

Organiser's Comments

Our initial plan for the weekend was to base the whole event in the Speech House Hotel field, and we booked it well over a year before the event, to be sure of having it. This, it turned out, was fortuitous, as for the past few years it has always held the Forest Food Festival during the last weekend of September. They were somewhat put-out, but declined our offer to share the field, and that now happens this weekend.

It soon became apparent, though, that with a number of new Forestry England Out of Bounds areas being defined quite near SpeechHouse, and with some very short legs in the VHI relay, keeping the relay changeover in the field was a non-starter, and so we made an early decision to move the arena to the so-called Go-Kart track in the forest, leaving just parking in the field; track parking was considered but ruled out as interfering too much with the potential event areas.

The other key decision we made – quite late on in the end, and after a great deal of discussion – was to stick with a Chasing Start for Day 2 of the Caddihoe. It has been dropped from recent Caddihoe weekends, but we felt that it would be good to retain some form of Chase, for the last non-DEVON Caddihoe weekend. We debated several alternatives, none universally popular, and so decided to reprise what we did successfully in 2014 – a combined Caddihoe and VHI with a proper Chasing Start on Day 2.

After lots of work, by lots of people, it all came good in the end, and the plaudits from all of you overwhelmingly outweigh the complaints and 'grouses'. That is due to an army of volunteers, many not getting a chance to run, turning their hands willingly to whatever they were asked to do. Being there early to set up, and staying late to move things around and take things down. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Amongst the highlights were the most impressive overnight map correction operation prior to Day 1 – described in the Planner's notes. My initial reaction when I heard about it at about 9pm on Friday was – no chance – but an hour later it seemed achievable, and indeed it was. I heard mixed views on it at download, but overall I think more people appreciated it than did not.

Secondly, the Chasing Start ran very smoothly, despite the little sticky 'bibs' being difficult to unstick from their backing paper, and the generator giving up half way through; it still wont start despite cleaned plug, a good spark, and clean new fuel. In fact power supply was nearly a big problem – both generators died, then the battery backup pack did too – so we ended up running on a small inverter in my car. It pays to have plans B, C and D for some things.

On the downside, the caterers did very little business, being necessarily left in the parking field due to problems getting FE licences for them at short notice. And at least 11 people were stung by hornets or wasps, no one could say quite what, in an area crossed by several courses. Lap On Leung, HOC (also known as Andy!) was particularly badly affected, and had to be carried out of the forest to a waiting ambulance. He is most grateful to Stephen Sutch, SOC, and Howard Thomas, BOK, who gave up their runs to look after him and report back to the Start, and to Tom and Tommie Mills, Tom Cochrane, and Ian Phillips, all from the Start team, who helped to get Andy out to the track and thence to the ambulance and on to Gloucester Royal Hospital. Both Andy and Serena Ludford, BADO, also hospitalised, to Lydney Minor Injuries Unit, were discharged the same day, so no lasting problems, and we have reported this to Forestry England for further investigation, lest this is an invasive species.

Finally, on a slightly unsavoury note, an 8 year old boy was in collision with a much older competitor at some point during Sunday. These things can happen, no intent on either side, but it is most inappropriate for the older runner to shout at the boy, call him stupid, and leave him very upset.

Huge thanks to everyone who came; we hope you enjoyed your visit to the Forest of Dean, and will be back again sometime soon.

Pat