

Know your sport: Post-race analysis

So you have finished your course, downloaded and got your overall time and a list of the time to each control. Perhaps you feel that you did okay. You wander across to the display of the course results or check the results later at home on the internet - and perhaps you feel disappointed that you were not higher up the results. So what can you do to assess your performance? Here are some suggestions.

Analysis at the event

The first thing that you can do is to talk to others and find out their opinion of the area, the map and the location of the controls. As every area is different and as planners have their individual opinions on the best location for controls, it can be illuminating to hear from others. Was a control easy (perhaps visible from a distance) when approached from one direction but less obvious when coming from an alternative route? Did others find a control marker in a pit set so low that it was only by luck that people found it? Or was the map not quite right at a critical track junction? These comments can help you put your own opinion into the correct context. Perhaps it was not so much your own error but a general problem with a particular control.

Analysis at home

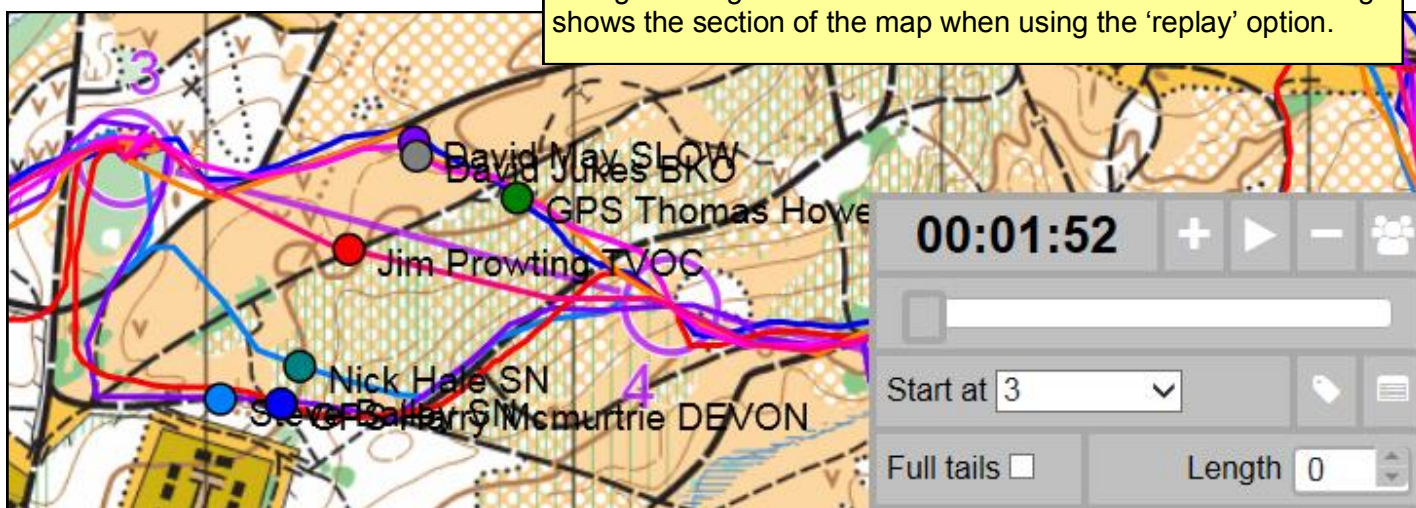
Route choice analysis

The decisions you made when under pressure and running through the terrain may have seemed correct at the time but, in retrospect, better routes may become clear. Take time to study the map. Most people will draw their route on the map (if they know where they went!) and then look for better options. Would a more direct route through the wood have been quicker? Or could you have gone around a hill rather than over? For urban events, it can be particularly difficult to identify all the route choices when competing and new options will become apparent when spending time checking again when back at home. Of course the objective is for this analysis to make you more aware of the things to consider when out at the next event.

Rather than just doing this yourself, the website 'RouteGadget' greatly enhances your ability to assess alternative routes and is a great additional tool. The organisers can upload the map and the results (with the split times) to RouteGadget and then competitors can find their own result and plot their route onto the map. When complete, the route is saved and then can be seen by anyone who looks at the event site. It also uses competitors split times to enable you to watch how people have gone around the course.

An extra 'replay' control panel becomes available when this is selected for some competitors as shown in this example...

Example: Concorde Chase 2016
Barossa - Blue course: controls 3-4
Here it can be seen that there were options of going to the north (the routes have obscured a minor path which made this an attractive option), going direct as chosen by Jim Prowting or taking the longer route round the tracks to the south. This image shows the section of the map when using the 'replay' option.



