

Junior squad report – 22 June 2012 – prepared by Mark Hennessy, Rebels Coordinator

Food/fund raising at events

The **junior tent and catering** have operated at SS events at Macedon, Irishtown and Porcupine Ridge. The Eureka Challenge events in March were not supported because it was early in the year, longer distances from Melbourne, and the logistics of catering on multi-day events at a distance from home.

The catering continues to offer toasties and drinks, and now includes cakes thanks to the leadership of Nicola Dalheim following the retirement of the Eureka cake stall. This now provides a one-stop shop for hungry or thirsty orienteers, yielding a more substantial revenue stream. A decrease in the number of single-day SS events may mean a decrease in sales opportunities.

The work in the tent is now shared substantially by the kids themselves, under adult supervision. There is a strong spirit of willing cooperation and cohesion developing, and it is good to see some primary school age kids feeling at home in the Junior Squad Tent. They don't need to be asked to help set up, pack up, or run the show.

Coaching Support crew

Anne Robinson continues her role as overall catering coordinator and treasurer, with Nicola Dalheim coordinating the cake aspect of the operation. There is willing cooperation from several parents. I currently arrange for storage and transport of the tent and some equipment.

Steve Bird announced at the recent selection trial that he is planning a training camp near Bendigo in the school holidays. Steve Doyle has also expressed a willingness to organise some informal training activities for juniors.

Communication

I believe that there is a need for concentrated focus by the OV Board to improve strategic planning, communications, goal setting and monitoring of progress across our promotion and development activities generally. One of the main challenges is to integrate and leverage promotion and development initiatives more fully into our bush orienteering activities, and to generally make the sport more attractive and welcoming to newcomers. Street orienteering has done an excellent job of this, and Melbush has been a great initiative. For example, we need to be more consistent in providing affordable pricing for juniors, and in planning the event calendar to provide frequent, accessible, easy-to-organise bush or (bushy park) events at key times of the year, especially in autumn.

Participation

A bumper crop of 26 juniors sought selection for the Victorian Secondary Schools Team. The team comprises 15 members plus 5 travelling reserves (see P and D report for names). Six

candidates could not be fitted into the team, in contrast to two last year and none the year before. While this is hard on the kids who missed out, it is a healthy sign to have stronger competition for places. About half the candidates are juniors who took up orienteering without/preceding parental participation in orienteering. The remainder are second generation orienteers. Bendigo orienteers comprise four of the nine junior boys and girls, reflecting strengthening links between the Bendigo J Squad and the Vic schools team, and the successful transition from space racing to bush orienteering. The team is very strong in three age groups, and we expect some good performances from the junior girls, two of whom are new to the team.

Second selection trial held in conjunction with a Bendigo Classic Event

The second selection trial was brought forward from August to June to enable cheaper air fares to be purchased for Tasmania in September. For the first time, the trial was held before a regular Bendigo Saturday event at Castlemaine, using the same controls but different courses. This saved a lot of time and effort by a few people setting up a stand-alone event. It generally worked successfully. I am very grateful for the Bendigo Club for accommodating the trial, and in particular to John Wilkinson for his enthusiastic and flexible collaboration.

Advantages: no need to organise a separate event, with a separate lot of SI gear. More efficient use of volunteer and P & D Officer time.

The Bendigo kids are accustomed to orienteering on a Saturday, so it was a smoother transition for them. Saturday is the most common bush orienteering day in Victoria.

The younger Bendigo juniors got to see the trial, thus setting an aspiration for them.

Generated stronger links between the Bendigo junior programs and the Rebels squad. Up until now, the two had operated largely in isolation from each other, although Peter Creeley and I regularly exchange information.

Disadvantages some kids have school sport on Saturdays. But many others have Sunday commitments.

No other disadvantages.

Recommendations for next year's second trial:

1. Continue to run the trial before a suitable Bendigo event
2. Bring forward the start times to 11 am (first start) to provide better temporal separation of the trial from the club event (first start at 12.30).
3. Investigate the feasibility of using Courses 2, 3 and/or 4 from the Bendigo event, without alteration. This saves volunteer and P & D officer time, reduces the risk of clerical errors, makes it easier to have sufficient maps, makes results handling smoother, and enables comparison between juniors' times and established/aspiring competitors on the same courses (a challenge for all, especially parents of candidates). The Bendigo course setter may be willing to adjust the Bendigo courses to suit the trial.
4. Appoint a controller for the trial to provide timely, coherent, authoritative advice on technical and organisational matters.

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