



Writing Junior Sports Fiction: Orienteering 'Gang O Kids'

An interview with Hazel Edwards who wrote 'Gang O Kids'
Check book details & links at
http://www.hazeledwards.com/page/gang_o_kids.html

1. Where did you get the idea for the book?

My family used to orienteer each weekend at a different place. We belonged to Emu Orienteering Club.

Kids of all ages and adults run through the bush using a map and a compass to find the controls. They are good problem solvers.

Orienteers notice stuff. That's why I thought of making my Gang into sleuths who solve mysteries.

I keep an ideas notebook.

When I noticed things like sprinklers turning on a midnight, in the camp site, and spraying the tents and the sleepers, I wondered, 'what if?'

and noted the idea to use in a story later.

2. Are the kids based on real orienteers?

The characters are made-up. They are composites, based on habits I'd noticed in several kids, plus my imagination. But the story is based on real events, like the elastic on the O pants breaking, as the kids ran in at the Finish.

3. Do you draw the pictures?

No. The illustrator draws the cover and the small illustrations inside. Check out the cover for her name.

4. My favourite character is Mars Bar. How do you make up a character? Could you put me in a story?

When you have a gang, they each need to be good at different things. To make up a character, I create a 'dossier' of all their details, like name, height, hobbies, what they are good/bad at doing. Check out the dossiers at the front and the names of the characters.

I found out that most kids called Mario were known as Mars Bar. So that's why I used the name. Moronic Bird was a made-up name.

Sorry I can't put you in my story. But you can create your own story. To keep the reader turning pages, more happens to a story character than to a real life person. But I might use your name if lots of kids are called that.

5. Did the pants falling down story really happen?

Yes. At the Finish. In real life, it didn't happen in front of a TV sports camera. Authors are allowed to exaggerate to make the story more dramatic.

6. What do you need to go orienteering?

You have to find markers called controls. Usually you would carry a compass, map (with the controls marked) and a whistle in case of trouble.

Courses are linked to your age like M 12 (for males under 12) or W 10 (for girls(women) under 10. The aim is to find the best route to the Finish in the shortest time.

7. Are you a good speller? Does the editor change your words?

I can spell, but I make mistakes when I am hurrying. Usually I'd write 10 drafts of a story.

I always listen to an editor's reasons for changing something. They read what is there, not what I think is there.

8. What does a publisher do?

My publisher Darren from Omotivo is an orienteer who owns an orienteering shop too, so he knows the right 'O' language. He was keen to publish orienteering stories for children.

A publisher organises an editor, an illustrator and a printer for the writer's manuscript. Then he arranges for the book to be distributed for sale.

Check out the cover and the publisher's details on the inside page.

9. Does anyone check your facts?

Usually I ask an 'expert' to check my stories to see if I've used the right terms. e.g. D.N.F. (did not finish) . And I ask a 'naïve' reader , usually a kid of the appropriate age to read it just for the story.

I try to write simply, so the story is easy to understand.

10 How can I start writing an 'O' story?

'My most embarrassing moment' is a good starting point for a story. Or you might like to create your own Gang O character who can solve a mystery around your place.

Hazel Edwards

http://www.hazeledwards.com/page/gang_o_kids.html

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