

ORIENTEERING

by Terry DelliQuadri

An interview with Bill Hall.



Bill Hall and Tanna at a control point.

Orienteering is a cross-country race in which each participant uses a map and compass to navigate between checkpoints located in unfamiliar terrain. I, Terry DelliQuadri, had been in a few orienteering races, and I decided to find out more about the sport. I contacted Bill Hall from the Scandinavian Lodge and set up an interview.

He explained, "Orienteering originated in Sweden. A gym teacher there was seeing a decline of interest in training for track. He decided to combine something he had done in the military with their training. He made them find controls in the woods. He combined the element of thinking with running. Before he knew it, they were all running excellent times. He had gotten their minds off the running aspect of it. It's been a required school subject since 1942 in Sweden.

"It's not necessary to be in good physical shape. Orienteering is something that anyone can do. A novice orienteerer can go out with his family and walk the course to find the controls. It doesn't require any real physical training. As people work further and develop more skills, they may want to spend some time training for competitions. When a person's up against the clock, he's trying to get the fastest time possible. It's the same as in a track meet or a cross country race. In higher classes, he needs to run and take the fastest route from point to point

because the competition will be running, too."

Bill Hall went on to say, "I would recommend that a beginner go to a clinic first. He should do that before he ever gets on a novice course. If he has no trouble with the novice course, then he can try the intermediate one and later, move up to the advanced course. The Scandinavian Lodge sponsors a one day clinic prior to our local race the Rabbit Ears Search. We work a lot with map reading games. We go over how to read a map, what the symbols mean, the legend, scale, and how to read contour lines. We also teach how to use the compass and map together and work them as one."

Bill Hall is the assistant manager and ski school director at the Scandinavian Lodge. He grew up in Denver and went to the Bear Creek High School in Morrison, Colorado. After graduating in 1970, Bill went on to Western State College where he got a degree in recreation and a minor in psychology. During college Bill skied on the alpine ski team. In his last year he became interested in cross country skiing. After going through a certification program of the Rocky Mountain Ski Instructor's Association, he became an instructor at the Scandinavian Lodge. Through Sven Wiik's programs at the lodge, he became involved with orienteering, and in 1973 took over the organization of the annual meet on Rabbit Ears Pass.



Comparing routes after the race.

"An orienteerer can easily go through a one day clinic and obtain a good understanding of the sport. It does, however, take a lot of experience to become really good. An advanced orienteerer has very refined map skills. He can read contour lines just like pictures and feel them as he walks up a hill. He can see straight from the map to the terrain and set his route from one control to the next in a matter of seconds. For a beginner, that's a very hard thing to do. In the advanced class map reading, route selection, compass use, and physical conditioning are needed to be a winner."

Bill pointed out that, "The best training is orienteering itself. If one ran courses everyday, he would get practice in setting bearings and reading maps. We have some practice courses here at the lodge. On the national level there's even whole teams that do a lot of training together. They also practice orienteering problems.

"A practice problem would be devising the best route from a map in one's head. Which way should I go? Is it best to go around the cliff, follow the path, or climb straight up and over to get to the other side? There's a lot of decision-making involved in orienteering. It's not just a physical sport. It's a mental sport, too. He's making decisions from the moment he leaves the start and even before. If one doesn't use his head, then he'll have to use his feet instead, and run a little farther.

"A novice course may be three or four kilometers long and have three or four controls. The intermediate course may be five or six kilometers long with up to eight controls. One could run possibly twelve kilometers on an advanced course, and locate possibly twelve controls. He'll always be assured of some good

exercise. Someone can be out for two hours looking for controls without realizing they're getting a lot of exercise. That's why more and more foot running enthusiasts are taking part in the orienteering races."

Bill Hall emphasized the importance of good equipment. "A good pair of running shoes is needed. There is a special orienteering shoe which doesn't wear out as quickly in the woods as regular shoes. They're made of tougher leather and are waterproof. A pair of long nylon pants is good to have when in deep brush or willows. It's nice to have protection for the legs. There are full orienteering suits. They help to keep from tearing up the skin. A good compass is essential, one with a movable housing and a 360 degree radius. A Silva orienteering compass is good. You can get it for seven dollars. The compass also needs a transparent base plate to enable you to see the map through it."

Bill discussed strategies. "One cannot have an advanced strategy because he doesn't know the course until he leaves the start and gets to the master map. At the master map the competitor transfers the controls to his own maps, which were received at the registration area. He then takes a bearing from that point to the first control. Using the protractor on the compass, you can decipher a bearing from point A to point B. Then match up the magnetic north arrow with the direction of travel arrow and follow that arrow to get to the control. The magnetic needle always points north, and you're just running a certain angle off north. Then different strategies come into play. Someone may have decided to go over the hill that someone else went around. There are a lot of decisions being made on what route to take. That's where the map is used.

"It's always frustrating to run so far from one control to the next, only to find that it isn't where



The Finish Line



“You’ll always be assured of some good exercise.”

you thought it was. Sometimes the course setters get a little off in their locations on the map. When you finally find one of those controls after looking for maybe twenty minutes, it’s a great feeling. You can say, ‘navigating was right after all. I found the control.’

“The more I set courses, the more I start to understand the fact that the controls could be a little off in placement. All course setters are supposed to have a course vetter who goes around after the course setter to see if they’re in the right place.

