

# Coaching Column, part 5

by Geoff Ellis BOK/RAFO

## FOCUS

"People who consistently win have a clear and thoughtful strategy. They know what they need to do and when they need to do it. They write it down so they stay on course, and avoid any alternative that does not get them closer to the finish line." Dr. Phil

Every time you go orienteering you need a focus. There are many factors that will determine focus. Is it Competition or Training? Is it a Classic or a Middle or a Sprint? Is it an Individual or a Relay, and which Leg are you running? Is it Urban or Terrain, and what sort of Terrain?

At different levels of orienteering competence the foci could be very similar irrespective of the factors, or the foci could be highly tailored.

A beginner may consistently go out with a focus on specific techniques that they wish to do well, whilst a competent orienteer may vary the foci and may also introduce a focus on approach to the course. An elite orienteer will consider all the factors about the race and develop a unique set of foci that are most likely centred round approach rather than technique.

Regardless of experience there is one key and common attribute about all foci.

Foci *must be positive.*

## HAVING FOCUS

Every race should have a focus.

For the Beginner it is recommended that the foci should be limited to 3 things and that they should positively remind you of techniques that you need to use. For example:

*Orientate the Map, Use Attack Points, Thumb the Map*  
Or  
*Orientate the Map, Aim Off, Pace Count.*



Geoff Ellis RAFO at the 2007 BOKTrot at Gare Hill.

For the Competent Orienteer, again the foci should number up to 3, but this time you might like to introduce an *approach*:

*Use Attack Points, Thumb the Map, Take on Contours*  
Or  
*SECCAM\*, Pace Count, Orientate the Map.*

At the Elite level the foci are most likely to be highly race specific and mainly approach based:

*TOPCARE\*\*, Winning Routes, Beacons, Aggressive*  
Or  
*Run the Diagonals, Take on Terrain, Close contact in Dunes.*  
Or  
*Fast Decisions, Force the Pace, All or Nothing.*  
Or (as used in Venice)  
*Piazzas are Unique, Double Simplification, Bang Bang the Canals.*

## COMMUNICATING FOCUS

Having focus is important, but acting on it consciously is more so. Remind yourself of the focus for that race using a Focus Card.

The Focus Card you use will be unique to you, but a suggested format with examples is offered.

Start Start Time Course	Red Start 11:22 Orange	North Start 12:34 Black
<i>Focus 1</i>	<i>Orientate the Map</i>	<i>TOPCARE</i>
<i>Focus 2</i>	<i>Thumb the Map</i>	<i>Beacons</i>
<i>Focus 3</i>	<i>Use Attack Points</i>	<i>Winning Routes</i>

By using a piece of paper that will fit in your control descriptions holder you can remind yourself of your foci on the way to the start. It will also be the last thing that you see before you take your control descriptions and will give you a positive reminder on what you need to focus on for that race.

\*SECCAM = *Steady Early Check Compass And Map.*

\*\*TOPCARE = *Thumb, Orientate, Plan (with CARE), Control, Attack Point (or Access for Urban), Route, Exit.*

# CompassSport

## Orienteering Magazine

Published six times a year.

SUBSCRIPTIONS address:  
subscriptions@CompassSport.co.uk  
COMPASSSPORT SUBSCRIPTIONS  
85 Deacon Road  
Kingston Upon Thames  
KT2 6LS