

2017 Belt & Road International Youth Orienteering Training Camp (Jiangsu)



Everyone at the Opening Ceremony.

by Ben Windsor DRONGO

The following article is about a Chinese Initiative to strengthen connections between China and the West through Youth Sport. Orienteering of course in this case. Ben and Zuzka met whilst studying at Cambridge and were instrumental in getting the initiative off the ground with the GBR and CZE Junior groups.

Deer-O is an orienteering club based in Nanjing, China. It is one of the largest and most active clubs in China. The club regularly competes at O-Ringen in Sweden each summer. Zuzka Strakova DRONGO/OK Kamenice, CZE, met Sun Yi, the founder of Deer-O, while studying in China during her year abroad. It was Sun Yi's idea to organise an international youth orienteering training camp under the name of 'One Belt, One Road'.

This Belt and Road Initiative is "a development strategy proposed by the Chinese Government in 2013 that focuses on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries, primarily the People's Republic of China, the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the ocean-going Maritime Silk Road. The strategy underlines China's push to take a larger role in global affairs with a China-centered trading network." (Source: Wiki.) The policy manifests itself through the building of infrastructure to allow for better transport and communication, but also through politics and friendship. Thus there is money for initiatives such as Sun Yi wanted to organise.

Altogether, 22 juniors from the UK, Czech Republic, Sweden and Norway travelled to China between 1-10th December 2017 for a week of orienteering and sightseeing. The UK team was led by Ben Windsor. Everything was paid for by the Chinese once we were there, all we had to pay for were our flights, travel insurance and

vaccinations! (LHR - Shanghai rtn with BA for £478)

Unlike a normal Orienteering Tour like many Juniors go on in the summertime, this wasn't really aimed at improving orienteering ability, although exposure to new types of terrain is always beneficial – orienteering was there as something which everybody present loved doing, to bring people from across the world together. The tour certainly immersed the Europeans in Chinese culture successfully, but most of the Chinese juniors were a fair bit younger so it was difficult for strong friendships to form with them.



The British Contingent.

Orienteering as a sport is much less developed in China – but their technology is way ahead of ours! They have a single handheld device which allows you to enter, pay, download, and upload results to the internet! [do you want introducing SportIdent?] Also, in China, orienteering is not a volunteer-led sport – people are paid for organising, planning, and mapping.

Deer-O have confirmed that they have funding to repeat this invitation in Autumn 2018, and having survived this trip, we

hope to take another group of people keen to experience a different culture and do some training whilst they are at it! Sadly, we will probably never get funding from any government in Europe to return their invitation, but if they decide to visit, we will do our best to organise some exciting training! (benwindsor@gmail.com)

Chinese International Orienteering: an athlete's perspective

by Jura MacMillan ECKO

Picture this: Running through a vast bamboo forest in rural China, the hills rolling out either side of you into a land of towering skyscrapers and pointed temples. You search for your control in the endless trees that all look the same and remember five days before when China was just a name on a map.

On an unremarkable Thursday evening in December, six teenagers – Meg Somers DEVON, Imogen Wilson LEI, Nick Wilson LEI, Louis MacMillan ECKO, Catherine Bloom LOC and Jura MacMillan ECKO – met in Heathrow airport, full of anticipation for exploring the unknown, and began their One Belt One Road International Orienteering Training camp in China. We grouped up with our team leaders Ben and Zuzka and the eight Czech Republic orienteers and boarded our 12 hour flight, arriving at 5pm the next day in Shanghai.

We were then picked up by a bus and started a seven hour journey through Shanghai and out to Nanjing to meet up with the Norwegian, Swedish and Chinese orienteers. After some icebreakers, a breakdown and marvelling at the skyscrapers that guided us through the night, we arrived at the hotel at midnight. However, we didn't feel prepared to wake

I woke up this morning and forgot which side the sun rises from, then it dawned on me.



Urban O, Chinese style.

up at 6am the next day, 11pm British time, for the opening ceremony.

The next morning, breakfast consisted of some deep fried rice and a bit of soft bread then we hopped on a bus and made friends fast with our fellow orienteers. On the outskirts of Nanjing, which contains 8 million people, we made our appearance on Chinese television for the opening ceremony. But it didn't stop there as

throughout the week we were flocked by Chinese locals who it seemed had never seen a white person in their lives! We set off for our first taste of Chinese orienteering in a surreal red forested parkland, spotting traditional temples scattered amongst the Chinese tourists. Control sites varied from rocks engraved with Chinese calligraphy to the top of mini temples. The course was technically easy but running at 3am British time proved challenging for Team UK.

Some team building traditional games at a school filled our afternoon. We got a record 9 bounces of a tennis ball on a drum controlled by 15 ropes and successfully scored goals in our three teams with the three sided ball. In the evening, we were taken to a famous lantern-lit shopping street with the Nanjing wall majestically marking the end of the street and then got to try our first Chinese meal and try our hand at eating with chopsticks. We all sat round several round tables with a round glass spinning table on top of that. About 15 plates of weird and wonderful food ranging from jellyfish to snake/lizard (we weren't quite sure!) were brought out. Let's just say that the rice was the best part!

