

Orienteering for England - Interland 2016

Introduction:

The "Interland" competition is an international orienteering event where teams from England, France, Belgium (French-speaking and Flemish-speaking) and the Netherlands compete against each other as individuals for one race. The competition however, is mostly a team effort, and there are prizes for first placed team overall and for the first placed youth team, which is the main target for the competition. This year the event was held in Belgium by the Flemish-speaking club VVO.

Selection:

Myself (Niamh Hunter), Rosie and Daniel Spencer were the only members from our club (West Cumberland Orienteering Club) to try out for selection this year. In order to be selected for Interland we had to complete a minimum of 3 out of the 4 selection races that were chosen by Orienteering England. The first selection race was held at Ogden water in Yorkshire. Only Rosie and I attended this event as Daniel was running for England on that day against the other home nations at the Junior Home International competition in Northern Ireland. The terrain was partially forest with a section of open moorland in the middle of the course; I really liked the course as it was a very nice area to run in despite being quite brambly. In this event Rosie came 4th on the Light Green but 1st in her age class W14 (which is what counts) and I came 1st on my course – Green. The second of the selection races was held down south near Southampton. Daniel and Rosie attended this race. Daniel came 4th on his course but 2nd in his age class M16 and Rosie came 3rd in the W14 age class. The third of the selection races was held a little closer to home on Bethacar Moor in the South Lakes. Unfortunately for this event the weather was horrible and rainy and we were running on open fell so got no protection from the weather but we didn't let that faze us. Rosie came 2nd in W14, Daniel came first in M16 (and won the Blue) and I came 1st in W16. The final selection race was held at Winterfold down near London. Only Daniel and I travelled down to this event as Rosie had completed the three out of the four events she needed to complete. The terrain was forest with a lot of short ups and downs. I made a silly mistake at my number two which cost me some time but I managed to find my control and then carry on quite quickly. In this event I came 5th in W16 but 3rd out of the people who had a chance of being selected and Daniel came 4th in M16 but 2nd out of the people who could be selected. In the end we all managed to get selected along with other orienteers from around the country to run for England in Belgium. (Many thanks to our parents for taking us all around the country to these events and to Cockermonth School for their continued support.)

By Niamh Hunter (W16 – running W17 at Interland)

Travel to the event:

On a sunny Friday afternoon at the end of half-term, I took a seat next to one of my best friends, Niamh Hunter, on a coach that would drive us all the way from our pick-up point near Beaconsfield to the Interland Event in Belgium. This was my first time representing England and I was pretty nervous, as I only knew a few of the people I would spend my weekend. The first part

of the journey was fairly quiet as people started to get to know each other (again, for most people). The ferry crossing was quite smooth and, once we were in Calais, it was a relatively short journey to the Youth Hostel that we would spend our first night in. It was a nice hostel, and I was sharing a room with my teammates who were running the same age class as me. That night we received our England tops; I got a red and white running t-shirt.

On the morning of the next day we visited the city of Ghent before carrying on to make it to a training event in the afternoon. The Youth Hostel that night had larger rooms, and so I was sharing with seven other girls. I slept well, which was good because the next day I was going to need it. We woke up on the day of the race (which was also my fourteenth birthday!), ate a good breakfast and then set off to the main event. I was extremely nervous about my race, but I had a good run (maybe due to birthday luck!) and came second in my age class by just twenty three seconds! I was so pleased, and although the coach journey back to England was long, I was still smiling partly because of my second place, but mainly because of all the brilliant people who made it the best birthday I've ever had. I doubt I'll ever have one as good as that again, so a huge thank you to all the people who helped to make it amazing - including the other members of the England Team, the organisers, and all the people who generously supported me!

By Rosie Spencer (W14)

The Event Itself

The Interland 2016 Event itself was held around 20km north of Antwerp, just outside the town of Brasschaat on military land around an airfield. We had run a warm up event the day before which included a small section in the town, then through similar forest to the next day's event. The area was mainly flat with lots of intricate detail, and because of lots of rain large areas were underwater (up to our knees). It also had lots of paths and open forest that meant the race was very quick through the terrain. The start times to split up competitors meant that the other people from England on my course would set off 10 minutes before and after me and other runners (from the other teams) could set off 2 minutes before and after. Although I was a little nervous at the start, I was feeling well-prepared and had a good race. The small scale of the map made it quite tricky to read in places and I found control 4 difficult due to this. The key to success for me was using my compass consistently and using paths where possible because they were much quicker than trying to run through the terrain. I didn't make any significant mistakes and kept my running speed high throughout the race. Because of this I ended up winning my course, with a Belgian runner just behind me in second, followed by another England runner in my age group, Zac Hudd, who was just 3 minutes behind me in third. Many thanks to the team of people who organised this enjoyable event, and to WCOG and the North West Orienteering Association for their support.

By Daniel Spencer (M16 – running M17 at Interland)

Map of the area (M17 course – run by Daniel Spencer):

