

30th March 2024, JK Day 2 Beaudesert – Elodie Claus

The 2nd day of the JK, also known as the middle race, was held at Beaudesert, a large area of mixed woodland not far from Lichfield. Going into the competition I felt fairly confident in myself, having seen a map of the area and finding it very similar to what we'd see for a typical forest event in Surrey. Although a surprisingly lovely day, it had been raining heavily the day before so we were already aware it would probably be very wet underfoot.



Driving up to the parking area, we were immediately met with two cars being pushed out the mud which is never a good sign!!! Walking into the arena itself I was met with another bad view; a long uphill finish where everyone could watch you struggling your way to the finish whilst a tiny 10 year old whizzes past you! Despite all these downers, I was excited to get out there as I hadn't done any forest orienteering for a few months now.

I was running W20L (course 13) - 3.4km and 160m climb. The course itself was not too long but was slightly more technically difficult than I'm used to. Starting on the run, I immediately messed up, turning down the wrong path to get to number 1. Because of this mistake I ended up having to clamber up an extremely muddy, extremely steep, thin path definitely setting me back a few minutes and knocking my confidence a bit in the process.

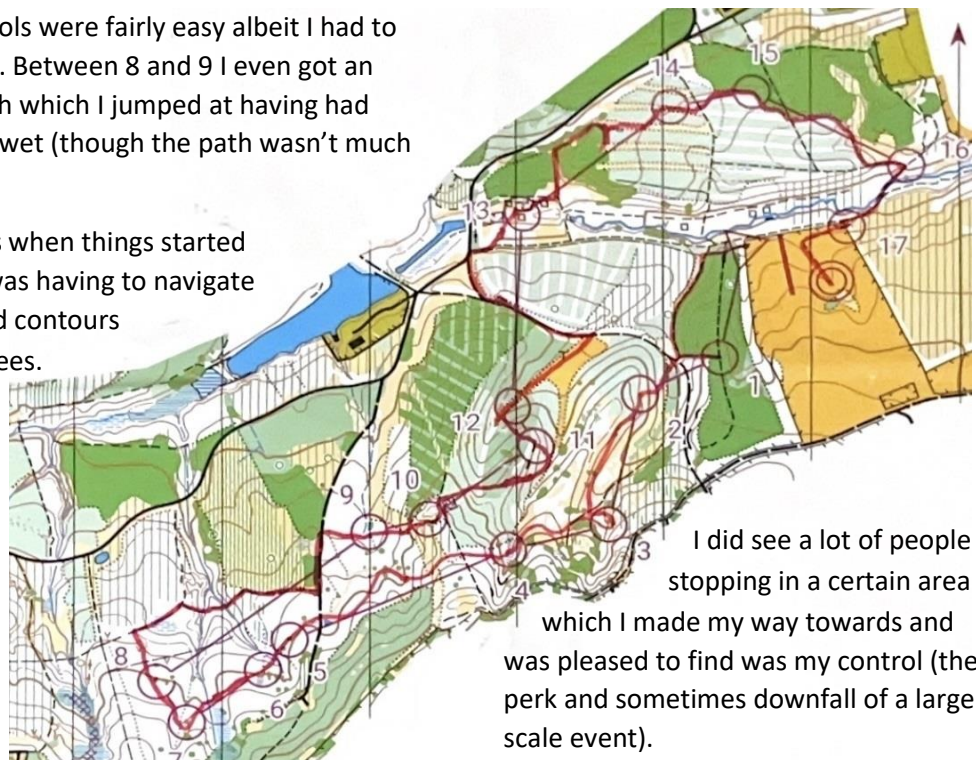
After that I slowed down a bit and really focused on the map, helping me easily navigate to 2, 3 and 4 using the contours. 4-5 was definitely one of my longer legs and with no paths to help relocate I found myself drifting too far north whilst following the contours of the area. In retrospect, I should have stuck to the vegetation boundary but with so many other people and controls around that area, my brain just seemed to switch off.

Whilst approaching control number 6 (the infamous 164) I was very dismayed to find it was half submerged in the middle of a marsh. After watching some orienteers about half my height heading into it I realised I'd just have to go for it and stepped in. I ended up about ankle deep in the smelly mud which, after hearing how some others did, it seems I was lucky!

After 6, the next few controls were fairly easy albeit I had to jump across a few streams. Between 8 and 9 I even got an opportunity to use the path which I jumped at having had enough of getting my feet wet (though the path wasn't much better).

Navigating from 10-11 was when things started to get a bit tricky again. I was having to navigate using only my compass and contours in a fairly dense mass of trees.

After several minutes of searching, unable to really locate where I was let alone the control, I went down the side of the hill to an open area of grass in hopes I'd see the control from down there. I didn't see it but >



I overshot 12 a little, having gone too far west but it was easy to find. After the hard time I had finding 11, I chose to stick to the paths for number 13, finding it easily next to the old remains of some kind of small house. Getting to 14 was far more difficult as I tried to run through thick overgrown hedges and scramble over sharp brambles. For a fairly short leg it definitely took longer than I expected and I was glad to see the control at the end of it. Controls 15, 16 & 17 were all easy controls where I could just follow the vegetation boundary to lead me to the horrible uphill run into the finish.

I finished with a time of 68:54 - definitely a lot longer than I was hoping for but it was to be expected. I'm not the fastest of runners on the best of days so with the amount of mud and marshy areas on the course I knew I wasn't going to be able to run a lot of it. There was also a lot more controls than I'm used to (17 controls on a 3.4km course compared to the 13 controls I had on my 6.3km course the next day) which meant I may have been spending more time looking for the controls than I'd normally do. Putting all these things into consideration I think I did okay but I definitely need to get back to running to try and make these courses go a little faster!!

Results can be found [here](#)