



The Omnium

This is a six race event, comprising the scratch, individual pursuit, elimination, time trial, flying lap and points races. Claire Balding described it as a little like the heptathlon or decathlon for cyclists.

The races take place over two days, three events on two consecutive days. Distances vary for some of the races between the men's and women's competitions, but the scoring system is the same for both: 40 points for the winner; the second-place rider gets 38, third 36 and so on, reducing by two points each place.

Scratch race - The opening event of the omnium, this is a simple race where the objective is to be the first across the line. In the men's omnium, it is 15km long and the women race over 10km.

Individual pursuit - Two riders race on opposite sides of the track, 4km for the men and 3km for women. This event would usually see the race over if one rider catches the other; but since the riders only race once and their times are ranked, instead they must both finish the full distance.

Elimination race - One of the most exciting events, the elimination race sees the field of 18 whittled down to one over 36 laps. Every two laps, the last rider to cross the start-finish line is removed from the race.

The Mechanic tells me that its also called the Devil takes Hindmost.

Time trial - On the second day, the riders first compete in a time trial. The men ride 1km and the women 500m.

Flying lap - Riders complete 200m against the clock having got up to full speed before the start line.

Points race - The last race of the omnium, the points race – 40km for the men, 25km for the women – takes considerable concentration. (the viewer and the rider need to swat up in advance on where everyone is placed, to know which points need to be chased after)

The first four riders over the line at each sprint lap – which take place every 10th lap – earn five, three, two and one point respectively. Additionally, an extra 20 points can be won by riders that lap the field and anybody lapped by the main field loses 20 points.