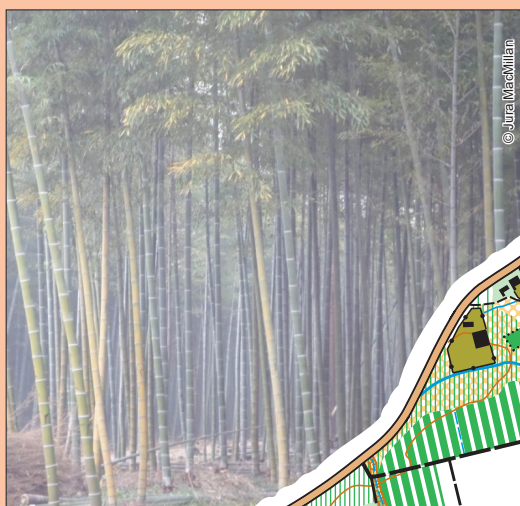
On day two of orienteering, we were taken to a scrubby mixed forest with

thorn bushes waiting to ruin our legs, given a map which was mostly green and paired off with a younger Chinese orienteer. Some of the faster runners were by themselves and enjoyed the light green course where we managed to avoid the thorns. By this time we had made friends with the other teams and so were able to do some training analysis of the forest which was similar to those at home. A bus ride later and we were happily exploring the history of the area in the Nanjing Museum which housed everything from shelves of pots to a fake street that stretched off under the museum. After having our pictures taken

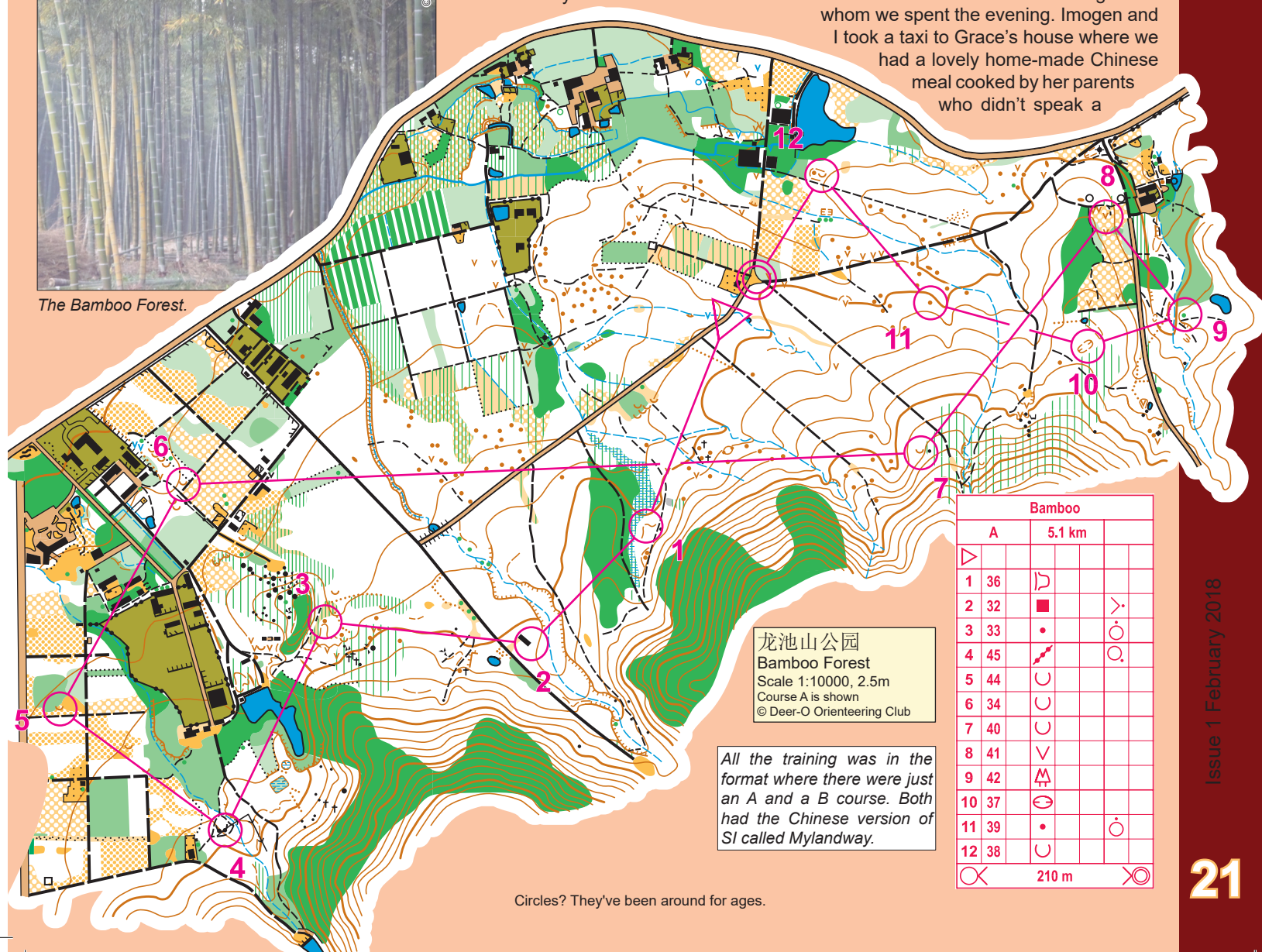


Chinese Cuisine.

by half of China outside the museum, we were put into pairs and buddied with a Chinese orienteer similar in age with whom we spent the evening. Imogen and I took a taxi to Grace's house where we had a lovely home-made Chinese meal cooked by her parents who didn't speak a



The Bamboo Forest.



Circles? They've been around for ages.