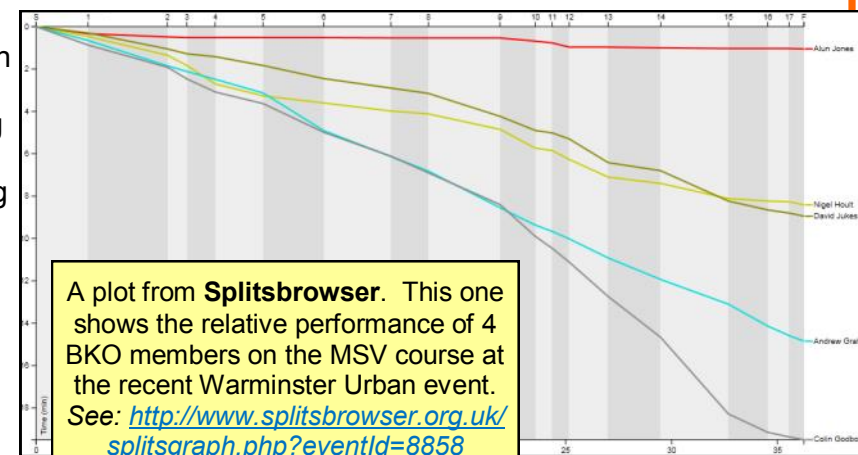
To access this site, go to:
<http://www.routegadget.co.uk/>

Split time analysis

As a competitor's time is recorded at each control point, the organiser has available everyone's split times. This is also usually published which enables you to compare your own time for each leg with every other competitor. An analysis of your splits in comparison to those of other competitors will give you a much better idea of your performance.

You do not need to do this manually as, once again, there are tools available on the internet. The event organisers usually provide a link to these sites alongside the on-line results, but they can sometimes be accessed directly at the URLs shown below. The main ones are:

Splitsbrowser: Shows in graphical form how much time you were behind the fastest person on each leg. The graph shows you gradually slipping further behind the best split, dropping down the page as time plots from left to right. A 'glidepath' plot shows you were orienteering consistently, just not as fast as others (try speeding up, perhaps?). A 'staircase' plot shows you were fast, but prone to big errors (try slowing down a bit?). See: <http://www.splitsbrowser.org.uk/>



A plot from **Splitsbrowser**. This one shows the relative performance of 4 BKO members on the MSV course at the recent Warminster Urban event. See: <http://www.splitsbrowser.org.uk/splitsgraph.php?eventId=8858>

EMIT splits: These are numerical totals of all split times and positions, plus total race time and position at each control, plus an indication of time lost on individual legs. Unfortunately, they are not laid out very clearly, and can be rather turgid to work through. See: <http://www.emit-uk.com/>

WinSplits: Only used with SI events, gives excellent layout of split times and positions throughout the race. Also highlights your time in pink on any leg where you lost significant time ("a pinkie"). If you completed the course with no 'pinkies' then you've run well! Easy to see how race positions change throughout the race. Sometimes you can be surprised with a good leg to gain a top 3 split, highlighted separately. Look for and take encouragement from sections of the race where you had good splits in succession. This is the elusive 'flow' round a course that we all seek. See: <http://obasen.orientering.se/winsplits/online/en/>

Using GPS data

As technology has advanced so it has become possible to obtain data on your precise position at all times during an event. By carrying a GPS data logger, you can obtain much more precise information about how you have travelled between controls and not just the total time. You can assess much more accurately how much slower you travel through a 'slow run' area in comparison to a runnable forest, how long did you stop at a path junction as you decided which route to take or what proportion of your lost time was in the final hunt for the control itself.

You can find out exactly where you've covered the ground. Sometimes we finish (or even retire) without understanding where we went wrong. GPS data never lies, but can be hard to believe! Major mistakes frequently start with one small initial error that causes a mis-read, which then causes another as we try to make the ground fit the map. GPS data helps us understand the initial error, and we can then seek to avoid that next time.

You can see inefficiencies in your routing, particularly on contoured areas. What seemed like a good line can turn out to be more distance or climb than you thought. When used on RouteGadget alongside GPS routes of your competitors, particularly good ones, you can quickly see how non-optimal your routes may have been by comparison. If so, consider revising your routing strategies.

Finally, GPS data gives a very clear indication of the accuracy of your compass technique. If you are not running close to your set bearing regularly, there may be weaknesses in your technique, so try to sort those out at training sessions. Alternatively, blame your tools and buy a new compass!

Important Note:

Although you are permitted to carry a GPS enabled device with you during an event, the rules of orienteering state:

11.5 The use of any artificial navigational aid other than a compass is not permitted.

11.6 Competitors are permitted to only use a GPS device to record data for use in post-race analysis.