

## **Water on Courses**

Parts of this article has been rehashed form a previous article in the SA Orienteer in an effort to encourage competitors to help both themselves and organisers. This follows issues being raised about placing water on courses at OASA Council, in part arising from the significant effort required to do this at carnival evens in 2002.

### ***For the Competitor***

My personal solution for this issue is to carry my own water in a 500 ml drink bottle in a pouch on a belt, and I have been doing this for several years. Having lived in warmer climates this also was often an essential item on longer training runs. Other methods for carrying your own water is to use a couple of the 250 ml pop-top bottles in which fruit juices are now sold in some supermarkets, and fitting them into pockets sown on the back of your "O" pants or a belt.

By carrying your own water several eventualities are covered eg other competitors having drunk all the water before you reach a water control, being able to have a drink when you need it and not when the course planner perceived that you might, or becoming lost and never finding the water control. After working in the finish at the 2002 carnival, another factor was revealed. Several competitors at these events failed to punch controls where there was water, presumably because they drank and then forgot to punch before continuing. Although the standard procedure at water controls should be PUNCH FIRST, DRINK SECOND, if you are carrying your own water, this is no longer an issue.

Providing water for competitors on courses is perhaps an issue for which we should take some responsibility ourselves. By carrying our own water we will reduce the workload for course planners and organisers. In addition, we should all ensure drinking adequately hydrates us before we start on a course (drink around about 30 minutes beforehand).

A selection of water bottles and pouches are available from many good camping or outdoor shops. Several people have indicated to me that when they first run with a water bottle they found it inconvenient, or they didn't like the extra weight. However a 500ml bottle filled with water will add only a little more than 0.5 kg, so the extra weight as a percentage of body weight is minimal. Try running with a water bottle on your training runs to accustom yourself to it.

### ***For the Course Setter***

Current rules regarding placing water on courses as outlined in the Orienteering Australia rules for Foot Orienteering are as follows

- If the estimated winning time is more than 30 minutes, refreshments must be available at least every 25 minutes at the estimated speed of the winner.
- Refreshments should be at controls where feasible. If not at controls, they must be located such that refreshment points meeting the above requirements are available on any reasonable route choice without significant deviation.

Hence currently the water is preferably at a control or a place which competitor has to visit on route, and not somewhere they may choose to visit (unless they abandon the course), and most courses require at least one water control.

For the course setter placing water on courses may become an onerous task, especially in areas with a limited track network. However the effort can be reduced by planning the water controls whilst planning the courses rather than leaving them as an after thought and adding in at the last minute. To make life easier for the course setter, water controls can be planned to be on or near tracks or accessible locations. For example follow a good long leg with a shorter easier leg finishing with the water control. This may necessitate easier legs on hard courses, but I would not expect most competitors would be too concerned about this if the remainder of the course is well planned.

The number of competitors carrying their own water has been increasing, and hence the total water allowance on a course can probably be reduced slightly as less competitors will require it.

Prepared by Robin Uppill