

## **Recommendations/Caveats from John Estle**

Below are some generic recommendations to the various parties involved in an event. The purpose of these recommendations is not to point fingers at any of the parties involved in the relay problem. There is usually a sequence of events and choices which ends up producing a problem such as was experienced at Oberwiesenthal, and it can be difficult to determine if a single choice or event made by a single party produced a problem, let alone what roles were played in the situation by organizers, officials, coaches and athletes. So . . . these are forward-looking recommendations, not backward-looking recriminations.

### **Recommendations for Organizers:**

1. Once you have sent out course maps to the teams, do your utmost to adhere to the plan you have for the competition courses. Every change creates an opportunity for an error.
2. To the extent possible, keep your courses as simple as possible. This is not always possible, but it is desirable. Organizers should be thinking about this when they are pursuing FIS homologation for their courses. Don't think about the courses as stand-alone entities, think about how they work with the other courses, such as in the case when both classic and free courses are needed for a single race (relay, skiathlon).
3. If the race involves both classic and free portions, think long and hard about whether to use a single course for both techniques, or two different courses. Is it better to race on a single course that might be a little skinny here and there, or is it better to race on two different courses that might be confusing for skiers? Ideally, think about this far enough in advance (during construction season) so that you can create a course with an E-rating for width, if that's the best solution.
4. If you are using color-coding for race courses, use different colors for each race course, ESPECIALLY for all the courses used on a single day. Using four different colors, rather than just two colors with overlapping women's and mens' courses might have been sufficient to have avoided this problem.
5. Signs are great, but signs are not enough. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a skier should have to cross over, under or through a physical barrier in order to make a wrong turn at a junction. Use whatever materials you have, but remember these rules from the FIS ICR:

311.4.1 The marking of the course must be so clear that the competitor is never in doubt where the course goes.

311.4.3 Forks and intersections on the course must be clearly marked by visible signage, and fences or V-boards must be placed across unused parts of the course.

### **Recommendations for Officials/Juries**

1. Spend a lot of time looking at course maps and try to visualize any problems that might be caused by the course configurations. This is especially important for mixed-technique relays and skiathlons.
2. Demand accurate, up-to-date maps from the organizers. Don't let them use course maps that are out of date, or maps that don't match FIS homologation documents
3. Inspect courses thoroughly, trying to approach trail junctions the way that a skier in the heat of a race would approach them. This is not easy, but it is very important.
4. If there are any problem areas that you feel are unavoidable, be sure to station a Jury member and some Organizing Committee members at that location to observe and video.

#### **Recommendations for Coaches:**

1. Even though coaches try to teach skiers to be responsible for themselves, it doesn't hurt for coaches to jointly inspect courses with skiers, especially with younger skiers at a competition venue that is new to the competitors. Two heads are better than one. Most coaches have more experience than their skiers, which should be helpful.
2. If you see anything that you think is a problem, bring it up with a Jury member at the earliest possible time. Most Jury members that I know would much rather have a coach bring up a problem, especially one that is easily dealt with by a little bit of V-board. Jury members like to eliminate potential problems

#### **Recommendations for Skiers:**

1. Inspect the course thoroughly. Inspect it again if you think you need to do so.
2. If there are any areas where you are uncertain as to the correct way to go, ask someone for help. Ideally, ask your coach, or ask a Jury member.
3. Inspect the course thoroughly. (And I know I said this just above this point.)