

Coaching Tip – Control Enlargement

Today I'm going to discuss an advanced form of precision map reading called Control Enlargement. This is most helpful to use on the advanced courses, but can be used on any course when the control point is a small feature.

Simply put, Control Enlargement is a way of making the control easier to find by expanding your perception of it. No control feature is sitting out there by itself, there's always something around it or nearby it. So, you can make it easier to find by enlarging the control feature, making it physically bigger, by including surrounding features. For example, see the control feature not as just a boulder, but a boulder on the side of a specific hill. Find the hill first and finding the boulder becomes easier. If there's a cliff face in a reentrant, make the whole reentrant your enlarged control feature. Or even go larger....

A few years ago, at an A-meet in another state, I discovered folks on my course discussing one particular control afterward that they found very difficult. I was surprised because I thought that control was too easy for the Green course it was on. So, I spent some time listening to them describe how they had difficulty and compared it to what I did. I discovered that the difference in their difficulty and my ease of finding it was a bit of knowledge I'd picked up from a Canadian Team member a year or so before, Control Enlargement.

The control was a small point feature, but what made it easier for me was that it was a short distance away from a clearing and the clearing covered most of a saddle defined by 2 distinct adjacent hilltops, and one of those distinct hilltops had a major trail crossing just on the far side of the hilltop. When I looked at the control, I'd expanded my perception of the control to include the clearing, saddle, hilltops and trail crossing. I'd followed the major trail to the hill, crossed the top to the saddle, crossed the clearing and shot off the end of it to the control site point feature.

The execution of my plan involved several other skills and techniques, which I will cover in future tips, but remember, first you have to know where you are going. If the control site is small, make it bigger by enlarging it to cover surrounding features and most of the time, it becomes much easier to find.

Robin Shannonhouse
USOF Level 2 Coach