



# The Follow Through

□ GREG SACK, OCIN

As I sit here by Vista Lake deep in the Boundary Waters I realize how much navigational skills we utilized in getting here. I also have noted how much of a family project it has been.

We each pitched in on the planning of route choices. Developing strategies for getting here was a group project. The ability to think things through, providing for likely situations and preferred outcomes, is a life-skill. Development of these skills are at the core of why orienteering should be taught.

But there is more. As I sit between my wife and son, having recently participated in MNOC's rogaine at Jay Cooke where my two sons formed a cohesive team, I recognize that these experiences have brought us closer together.

It is a natural function for confidence to develop as skills develop. And as skills develop, independence is achieved, and granted. All of this has positive effects on our personal relationships.

## Benefits to Orienteering

So now that we have gotten all warm and fuzzy inside, what does this have to do with orienteering and schools? There has been a fair amount of discussion regarding what kind of person is likely to become a lifelong orienteer.

The short answer to that question is the successful orienteer. But better clues can be found in articles like Janet Porter's April article (ONA vol. 18, no. 3, pp 39) and by looking at the makeup of the 2002 JWOC team.

Is there any doubt that these young people will be active in orienteering for a long time to come? They have all been active in orienteering through the involvement of their families.

This does not mean all members of the family are strong orienteers. Often these young people drag their families to orienteering. (Again, see Janet's article.)

This is very significant. As educators we want kids to develop the life-skills that orienteering teaches. As orienteers we have a vested interest in developing the sport and active participants.

## Lessons Learned

Past articles in this column have covered how to hold school events, cross curricular benefits of the sport, and resources for teaching orienteering. But educators, like good golfers and batters in baseball, know that success requires a good follow through.

A good follow through in this case would be providing the chance for the students to practice and further develop the skills they have been taught. This would require the involvement of the parents and family.

This is where the club can best aid the teacher of orienteering. I strongly advocate close coordination between teachers and clubs. As soon as possible after there is a school event there should be a meet where students can show their skills to their parents.

Each student should receive a copy of the local club's schedule and internet links on the back of their schoolyard map. This map or a coupon could be presented at the local meet for a onetime family discount.

It is pointless to teach a skill that isn't used. The sooner the student gets to practice the newly acquired skills, the more likely she/he will continue to develop them. Then the cross-curricular benefits and life-skills can truly take hold.

But none of this can take place without the involvement of at least one parent. Obviously, the kid can not take herself/himself to meets, no matter how excited he/she might get. The parents need to see the value to the child, and to the family.

They also need to see their children excited.



## Other Allies

Kids don't remove their brains for the summer, regardless what the rumors and comics say. Many kids have rich learning experiences on vacations and at camps. And camps and parents are often searching for more ways to further enrich the kids' lives.

This past summer my wife and I developed an orienteering sequence for an Outdoor Skills day camp for Cincinnati Parks where she is a naturalist. We utilized several of the ideas discussed recently in this column and received rave reviews from both staff and kids.

Because of the success of the summer camp, the Park Board's education department is working on developing orienteering offerings for schools and considering making some Permanent Courses as Nature Trails.

Sleep-away camps and special events camps often need guidance in developing meaningful and fun activities. Most of these camps are only familiar with Scouts' methods and are unaware of the leadership and confidence building benefits of the sport.

## Don't Wait

It is not enough to just attach a coupon or get other institutions involved, though. It is important to involve parents as early and as often as possible.

Teachers and parents know full well how easy it is to let things slide. It was one of the strong elements in Chris Cassone's program that he had the teacher bring parents in to help with the off-campus white course.

Even better would be to have the parents give it a go. The best experience that I have been involved with in teaching orienteering was a Father-Daughter event. It was part of a weekend at a sleep-away camp.

There were some pretty special moments as daughters and dads worked together to find real treasure. ▲



Photos by Leo Sack

