

Lagganlia 2011

I will start off by saying that this was one of the best weeks I have ever had. I was nervous beforehand. I didn't know anyone and I wasn't sure whether I would enjoy it. But after the first evening, playing football with everyone, I suddenly realised what a great week this would be.



The Lagganlia 2011 group on the first day

On Sunday we were focusing on pacing and bearings. Now I have to admit that I don't use either on a normal green course in East Anglia but in Scotland you really need them. When you are training on a certain thing, you really have to concentrate on doing that and not use the technique that you might normally use for that leg. If you treat it like a normal race you won't get better at the technique you should be developing. In the afternoon we did a short course and a fun clock relay. A clock relay is where there are three in team and each team has a toy. The first person takes the toy out to the first control and comes back. The next person takes the toy from that control to the next one. It keeps going like this until you get back to your first control and the last person brings it back to the start. When we got back to the camp we did some fun races, like piggy back races and shuttle runs.

Monday was all about visualisation. In the morning we did an exercise where we described to our coach what we thought the leg was going to look like then run it and come back and say if what we thought it would be like was what it was like. We then did some 1 kilometre time trials on track and terrain. In the afternoon we didn't do any actual orienteering but

we had a map of a field and over lunch we had to write down what we thought it would look like then go and explore it to see what it did look like. After that we went into the woods and played a game that was sort of like hide and seek. The coaches went and sat somewhere and when we found one of them we had to put a pin prick on our maps where we thought they were. After that we went back to camp and did some ultra sprint courses. This is a really short course in a maze or in our case a maze of tapes!

Tuesday was probably the toughest day. It was in one of the most famous areas in Britain, Culbin. The map was strewn with contours. What made it harder was that they were 2.5m contours, so what you thought were massive inclines were half the size of what you thought they were. In the morning we did exercises based on attack points, reading fine contours, long legs and simplification. If you want to learn about contours then this is the place for you! The afternoon was less hard work, we did a 1.3 kilometre course in a low visibility part of the forest and an odds and evens relay, which those of you who have attended East Anglian squad training sessions will know all about!

Wednesday was all about race preparation. What you should eat before a race, reading the final details to get any hints about your course (eg. if you cross a road) and making sure you give yourself enough time to get to the start. There was a qualifying sprint race in the morning around a bit of well contoured forest. The fastest 6 boys and 4 girls would go through to the A final the rest would be in the B final. I was disappointingly in the B final but did a lot better in the final on a forest and urban sprint race around the camp. Except for the finish where I went to the wrong control and as I realised and tried to turn around I skidded on the gravel and fell over! The afternoon was easy. Trying out the rings at Baddaguish (8 rings suspended over a pond), I got halfway across then fell into the water. After that we had a swim in Lake Morloch which wasn't as cold as I thought it would be.



The final day of training was definitely the wettest. It had rained overnight and made the heather very wet. In the morning briefing we had to draw a sketch map of the course we were going to do, then run it just using what we had drawn. It was difficult because I couldn't judge distance very well because I hadn't drawn my map to scale! We then did a couple of exercises in pairs. One we had to explain to the other person where to go while holding the map, the other we had to memorise the leg and then run it while our partner held the map. This is very useful because if you can memorise the leg you don't have to look at the map so often, which slows you down. We then did a peg relay. This is where there are pegs at certain points on the course. If you get a peg you then have to do an extra loop to go to the next control. The person with the most pegs wins. At the same time there were coaches out there trying to put you off by running the wrong way and shouting things like "It's over here!"

The last day was a classic race at Batten. It was a 5 kilometre course with 250 metres of climb! You don't see that in East Anglia. I came 7th out of 16 with a time of 59.32. It was really fun doing the last 6 controls where there were five of us running together. And as I sat back on the train going home chatting with my new friends I knew I would definitely be a much better orienteer for going on this trip and that I might never have a better week in my lifetime. Lastly thank you to East Anglia and SUFFOC for paying for some of the costs of the trip and putting me forward for selection for it in the first place and the junior squad coaches for teaching me the skills required.