



Course Format Changes Explained

We know that many clubs and course setters are confused by the course format changes going on internationally and within USOF, possibly discouraging them from bidding for Championships. While we have tried to keep up with international standards by expanding our allowed course format offerings, we have done a poor job of training our volunteers in exactly what those different formats entail. Eric Weyman has been working with the rules committee on this issue.

Below is an excerpt of some of his work, giving basic information on the four primary formats currently used for individual orienteering - Sprint, Middle, Long (known by many as Classic in the US), and Ultra Long. Hopefully, the initial publication of this information will be useful to clubs and course setters looking to expand their course format offerings. --Clare Durand

SPRINT

EMPHASIS: High speed orienteering.

TERRAIN SELECTION: Sprint terrain must be very runnable, with geometry that is complex at high speed. This can include urban, campus, parkland, and some forested terrains. Denser and more urbanized settings can create additional concerns with mapping, permissions, and policing.

COURSE PLANNING: A Sprint course should combine high speed map reading and quick decision making with technically easy controls. The challenge should be in navigating through complex environments at high speed, to control sites which are technically easy for advanced level orienteers. Controls should be primarily on advanced beginner (Yellow) level, or intermediate (Orange) level sites with nearby relocation options. Courses should include changes of direction, route choice as the terrain allows, and promote spectator opportunities. Unlike other formats, organizers may allow spectators throughout the course.

MAP: Scale- 1: 4,000 or 1: 5,000 with a proportional contour interval, typically 2.5m, or other intervals if explicitly approved by Sanctioning Committee. ISSOM (Sprint mapping) standards are encouraged for denser, urbanized settings. Otherwise, ISOM standards shall be used.

WINNING TIME*: 12-18 minutes for M/F 21, preferably in the lower end of this range, similar or less for other classes. If part of a multiple-course day, winning times for M/F21 should be reduced to 5-15 minutes.

MIDDLE

EMPHASIS: Technical orienteering.

TERRAIN SELECTION: Middle course terrain should be very technical, or at least as technical as possible for a given region. Technical difficulty should be created by the presence and complexity of details, not the absence of features, or their lack of definition. Variety in the terrain character and vegetation conditions is desirable. Suitable terrain for beginner courses must still be provided.

COURSE PLANNING: The Middle course should be full of technical orienteering. Courses shall promote detail intensive navigation and use technically difficult, but fair, control sites. Variety in the terrain conditions, leg lengths, and changes in direction are desirable. Route choice is desirable, but not at the expense of reducing the technical challenge.

MAP: Scale- 1:10,000. Contours- 5m or 2.5m, or other intervals if explicitly approved by Sanctioning Committee. ISOM standards apply.

WINNING TIME*: 30-40 minutes for M/F21, similar or less for other classes. If part of a multiple-course day, the winning times for M/F21 should be reduced to 20-30 minutes

LONG

EMPHASIS: All orienteering skills.

TERRAIN SELECTION: Long course terrain can vary by region, but should contain some technical interest. Variety is always desirable. It is also desirable to have either pleasant vegetation, or route choice possibilities around thick vegetation. The terrain should not be excessively hilly, thick, or dangerous. It should be large enough to accommodate a suitable M21 course, but also must contain a section suitable for beginner courses.

COURSE PLANNING: Long courses should provide as many challenges and variety as the terrain allows. Route choice and long legs should be featured, as well as changing conditions and leg lengths. Technical difficulty should be generally high, but easier sections can contribute to change of pace.

MAP: Scale- 1: 15,000 encouraged for M/F21 courses, but if not practical, 1:10,000 is acceptable. For all other classes, 1:10,000 is standard. Contours- 5m or 2.5m, or other intervals if explicitly approved by Sanctioning Committee. ISOM standards apply.

WINNING TIMES*: 80 - 100 minutes for M21, 70-90 minutes for F21, less for other classes. If

Long courses are conducted on consecutive days, winning times should be reduced to 70-80 minutes for M21, and 60-70 minutes for F21 with other classes proportionally shorter.

ULTRA LONG

EMPHASIS: Endurance, route choice, and rough map reading.

TERRAIN SELECTION: Terrain for Ultra Long courses should have high route choice potential and/or good rough map reading. Excessively thick or stony areas should be avoided.

COURSE PLANNING: Ultra Long courses shall feature long legs, and route choice legs. The courses may contain a variety of technical difficulties, but no controls should be set solely for technical challenge. ISOM standards apply.

MAP: Scale- 1:15,000 (encouraged for M/F21) or 1:10,000. Contours- 5m or 2.5m, or other intervals if explicitly approved by Sanctioning Committee.

WINNING TIME*: 140-180 minutes for M21, 120-150 minutes for F21. For other advanced classes, courses should be proportionally longer than standard Long courses. For intermediate (Orange) and advanced beginner (Yellow) classes, proportionally longer (than standard Long) courses may be provided. For beginners, a standard length Long White course should always be provided.

*estimated or target winning time for US 100 point M/F21 runner, other classes proportional. For all formats it is desirable to design the best course possible within the range, rather than striving for the exact middle of the time range.

