

on the team need to be an expert navigators, but everyone must at least know the basics so you can be of use when your navigator needs a break or get your team to safety in a funky situation.

T = TERRAIN FEATURES

Maps are cool! Even though they are two dimensional, they are drawn in a way that allows you to see every elevation change and each nook and cranny of the world in surprising detail. With practice, you'll soon notice the map jumping off the page and giving you a miniature 3-D replica of the real estate around you for miles and miles. A good navigator will explain everything they're looking for to the team on their way to the next checkpoint, because you'll need all the eyes and ears you can get (ie. "We're going to traverse around this peak at an average elevation



photos by Will Ramos Photography

of 3500 feet. After the boulder field on the Southeast side, we'll have 4 stream crossings over 2 miles. After the 4th one, we'll descend through a clearing in the trees on the East side of the slope...")

A = ALTITUDE

Your altitude is your elevation gain/loss. It's not only important to know your starting and ending elevations, but to have a handle on all of the changes along the way, as another check that you're on track. Many places look very similar terrain-wise on the map. The only way to pinpoint where you are is by knowing your altitude.

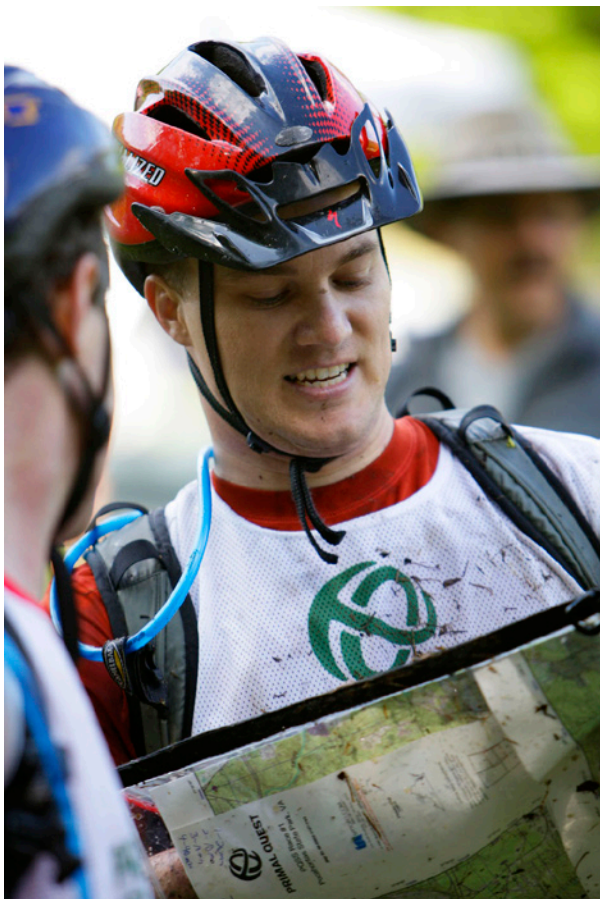
H = HANDRAIL

Handrail is a common term used to describe a terrain feature that alerts you that you may

not be where you're hoping you are! For example, if we miss the trail cutoff we're looking for, we'll hit a river running North to South. If you hit that river, you've gone too far. Don't overlook the handrail as an important tool. They have saved our butts a number of times, especially when the sleepmonsters are coming to get us.

In general, the biggest mistake that teams make out there is to simply look at the distance and direction to the next checkpoint, but not the other three important components that keep you on track. Take a moment to figure out your DATAH and you'll arrive in style—not to mention pretty far ahead of your competitors. See you out there!

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Article courtesy of
Adventure World Magazine
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