

The second of the coaching days will be held soon (check this newsletter for details) and is developed for orienteers at Orange and Red level. The coaching day focus on techniques to use to navigate through the course and minimise errors. If you are interested in the practical coaching activities please see me to arrange the fine details. People wishing to attend need to contact Geoff Todkill (49585920) in advance so that maps can be prepared.

In this coaching page I'd like to focus on errors that commonly occur and generally cost us time in competition, and the use of relocation to get us going again.

Errors

Judgement Errors

These normally occur through over or under-estimation of the difficulty of a control, or failing to assess the difficulty at all. If you under-estimate the difficulty, your orienteering approach will be too 'rough', and you will miss the control through being off course, failing to judge the distance adequately, or missing the attack point. Over-estimation of difficulty is normally less common and less serious. Here, it is time lost through going too slowly, and taking too much care with the map reading. The main cause is usually uncertainty, or failing to spot a good catching feature or attack point.

However, if the slow approach results in finding the control, the time loss is usually small. Route choice mistakes are also judgement errors. They normally occur when a route is chosen under pressure (eg. on leaving the control at the beginning of the leg). Time lost through a mistake in choice of route, as opposed to carrying the route out, is generally small.

Hesitancy Errors

There are two main consequences of uncertainty, apart from the overuse of the map mentioned above. One is the tendency to stop short of the actual control site, and the other is the more dangerous practice of heading for and following other orienteers. Allowing other competitors to lead you off course can result in very serious mistakes, and should be avoided at all costs. The only time when other orienteers can be useful is when they are on your course and going in your direction. Several pairs of eyes are better than one - providing that you notice when someone finds the marker!

Relocation

The biggest difference between the elite and the average orienteer is in how they cope with being lost. Following a top competitor you might well be almost unaware that he'd lost track of his position and then re-located himself. Following a lesser orienteer it would be very painfully obvious. If you get lost, you must stop and be rational. Mistakes can invariably be fathomed out if a sensible approach is adopted. The first thing to do is to orient your map, and try and relate the features you can see to the features shown on the map. It helps to work out where you might have gone from you last known position.

In trying to estimate distance covered remember that you will not normally have gone as far as you think you have. If you cannot work out your position, use the compass and head for a prominent nearby line feature. Try and locate your position on this. When you have failed to find a control from a good attack point, it is often worth doing circles of about 20 metres radius around the point where you think the control should be, particularly if you have taken care from the attack point. Never wander aimlessly though. If you have not been careful from the attack point, or if the visibility is low, it is usually safest to head back to the attack point and try again - at walking pace.

- Geoff Todkill