

Approximate translation of the Skogssport article on Better Orienteering, from Swedish to English by Duncan Bayliss

The original article was based on an interview with Duncan Bayliss by Skogssport journalist Victor Lundmark

<https://betterorienteering.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/better-orienteering-skogssport.pdf>

Duncan Bayliss: Started writing something and then it just grew

After being amazed by how much beginners in his region continue to make mistakes in orienteering Briton Duncan Bayliss wanted to find a way to help people get better at orienteering.

The university lecturer started writing a guide which then later resulted in the website Better Orienteering. Now contributions have come in from all directions and the education project continues to develop.

Q - Where do you start if you have to explain the whole orienteering sport?

It has been a very interesting problem, because there has been lots of good material and lots of bad material out on the internet. For someone who just starts figuring out what orienteering is all about it can be very confusing to know where to start looking. If they find one good source, they still don't know how to find others. What I tried to do is to connect material together, gathering support from different directions and direct it to everything from pure beginners, on to different skill levels. I think the best way to start explaining orienteering is something in the style of the introductory film that South London Orienteers have produced. It shows the basics and then it's just a case of go out and give it a try. When you have then gained some experience, it is easier to understand what is being covered elsewhere on the website.

Q - You have tried to explain how the sport works through the website Better Orienteering. Can you tell us about the idea behind the website?

For a long time, I pondered on the fact that many people as they orienteered five, ten or even twenty years still made beginner's mistakes. They seemed to have problems with getting the right basis in their orienteering technique. I tried to understand why it was. The problem seemed to be the foundation was not laid properly - things like always have the map facing north, always make sure you have the right starting point from the control, having regular contact with the map etc. They didn't do these things reliably. I thought we needed a clear way to help people see that they have to always do these things reliably to orienteer successfully. And beyond that there is stuff that is worth knowing how to do, to build your orienteering. I started writing something and then it just grew. From the beginning it was about adult orienteers who seemed to have trouble grasping what they needed. For some, there were no problems, but for others it was more difficult. We tried to get

people to read books or conduct discussions in connection with club training, but it was an approach that had its drawbacks because this feels a bit like going back to school. But orienteering is about having fun, it's sports, after all. When you start you might not want to sit down and read a book, although there are several really good books available. So, I thought we needed something that says: "This is what you need to think on". Then people can go through the material when it suits them, and then come back and try to apply it to reality.

Q - Why do you personally want to help people to get better at orienteering?

Basically, because I love orienteering. It is not more difficult than that. I have orienteered since I was ten years old and it is great fun. I have orienteered in the UK and around Europe, and it's something that is so much fun I enjoy sharing it. Since starting friends and acquaintances want to join in the project. Several different people within the British orienteering community have contributed in one way or another way to this project.

Q – How have you managed to get so many people involved in a relatively short time?

It started with a guide and I felt that I wanted to post it on the Internet, so I started building a website. About the same time South London Orienteers published a great series of movie clips. I talked to them and then we agreed to collaborate. I built the website and put their movies in there. Quite quickly there was a decent amount of material there.

I tell every British orienteer I know and ask them to look at what I have been doing and think about what they could contribute. People were very generous and said, "What do you think about this?" Or "Maybe this guide?" I have continued to add material as people come up with tips.

Q - Have you worked with this type of educational platform before?

I lecture on geography at university and teach environment-related subjects. I have also taught cartography. I have made web material for university students, but it is only those who go to university and study the specific courses that see the material. I have built some websites for students and thus have some experience of web design. It was helpful, because what we realized when we analysed the student webpages was that we live in visual times. You need an extremely clear structure so that people understand where to look. Then they start in different places. It's not like a book. Instead, they start with what seems most interesting. It is always movie clips that they go to first. Then they zigzag through the site. So, the key is a clear structure and a lot of visual material. It seems to be how you catch university students' interest. When they are worked through the webpages, they can begin to immerse themselves in books or other forms of material. I've been trying to apply the same setup here to Better Orienteering.

Q - Can you briefly explain how the website works?

Basically, it starts with a "New to orienteering" section that will help people who really do not know anything about the sport or who have only tried a few times. It is about understanding the basics. I have tried to present it so that they can access the information in several different ways. They can read, they can watch movie clips and they can download guides that can be helpful. Hopefully then one of the ways fits their understanding and it becomes clear. After that, there is a structure that goes from basic technical knowledge to more advanced skills, so that people see that there is a

structure they can follow. If they look at the basics and feel that "I have that in mind," they can move on to the steps further ahead. That's the idea.

Q - Is there any particular section you are extra proud of?

I don't know what people think, but I'm very pleased with the information on basic orienteering technique, the Basic Navigation Routine and the Intermediate Skills Tool Kit. I have tried to create something very visual about the visual challenge it is to orienteer. Orienteering is not just about words, but about understanding something like a 3D image. After starting with such visual basic material, I hope it will get easier then to have a conversation where people see what you are talking about.

Q - Do you have any thoughts on how the website should be developed further?

A section for teachers who teach children orienteering in school. In that context, it is about explaining what resources are available and which parts of the website would be most useful for them. Then it would be nice to have more advanced contributions from elite orienteers, if I can find people who want to tell you how they managed to take their orientating to a whole different level. And a third thing would be to be able to add short introductions in the languages spoken in other orienteering countries. A Swedish home page for example. Although many Swedes can speak English, it is an advantage if there is an explanation in their own language.

Q - What is the ultimate goal of Better Orienteering?

It's just to help more people learn to enjoy orienteering, it is that simple. Better Orienteering started out mostly as a fun thing, then it got bigger and bigger. When I added the movie clips it looked better and then I just kept posting things!

VICTOR LUNDMARK