and what are the appropriate courses on which ranking points can be scored.

Eligibility for Rankings

The RWG envisage that only members of British Orienteering (national or local) will be eligible to be ranked.

The RWG considers that the current mechanism of “best 6 events to count” will continue to serve the new Ranking scheme well.

The RWG consider that Juniors should not automatically be excluded from the Ranking Scheme. If junior orienteers are good enough to run a ranking eligible course, then they are good enough to be ranked. M/W16 and above automatically compete under existing age class guidelines on TD4 level courses and above.

However, the RWG recognises that there are legitimate concerns about juniors progressing too quickly following the “carrot” of competition, and would wish to consult more widely on this issue.

Recommendation 5:

It is recommended that the Board instructs the RWG to consult the wider membership about eligibility criteria for the Ranking system.

Recommendation 6:

It is recommended that the Board instructs the RWG to consult with relevant committees regarding the inclusion of juniors in the ranking system.

International Events

The RWG believes that for the Ranking Scheme to be credible in needs to reflect the performances of all British orienteers. To exclude some of our top athletes because they choose to live and/or compete largely abroad, would result in obvious gaps at the top of the rankings.

The proposed ranking scheme is compatible with the IOF World Ranking system, and it is proposed that British athletes can gain ranking points where they have been selected to compete in a WR event.

Recommendation 7:

It is recommended that the Board instructs the RWG to consult with the membership in general as to whether international performances should be eligible for inclusion in the Rankings scheme.

Integrating the Rankings with Incentive Schemes

The RWG recognises that Development Committee have been charged with looking at incentive schemes across the sport. However, as the ranking system itself is an incentive scheme, the RWG has considered where it could sit within an overall approach.

The RWG considers the colour standard system to provide the most appropriate approach to recognition of achievement at TD3 level and below, with some overlap with rankings at shorter courses as TD4/5.

The proposed Ranking scheme could become the primary measure of progression above this level, and the WRG considers that the existing Badge scheme (gold, silver and bronze) could be revised to link with the system. Championship badges would continue to be exclusive to Level 1 events and awarded based on % time as at present.

The ranking scheme could be used in other ways to create calendar defined leagues or trophy competitions, either at a national or more local level. Such an approach, if sufficiently promoted and resourced, could provide additional competition incentives within the sport.

Recommendation 8:

It is recommended that the Board notes the potential links to other incentive schemes identified by the RWG.

Rankings Working Group
23 February 2009