

HHH VR Series – Blackcap Handicap VR9

Race window start times Sat 5th to Sun 13th Dec. Daylight Hours 08:00 to 16:00!

This is an Interclub team event and individual handicap race for HHH members on an out and back course along the Downs from Ditchling Beacon to the Blackcap trig point and return. [or potentially in reverse starting at Blackcap & running to the Gate to the road across from Ditchling Beacon and back]. To enter this virtual Handicap race, please contact the HHH organiser, Ian Dumbrell, so that you can be assigned a target time. As far as the team event is concerned there is no need for separate entry, everyone who enters the HHH handicap event will automatically be allocated to a Harriers team – EVERYONE WILL COUNT. The HHH handicap event is open to members of Harriers only, ages 16 and over. Parents or guardians of 16 and 17 year olds should contact the HHH race organiser to go through the safety points which we will request you to follow.

The route description below reflects the “traditional” out & back route from Ditchling!



The route begins near the gate on the eastern side of the road opposite the Beacon car park, (this is the view you'll get with the gate behind you) and follows the South Downs Way until the farm gate by the fields at Black Cap at 3.7k from the start. At this point, runners leave the SDW and enter the field taking the track up the hill on the left following a line of trees until reaching the trig point (half way) at 4.1k. Runners must run clockwise round the trig point before returning to the start. Total route distance is just over 8k and your race organisers describe it as “undulating”. If you are not familiar with the route we suggest you run it with another of your experienced colleagues (no more than 5).

Timing. The event is being run on a Strava segment, so set your watch accurately in order that it uploads properly. The segment reference is <https://www.strava.com/segments/20405068> . If you are being adventurous and running from Blackcap see <https://www.strava.com/segments/26545017> . Reading the instructions below will help you keep to the segment!

Race window. Reflecting the possibility of inclement weather and reduced daylight in winter we are allowing runs to be completed between Saturday 5 December and Sunday 13th December 08:00-16:00. At the weekends, Ditchling Common Car Park and the Downs in particular on this section are extremely busy with cyclists, walkers and runners. There is also an organised event running onto the Downs on from Plumpton on Saturday 5th – please respect Social Distancing if you have to run that day – better to avoid if possible. You can run in groups of 6 or less provided you maintain a 2m social distance. If there are more runners setting off at the same time, you just need to allow a sensible gap.

Car parking. Pay and display at Ditchling Beacon. The location reference is 803351 on paybyphone.co.uk

Safety. Your own health and safety and that of others is your number one priority, we don't want anything to go wrong and neither do you, so here's a reminder:

- The paths are hard with loose stones which are slippery especially downhill – watch your footfalls, wear the right shoes, properly laced
- It can be chilly and wet – dress accordingly, have a change of clothing etc at the car park
- Tell your close family members when and where you're going (!). Carry a mobile phone and have your name and address written on a slip of paper in your pocket
- The SDW is a bridleway so you'll meet horses, mountain bike riders and sometimes animals. Be aware of them, give them plenty of space, listen out. **If you wear headphones you'll be disqualified.**
- **Covid-19.** Social distancing of 2m still applies, and no groups more than 6. There are 3 gates to open on the route, wear gloves if you wish to and avoid touching your face before sanitising your hands when you're back at the Beacon. Car sharing with bubble members only.

For 16 and 17 year olds, we ask that parents or guardians speak to us first to make sure they are competent to run this distance. We'd also like you to run with them. We understand that this may not be possible (!) so we will organise a race window to accommodate your son or daughter in a small group, please contact one of the race organiser and we'll arrange this with you.

The course in more detail – distances from start in km, in brackets for the return route

Start running & your tracking watch at the gate to the Ditchling road and follow the well worn path which curves round first to the right and then left along the line of fence posts. As you come over the brow of the first hill just before you hit 1k, the path then moves away from the line of fence posts up over the next hill and then down to a



Pictured here.

gate at 1.9k (6.6k).

Slow down here!

After this gate, cross the road watching out

for anything coming from the left or the right and follow the stony path up the hill. The SDW is quite narrow here, so watch out for cyclists coming up the hill behind you or hurtling down towards you. Coming to the top of the hill at 2.3k (6.1k), follow the SDW slightly to the right and don't be tempted by the prospect of a downhill on the left. This will take you to Plumpton College, and whilst this is lovely, for the purpose of this race it would be better signposted "This way ends in Ignominy".



Staying on the SDW, you're now on a faster stretch and the path is wider, with no fence on your right so there's nothing in the way of the crops and stunning views across to Seaford Head. Watch where you put your feet, the stones are sharp... you may see some cows on your right just before the brow of the hill at 3.4k (5k).

The fence is on both sides now and if you feel like you're picking up speed, and you probably are as it's downhill to the gate at 3.7k (4.7k).



The SDW

goes to the right here but you go through the gate and take the path up the hill.

It's ok if someone happens to open a gate for you, but not ok if they pace you on an MTB (the organisers would not be at all happy with this, neither would your colleague Beetroots!). And even better if they pointed the way here – this is where a mistake could be costly!

Follow the path up the hill, along the line of trees on the left here in this photo. There's a more grassy path which heads

lower down towards Lewes and you don't want this one.

As the path levels out and becomes a bit more stony, keep following the line of trees as they turn more to the left and you'll find something remarkable. It's your turning point at 4.1k. Run clockwise around the trig point – this is important to record against the Strava segment.

Well this is my finish point... it only remains for me to say to you "run back to where you started from". Run as far as the gate in the field where you started – and stop your watch there which will cover the segment.

Have fun and stay on your feet.



NB : if you're running the reverse route start/stop running some metres to the East of the Trig point and turn as you touch the gate at Ditchling road.