

Coaching Tip - Recovery & Relocation

I'm not sure anyone has ever run a perfect course, although a few have told me they've come close. Pretty much everyone will make a mistake now and then that requires them to stop and admit they aren't where they thought they were on the course and they need to figure out how to correct the mistake. We call that process Recovery & Relocation.

Contrary to some claims, the map or compass is likely not the problem. The most common reason to get mis-oriented (we aren't "lost") is a lack of concentration. You start thinking about how tired you are or how you need to do this or that when you get back, or maybe you see something and get distracted. But ultimately, you figure out that you missed a step in your navigation and it would take a lot of creative landscaping to make the surrounding terrain match where you think you are on the map.

Ooops!

Don't despair, don't start running around from hilltop to hilltop like a headless chicken, don't try to find someone to ask where you are. You got yourself into this and you can get yourself out of it. You just need to determine your current location and plan your route again. Efficiently.

If you don't know where you are, here are the steps to follow:

1. Stop! Don't make the situation worse.
2. Remember your last know location and mentally list several features you've seen since and try to find them on the map.
3. Determine some features around you and try to find them on the map.
4. Determine likely mistakes and where they might have led you.
5. If you have a likely guess of location, verify it by testing that location on a short leg, identifying features you would find.
6. No "creative landscaping", don't lie to yourself.
7. If quick recovery fails, determine the nearest linear feature you can't miss on a rough compass bearing, run to it, then run along it, looking at features, until you can positively identify your location on the map.
8. Once you know where you really are, plan your new route to the control site from your present location.

To help you settle yourself down so you can think clearly, there's an acronym, SOFA, it will help you remember what to do. Just remember to relax on the SOFA:

S - Stop moving

O - Orient your map

F - Find a feature in the terrain

A - Acquire it on the map

Once you are back on track, and you know where you are and have a plan to get to the next control, don't start worrying about how much time you lost. Put that mistake out of your mind. Nobody else out there is running a perfect course either. Now go for it!

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