

## World Schools Orienteering Championships

### Turkey 2015 Report by Daniel Spencer (WCOC)

From the 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> April 2015, I participated in the World Schools Orienteering Championships which were held in Antalya in southern Turkey. I was selected (along with Alastair Thomas and Niamh Hunter from WCOC) to be part of an England team of 50 runners aged 14-18 from all over the country. This is the England team (I am in the front row, 9<sup>th</sup> from the right):



On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April, I got up at 5:30am and was driven down to J36 with the 2 other WCOC juniors, where we were picked up by the UVHS minibus which took us down to Manchester airport. We flew to Istanbul and got a connecting flight to Antalya, where we got a bus for an hour to the hotel where we were staying. We were delayed in Istanbul and finally arrived at 3:30am, grabbed a few hours of sleep and got up at 7:00am for the “model event”.

For the model event we were bussed to an area near the hotel which was similar to the terrain we would be competing on. There were lots of controls out and you could go and train in the terrain. My team went out and trained with our coach Josh. We explored different areas of the terrain and what the quickest routes would be during the competition.

The next day we competed in the Long Distance Race. I got up at about 7:00am as I wanted to eat around 3 hours before my start time at 10:15. After breakfast I met with the coaches, who passed on any last minute information about the race and told us which bus to get on. We were bussed to the “quarantine area” (which we weren’t allowed to leave until our start time) and before we started we ran some warm up controls. Then, before I knew it, I was off.



I had an ok race and came 9<sup>th</sup> out of the 45 competitors in my class (2<sup>nd</sup> English runner), but wasn't happy with how I navigated on the long legs. After racing we waited at the finish and cheered in all the other England team members.

The next race we ran was the Middle Distance; this was a bit further away from the hotel and was being run at 800m above sea level. This time the quarantine area was in a local school playground. I left 45 minutes before my start and had plenty of time to run the warm up courses then warm up properly and get in a race mindset. I had a much better race and was much happier with it, taking it more steady and focusing on running quickly. I came 9<sup>th</sup> in this event too (3<sup>rd</sup> English runner).

Overall my section of the England team (the M2 select team) won Gold Medals! This was based on the performance of the first 3 English runners at the Long and Middle Distance races. This is us on the podium, waiting to receive our medals:



The final event of the week was the Friendship Relay which was held in Kemer, a large town near where we were staying. In my team was Michal from Slovakia and Helena from Portugal. We had 3 maps with all the controls on and had to split them up between us. It was a mass start and it was chaotic - the first control I was supposed to be going to had about 50 people trying to punch it at once. After that the race got quite a lot better and despite being the last one back for my team because of the crowd it was still a really great experience.

Overall this was an amazing trip, I learned a lot about competing at an International level and about the terrain and orienteering in Turkey. It was a great opportunity to meet people from other countries with the same interests as me and compete against them. This will help me to be prepared to compete at a higher level.

Thank you to all the very generous people and organisations, including WCOC, who have supported me and allowed me to go on this amazing trip.

*Daniel Spencer (4<sup>th</sup> May, 2015)*