Relocation: Help – I don't know where I am!

All orienteers have had that thought and the outcome from this is variable:

- For some it is blind panic and the brain enters the 'headless chicken' mode.
- For others, it is a short 'eekk' before they work out what happened, where they are and what to do to get back on their course.

So how do you get to be like the latter orienteer and waste very little time?

There are many reasons for navigational errors. Common ones are:

1. 90/180 degree errors where you have confused North and South on your compass/map.
2. Misjudging the distance and running too far or stopping short.
3. Parallel errors where similar sets of features have misled you.
4. Being dragged off course by undergrowth, the terrain or other runners.
5. Making the terrain fit the map regardless of evidence to the contrary.

Everyone gets lost at some time when they orienteer – these make up the good 'car park' stories! Nearly everyone reappears by 'Courses close' time, very few orienteers have a search party out looking for them.

The starting point for relocation is to try and prevent it in the first place. Systematic Orienteering really helps here – BUT only if you stick to it!

- → Make a **PLAN** and execute this carefully, keeping good map contact (remember to 'thumb the map').
- → Ensure that you have accurate **Direction**.
- → Does the **Picture** in front of you match what you expect from the map?

Refer to the Systematic Orienteering sheet to refresh yourself about this.

So, you do not know where you are. Once again, there is a routine to follow:

1. STOP! If you continue to move you are going to become even more lost.
2. Think about what you have seen / type of ground you have gone over since you last knew where you were. When doing this, I put my map behind my back so I am not distracted by that. You are forming a 'mental picture' of you route.
3. Now look at you map having set it with your compass, find your last known point on it. Start to go through your mental picture and try to work this out on your map.
4. Ask yourself a question – was I accurately following my **Direction**? If so, what was the direction?
5. As well as doing this, get your head up and look around you. If you are in a re-entrant or depression, it is useful to head up hill to get a better view of the surrounding terrain. Is there anything distinctive that you can see? For example, a pylon line (yes, look up for these if they are in the area!), a steep

slope going uphill away from you, some large crags, a pond, etc. From the noticeable feature/s you can see, can you identify them on the map? A word of caution here – it is really easy to think that you have identified the feature on the map but the feature might not be unique. It is so easy to say to yourself "I am here" and you might not be!

6. Once you have established where you are, **PLAN** your route to the control.
7. If all else fails, try to retrace your steps to your last known point, take a deep breath and start again to **PLAN** the route you want to take.
8. Finally a big No, No, No! You only ask another competitor for help if you are injured; working out where you are for yourself is part of the sport.

To help you a bit more . . .

- Have a look at this video, staring BASOC's own Hilary Q.
- Better Orienteering has a visual guide to Relocation – scroll down the page to find the graphic.
- And finally, even the best (at the World Championships 2011) can get things wrong at times! This one is fun to watch.
  - When on the leg should the athlete have stopped?
  - From the list at the start of this sheet, which 'common errors' have you identified?
  - How do you think the athletes should have relocated?
  - Watch the video through to the end – 'KAU' gives up and retires from the course. A couple of days later she came 4th in the Middle Distance race!