

orienteer profile

We're going to kick off this month with a few words of wisdom from **Pete Swanson**. Pete, Orienteering NZ Chair, is an awesome bloke, always ready to listen, passionate about sharing his sport and doing his best, with the ONZ team, to make sure orienteering in NZ is a sport for everyone. Here are a few questions put to him.

A bit of personal background - how did you first get involved in orienteering? Your favourite type of event? And favourite event competed in ever and why?

I have always been involved in the outdoors, although from my early teens until late 30's my main interest was climbing and mountaineering, as well as quite a bit of mountain biking, touring, mountain running etc. I just love the freedom and challenge of the outdoors, and quite enjoyed the navigation component of mountaineering etc but wasn't until I became a Dad in my late 30's that I discovered actual orienteering. I took it up because it allowed me to feel a bit of adventure without going away for a whole weekend or weeks on end, so much more family friendly for a parent with a young family.

I love all forms of orienteering, but I especially love MTBO – I love the speed and distance you can cover, and it is a really great relaxed vibe at most MTBO

Photo: joolizMoore | Moore2it



events. This year's champs in Otago had some really superb maps and terrain – am still buzzing thinking of it now. I also love longer rogaines, which often go in some awesome terrain, and I also have a partner I can whinge to when I get tired! If I had to choose one orienteering event as my favourite, the Winter Classic in Wellington is one I just loved but felt completely beaten up by – such a physically tough event and one you area happy to just finish irrelevant of position!

Top hints for red, orange, yellow and white competitors?

There are many better skilled and equipped people than me to be

giving advice, but one skill I only really picked up in recent years that has really helped me (on red courses on forest maps), is to notice features on the ground first then find them on the map, rather than vice versa. I was spending too much time looking at my map trying to anticipate terrain, and then missing things around me – my focus was all wrong and it was making me slow and error prone. I guess related to this, but true for all grades (red, orange, yellow, white) is that orienteering is very much a concentration sport – I reckon the best competitors are often those that can hold their concentration best and not let their minds wander

and get lazy in the oxygen deprived state we often find ourselves in!

The evolution of sticks and what it has done for orienteering?

I was incredibly lucky to have started my orienteering life with the Auckland Orienteering club, who thanks to the vision and forward thinking of people like Joanna and Alastair Stewart, Rob Jessop and others, were completely up for trying new technologies and innovations in the sport. AOC was the first club in NZ to secure Sport Ident gear, and this happened around the time I started with the sport in 2003. So my feeling is SI and other technologies are incredibly positive and enhance the experience for competitors who benefit from seeing instant results and simpler control punching. MTBO has been transformed by SI Air, as you no longer even have to stop at a



control so is a fantastic enhancement for that sport. But is also so much better for event organisers as well – yes you need additional skills and expertise to set up the system and use it, but all up it saves time and simplifies the whole event management as well.

Hints for MTBOers?

Many foot orienteers think that MTBO is an easy or simple form of orienteering, however I don't agree – it is a different kind of challenge that relies more on memory, riding skills, and fast thinking. Simple mistakes are often more costly than in foot orienteering, so staying on your map and speed control is critical. One thing I try to do, especially in sprints and

Alexandra 2021. Photo: Deidre Vercoe



middle distance events, is memorise the first 2-3 controls, and have made my route choices for the first 6 or so controls during my 1 min planning time. This means I can start fast without having to look at my map constantly and think.

Ideas for getting people to help - to threat, bribe or ignore!

This is such an important topic, and funnily enough was discussed at last week's Presidents forum with club Presidents around the country. One of the things we talked about was the importance of breaking jobs down to manageable sizes, so it makes it seem more manageable and easy for people to say yes to! The other super critical thing is to ensure people feel valued and appreciated – small gestures and even



Alexandra 2021. Photo: Deidre Vercoe

gifts of eg coffee vouchers etc can go a long way to creating an environment that people love to be part of and do their bit to help.

How is ONZ structured? Where/how do you meet and how often?

Most people would be surprised at the scale of ONZ and what it does. All up there are over 40 people actively involved in formal roles and committees that comprise Orienteering New Zealand, including the Council which has 6 elected members (and up to 2 co-opted members). My role as Chair is elected annually from within the Council, so it is a very democratic structure which through the constitution represents the interests of members. This is something the current council is really strong on and in the last 2-3 years we have put a real focus on connecting and engaging more with people across the sport and looking at ways ONZ can deliver more value to members. Jenni, Marquita, Guy, Tom, and Magnus have been fantastic to work with on Council – they are super



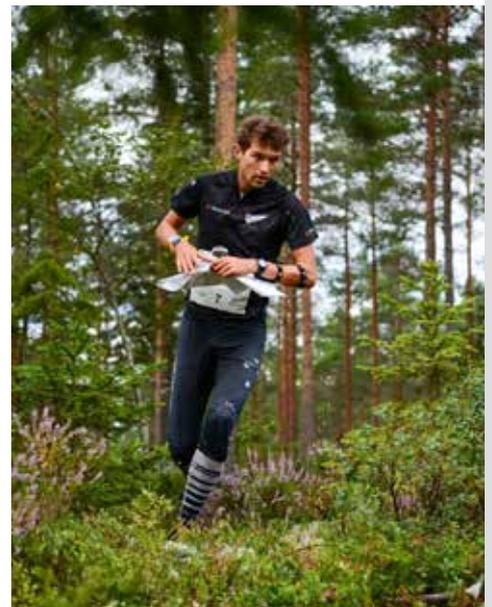
experienced, understand the sport, but also see the bigger picture and strategic issues, and have a very positive and progressive outlook. This is helped no end through having a really capable GM, and Christo has been brilliant to work with since he started over 2 years ago in that role. As a Council we meet monthly (by Zoom), however Christo and I have a meeting most weeks (usually by phone) to discuss operational things and make sure we are on track with plans. Whilst the Council and GM provides the high-level governance and oversight, there are many people doing fantastic work across ONZ and I really recommend people read the annual report which provides the highlights of this, as well as our strategic plan which maps out our priorities and focus.

[ONZ Annual Report](#)

Obviously there are many people involved in the various committees and roles, however one example of where ONZ



Christo Peters



Gene Beveridge

is putting more focus is on the development of coaching and training resources, and we have recently employed Gene Beveridge in a part time capacity to develop some resources, as well as establish a platform for sharing resources with clubs and members. This is just one example, outside the many operational demands we have, where we are trying to bring more value to clubs and members – access to information and resources that makes running events and training people easier.