“The course can be set inside on a master map before even leaving home. The course setter can set the novice, intermediate, and advanced courses all at once. Course setting is a challenging experience in itself. It takes a full day to go out a place all 15 controls. It’s kind of fun. A course setter can try to do little things like putting the controls behind a tree, a boulder, or low to the ground. They can pick a very interesting part of the terrain and put it on that.

“The novice course has to be set fairly easily so that the controls can be seen from 200 meters away. The beginners should have a chance to find every control. If they get lost in their first meet, then they won’t want to try it again. If they have fun finding all the controls, then they’ll want to come back and do it again.

“I do compete myself during the summer months in the Rocky Mountain Orienteering Club. They’ve had meets in Snowmass, Colorado Springs, Palmer Park, Virginia Dale, and Leadville. There’s a schedule of twelve meets this year including the two sponsored by the Scandinavian Lodge, the ski orienteering meet and the Rabbit Ears Search. They do all the advertising for the meets. We try to get local interest. There is a registration fee for the meets

which usually runs about \$3.50 for non-members and about a dollar less for members of the club. There are about 200 paid members. In our meet last year we had the biggest turnout in a couple of years. We had about 50 people. That’s much smaller than the meets over in Europe. They have five day meets over in Sweden in the summertime with as many as 2000 competitors.

“I’ve also been down to New Mexico to the Philmount Scout Ranch for a national meet. That course was an experience. It was a lot more difficult than those that are set around here. They place the controls a little more strategically. Everyone really has to be in the right place to find them. Sometimes the controls are close to the ground. I’ve never been lost, but I got to the point in that race where I was just totally fouled up and had to go back to the start and check in for the day. I just lost all idea of where I was. It was a two day meet, so I got to try it again the next day. A safety bearing is given before the start so that no one will get lost.”

I was wondering if Bill had ever run into anything dangerous, so I asked him. He explained, “I’ve had no major first aid problem. I’ve seen some wildlife though. It’s a great feeling to be at the mercy of the wilderness. When someone is out in the woods, there’s no one else around. They might have a little doubt in their mind what they should do. It gets the adrenalin going.

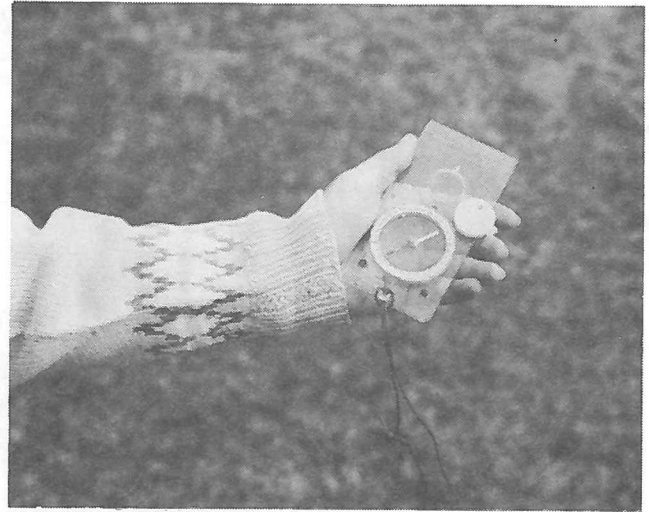
“A meet can be anywhere. It doesn’t have to be in the dense woods. A topographical map of the area, is needed. It’s hard to do it in a cornfield, though. The challenge wouldn’t be as great because of the terrain. Someone could just orienteer around the city using the road map. They can try to find the Denver Mint, for example. That’s all orienteering is, finding a specific point.

“There’s different types of orienteering. There’s point-to-point orienteering where everyone has to circumnavigate the course



At the awards ceremony.

according to the route on the master map. Everyone has to find all the controls, and they are clocked in as soon as they punch their cards to show what they have been there and cross the finish line. It could take possibly five hours. Another form of orienteering is score orienteering. Everyone has a set amount of time to find as many controls as he can. Points can deducted for every minute that someone is out over the time limit. There is also line orienteering where the master map only has a line. The controls are not marked. Everyone has to follow that line exactly. If they do then they'll come upon the controls."



Results 1981 Rabbit Ears Search
Orienteering Meet Aug. 23, 1981

Novice Men

- 1. Bob Golub 37:54
- 2. Les Hampton 48:24

Novice Women

- 1. Verla Kelley 38:00
- 2. Suzanne Golub 51:04
- 3. Libby Scarborough 56:13
- 4. Alice Sharp 47:25

Novice Teams

- 1. Donald & Carl Newell 44:08
- 2. Julie, Brenda & Jill Harmon 44:40
- 3. David & Arron Smith 45:13
- 4. Marilyn, Maya & Sasha Milhouse 63:21

Intermediate Men

- 1. Jim Dudley 42:50
- 2. Steve Wolff 54:20
- 3. Russ Boley 59:19
- 4. Geoffery Wolff 1:25:52

Intermediate Women

- 1. Diana Johns 1:23:19
- 2. Polly Boley 2:26:22
- Becky Boley DQ
- Marilyn Milhouse DQ

Advanced Men

- 1. Larry Mullenay 1:07:55
- 2. Rodney Ley 1:18:31
- 3. Louis Harmon 1:38:56
- 4. Scott Eggleston 1:47:48
- 5. Joe Johns 1:55:25
- 6. Brett Eggleston 1:59:00
- 7. Tyler Arroyo 2:00:55
- 8. Tom Suddath 2:08:45
- 9. Bob Milhous 2:31:28

Advanced Women

- Birgitta Wiik DQ