

On being more Swedish than ABBA



2022 was the year that the much-delayed 2020 O-Ringen actually took place. Taking place around Uppsala, this was an O-Ringen that a lot of people wanted to go to as it was close to Arlanda airport and all days could be reached using local public transport. Plus, O-Ringen. I had entered back in 2019 and was really happy that it was going to actually happen.

The O-Ringen has one rest day, after the first two days in the forest. There was an elite sprint race planned for the rest day, so my plan was to watch that, or do some sightseeing. The O-Ringen Gods had other ideas though, and about two weeks before the event, the organisers announced that there was going to be an indoor event on the rest day, in the local IKEA store. I have wanted to do an indoor race for a long time and knew that I was absolutely going to be on the start line in that IKEA.

The first challenge was getting an entry. Numbers were going to be limited to 200 starters per hour, over 7 hours of starts. 1400 starters sounds like a lot, but that was less than 10% of the O-Ringen entry numbers. I spent the morning that entries opened checking about every 30 minutes to see if entries were live yet and managed to be around the 500th person to enter. First job done!



The event was being planned by the same team who run the Stockholm Indoor Cup. I have seen maps of their events, with fiendishly difficult routes through multi-storey buildings and one-way systems and so I entered the medium difficulty course. Although we didn't know it at the time we entered, this event wouldn't be as difficult as the Stockholm events, and

the courses were more like short, medium, long and very long rather than there being a big difference in technical level.

The final details had some instructions that we don't usually see: it was "forbidden to jump, crawl below or in other way pass through furniture". Which was lucky as my de-materialiser was on the blink so I wouldn't have been able to pass through furniture anyway. Terrain was "classic Swedish design with mainly furniture, stacks of silverware and shopping bags. Little to no elevation." Map symbols and descriptions were also strangely devoid of re-entrants:



Start times weren't allocated in advance. When arriving, you chose a sticker off a large board which had a start time in the hour block that you had been allocated to. Start times were 30 seconds apart and there were around 3 people starting in each of those slots. That meant a lot of orienteers out on courses at any one time. As I had entered only the medium course, I had expected the other entrants to be mainly children, but they were actually mostly adults.

The IKEA in Uppsala has three levels, and the start boxes were on the middle level. There was no call up, it was very much self-service with a clock and everyone just got themselves into the start boxes at the time on their sticker and moved through. Loose control descriptions were available, and there were some final instructions in Swedish but I wasn't mean enough to make the poor helper repeat them in English when he was having to go through his spiel every 30 seconds! The actual start was up on the next level, so everyone took a very casual walk upstairs to where the maps were in buckets, grabbed a map, and punched the start.



The first part of the course was through the showroom section with its maze of furniture and small “rooms”. It would have been really difficult to relocate so keeping contact with the map was key. In addition to all the furniture out on display, there were also lots of shoppers acting as moving chicanes and marshals trying to keep competitors from going too fast. In this section, any running was in very short bursts and a fast walk was probably just as quick. There were also lots of controls for other courses, so checking control descriptions was a must.

After the first 13 controls, we dropped down a level. At first I couldn't work out where I was until I remembered that the stairs were all marked by a letter and managed to get a grip! The next few controls were through the shop section (keeping away from the glass and crockery for some reason) and then out into the big warehouse section. This was the only part of the course where you could actually really run and those controls were fast and furious. It looks simple here, but it was very easy to miscount rows and punch a control from another course.

After running through the tills, we dropped down to the finishing controls around the entrance / exit and to the actual finish in the parking area.

The whole experience was a little bit bonkers. I can't imagine this happening in the UK, especially while the store was still open. I think the reason for us dropping down levels sequentially without the usual up – down – up again common in indoor events was to reduce traffic on narrow stairs that were also open to the public. I was also amazed by how tolerant the Swedish shoppers were. They all clearly understood what was going on, and were also keeping an eye out for the orienteers to give us as free a run as possible. The whole experience was fantastic, and I would recommend trying an indoor event if you ever get a chance.

And it turns out that indoor O is my orienteering super-power. I finished 63rd out of around 250. My little hesitation at the bottom of stairs and running the long way around a wall at one point cost me 30 seconds and around 15 places. I finished around lots of people whose names ended in -son or -quist, and taking part in a very Swedish sport in an iconic Swedish location made me feel completely Swedish!

Tack och adjö!





O-Ringen Indoor IKEA Uppsala 27 juli 2022

Medel	Tid km	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	33																	
2	32																	
3	35																	
4	38																	
5	52																	
6	36																	
7	32																	
8	39																	
9	64																	
10	62																	
11	65																	
12	40																	
13	94																	

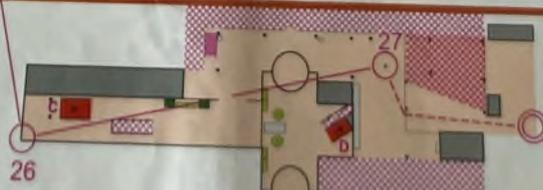


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omhuskarta Ikea Uppsala
 sala: 1: 1200, troligtvis
 ridistans: 1 trappsteg
 i tecken enligt Stockholm Indoor Cups inomhusnorm.
 ritad juni 2022 av Assar Hellström,
 d Hektor & Jonas Rinnbäck
 liggare: Assar Hellström
 rring och användning av kartan utan tillstånd är förbjudet.
 ft: BL-Idrottsservice Stockholm



Medel
12:25:00

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VALDS bagheera

