

Coaching Column, part 1

by Geoff Ellis BOK/RAFO

Geoff Ellis attended his first orienteering event at the age of 11. It was the Avon Schools Orienteering Championships held at Quantock Forest North. Within a few weeks Geoff had won an inter-house orienteering competition at his school, Kingswood in Bath, and was hooked on the sport.



Geoff at the 2013 World Masters in Italy.

During his time at Kingswood Geoff enjoyed success in the Avon Schools Orienteering Association events as well as representing his county and the South West Junior Squad in the Inter-Regional competition. It was natural, therefore, that Geoff's choice of university would include orienteering as a deciding factor.

As a member of ShUOC Geoff had the opportunity to train with some of the best orienteers in the country and set his ambition of joining them.

Geoff joined the RAF in 1999 and continued to go orienteering. A chance meeting with Mike Edwards started an enduring relationship of mutual coaching as they both sought to improve as orienteers. Together they developed methods to improve their orienteering which resulted in Geoff becoming a British Champion at M35 in all disciplines as well as gaining selection for the Veteran's Home International, and then running up to M21 for Interland. Geoff also secured a Bronze medal running elite in the Grand Bazaar super sprint in Istanbul.

This journey of discovery and self improvement resulted in a significant amount of tools and documentation that has now been brought together in one booklet so that others may benefit.

This new column in CompassSport Magazine will cover a different section in each issue.

1 – GOAL SETTING

"Many people fail in life, not for lack of ability or brains or even courage, but simply because they have never organised their energies around a goal." Elbert Hubbard - an American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher (1856-1915)

Goals

Goals can be broken into 2 categories. The Outcome Goals are those targets that are often fixed around a specific event. Process Goals are the steps in the journey.

Outcome Goals

It is difficult to perform well every time that you go into the terrain. It is also easy to have misguided expectations and therefore an extremely emotional response to the results which is not necessarily linked to how well you actually raced. Without knowing what your key races are it is also likely that your training programme is structured in such a way that you are fatigued going into a key race, but in optimal physical condition going into a training event. Goal Setting, particularly SMART Goals, can help you be in the right condition for the race as well as having reasonable expectation of the results.

SMART Goals

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bounded

(e.g. for me: BOC2013, Placing, Within Ability, Podium, BOC2013)

Set a Major Goal for the Year with less important Minor Goals that serve as stepping stones. If necessary sacrifice a Minor Goal to be in the best possible shape for the Major Goal.

When setting Goals consider Realistic and Stretch Targets.

Realistic – Podium – Most likely outcome

Stretch – Win – Everything has to go right

Now appropriate Goals have been set it is important to evaluate the outcome in a considered manner. Below are 4 conditions, of which 3 are acceptable outcomes and one is not. Consider what can be done to ensure that a positive mindset is taken forward from the result.

RESULT	<p>Bad Run, Goal Achieved</p> <p>☹☹</p> <p>Be Happy (Goal Achieved)</p> <p>Analyse Errors (To Improve)</p> <p>Be Happy (Don't beat yourself up as Goal was Achieved)</p>	<p>Good Run, Goal Achieved</p> <p>☺☺☺☺</p> <p>Be Happy</p> <p>Analyse Run (To learn what went well)</p> <p>Be Happy</p>
	<p>Bad Run, Goal Missed</p> <p>☹</p> <p>Drop it (Take yourself off so as not to upset anyone)</p> <p>Analyse Errors (To drive improvement. Be honest)</p> <p>Pick yourself up and move forwards</p>	<p>Good Run, Goal Missed</p> <p>☺☺</p> <p>Be Happy (It was a Good Run)</p> <p>Analyse Run (Identify what went well and what needed to Improve)</p> <p>Be Happy (You Controlled the Controllable)</p>
	PERFORMANCE	

Setting appropriate Goals can make orienteering a much more rewarding experience. Having Goals helps focus the mind on what is required and when. Set Goals that cover the year that is about to start and also that look forward 2-3 years.

Remember that Goals are flexible; be prepared to modify your Goals as you go through the season, especially if you experience a period of injury or illness or even something else in your life that affects your orienteering.

Process Goals

The Outcome Goals provide a measure of performance that is quite stark. There has either been a triumphant success or a crushing failure. Although an attempt has been made to moderate emotional reaction by recognising both performance and result, Outcome Goals are not able to recognise the investment required to improve the possibility of realising the SMART Goals.

Process Goals are enabling activities and should also be SMART. These generally are identified from known weaknesses that require strengthening or new attributes that need to be developed. These processes may take time to develop and therefore should seek to see a measurable change over a period of time. The Process Goals may be stepping stones on the way to a primary Outcome Goal, such as a qualification race.

Just as Outcome Goals, Process Goals should be recorded and tracked. Regular reviews should be undertaken, and once a Process Goal is achieved another should be identified. A few Process Goals should be identified and actively pursued; if there are too many then there will not be sufficient focus and it may prove challenging to achieve rather than realistic.