

[Listen to News-Press Radio AM 1290: Click Here](#)COMMENTARIES [Search Site](#)

# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Welcome, MAURA | [Logout](#)

Friday, November 17, 2006

FRONT PAGE  
 LOCAL  
 NATIONAL  
 WORLD  
 WEATHER  
 EDITORIALS  
 OPINIONS-LETTERS  
 SPORTS  
 SCENE  
 LIFE  
 REAL ESTATE  
 CLASSIFIEDS  
 BUSINESS  
 ADVERTISING INFO  
 SPECIAL SECTIONS  
 FEATURES  
 ARCHIVES  
 COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS  
 SITE INDEX  
 PHOTO GALLERY-NEW OKIES

## Sports

[Home » Sports](#)[Email Story](#)[Print Story](#)

### RADIO HEADS ANG! BOOM!

DENNIS MORAN, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

November 17, 2006 12:00 AM

Jay Hennigan came to the crossroads where electronics-geek meets athlete -- and he ran right past it, antennas shaking.

Hennigan's a world-class radio orienteer, which means he runs through wooded terrain with a map, compass and radio receiver, hoping to find four radio transmitters and get to the finish faster than his opponents.

If that sounds simple, consider the diverse skill set: He has to be fit, able to run four to six miles over varied terrain including hills and likely some bush-wacking and creek-crossing. He needs to be good at orienting himself with a map and compass, and also at seat-of-the-pants direction finding as he listens to the radio signals. And he needs to make decisions on the fly on what routes to take and which signal to seek first, since they don't have to be found in a particular order.

Also called amateur radio direction finding (ARDF), the sport is still under the radar of popularity in this country. But it has a huge following in Europe and Asia, and it's likely to start catching on here as it hones in on people with certain interests.

Like Hennigan, 55, of Goleta. A longtime ham radio operator and self-described "electronics geek" who works as a network engineer at Impulse Internet Services in Goleta, he's long been a participant in various orienteering and transmitter-finding activities. And though he was not interested in sports in school, the trim Hennigan in recent years has added competitive running as a hobby as a training tool for ARDF.

"I've been a geek all my life, if you will," Hennigan says. "In fact, I joke about this as being one of my 'geeks running through the woods' activities. I also do geo-caching, which is essentially hiking to find hidden objects using GPS."

The development of skills to locate hidden radio transmitters is almost as old as radio itself, becoming a practical concern in wartime and during the Cold War. Transmitter-finding for fun began developing in Scandinavia in the 1950s, according to ARDF Web sites.

For many years world championships have been held in even-numbered years, and Hennigan has been to two, in the Czech Republic in 2004 and in September of this year to Primorsko, Bulgaria, where he placed 16th among 42 competitors in his age bracket for one of the two radio bands used in competition, and 20th in the run using the other band. He competes in the men's 50-59 group.

To get an idea of the popularity of the sport in Europe, Bulgarian Vice President Angel Marin presided over the opening ceremonies of the world championships. Competitors came from 30 countries, and among the 13-member Team USA along with Hennigan was the U.S.'s first-ever medalist -- Nadia Scharlau of North Carolina, who won a bronze in the women's 35 and up division. She was, however, born and raised in Russia and formerly competed for the U.S.S.R.

"It's extremely competitive and a very big deal in these European countries," Hennigan says.

Participation in the U.S. tends to cluster in a few "centers of influence" where someone gets others interested, said former competitor Marvin Johnston of Santa Barbara. Johnston, who now sets up and officiates ARDF competitions, and was a juror at the last two world championships, is largely responsible for recruiting the half-dozen or so people who do it locally. Johnston is also the meet director for the U.S. Championships to be held next September at Lake Tahoe.

"Santa Barbara has probably as many people who do this as any place else in the country," Johnston said.

Locally Johnston sets up practices at Lake Los Carneros, which has terrain that's been mapped to the detail ARDFers like, showing gradations of elevation, indications of brush thickness and trails. They also go down south and set up ARDF events in areas that have been mapped for the related sport of orienteering, which involves finding objects with a map and compass but involves no radio transmitters.

Johnston got involved in the sport in 1995, and competed with the first three teams the U.S. sent to world championships, starting in 1998.

"My interest is really in helping develop the USA ARDF team," Johnston said. "I would love to see a team that's centered here in Santa Barbara that makes the rest of the nation wish they'd gotten involved with it."

As Hennigan describes it, ARDF competitions are timed and have staggered starts so one competitor can't just follow the lead of another.

A course is typically about six square miles, Johnston said, and contains five transmitters marked with orange-and-white flags. The transmitters are sometimes called 'foxes,' and another name the sport goes by is 'fox-tailing' or 'fox-teering.' Not all age brackets have to find all five, and in Bulgaria Hennigan was concerned with four of them. Each transmitter sends out its own pattern of beeps for one minute, then is silent for four minutes as each of the others takes a turn.

Once on the course, as the first transmitter beeps, the decisions begin. Go over or around the hill? Toward this beep first, or that one? What is the best order? There are no GPS devices allowed, only map, compass, receiver and sense of direction.

Once he starts running toward that first transmitter, "one of the things that will happen is, as you're running, you are making marks on your map determining which direction you think the other (transmitters) are. I may be going toward transmitter number one, and I'll draw a line on my map on which way I think number four is. Then as I'm finding these other ones, I'll have several converging lines on my map that converge around where number four should be," Hennigan said.

Anyone interested in getting involved with ARDF can call Johnston at 687-8881. More information is available at the USA RDF Web site [www.homingin.com](http://www.homingin.com).

e-mail: [dmoran@newspress.com](mailto:dmoran@newspress.com)

Book now  Hurry - over 30 beaches from \$79\* each way.   
DISCOUNT VALID ONLY WHEN USING A VALID MASTERCARD OFFER BASED ON PURCHASE TAXES/FEEES. TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY.

Subscribe to the News-press  
 JOIN TODAY

#### Sports

URGENT - TV reports: Ex-Michigan coach Schembechler dies at 77

U.S. 8, China 0, 5 innings

Boise State resumes BCS quest with distractions

Friesinger clocks fastest time at sea level to win 1,500 meter race

Huskies hope to spoil Washington State bowl aspirations

Champions Q-School Par Scores

Champions Q-School Scores

Weekend Time Schedule

NBA Leaders

This year, it's The (Other) Game

A's go with experience in picking Geren as manager

#### Related Stories

A very different type of hide-and--seek  
 ARCHIVE Aug 18, 2000

Lifestyle sports column  
 ARCHIVE May 3, 2002

Police say gang problems on the rise  
 ARCHIVE Jul 1, 2006

Setting the local stage for top performing arts center  
 ARCHIVE Jun 4, 2002

E. & J. GALLO BUYING BRIDLEWOOD WINERY  
 ARCHIVE Mar 25, 2004

Letters: Don't turn Cottage into Taj Mahal  
 ARCHIVE Jan 13, 2006

High-tech HIDE 'N' SEEK  
 ARCHIVE Jun 5, 2006

Pro rally team outraces the millionaires  
 ARCHIVE Mar 30, 2001

RECREATION ROUNDUP: A DAY FOR ADVENTURE  
 ARCHIVE Jul 15, 2005

Lompoc residents face deadline to vote on hospital bond  
 ARCHIVE Sep 11, 2005



[View Today's Front Page Ads by Google](#)

[Top SB Defense Attorney](#)  
 Nominated Best Santa Barbara Lawyer Protect Your Rights & Get Results!  
[www.lytel-lawyer.com](http://www.lytel-lawyer.com)

[Santa Barbara Beach Homes](#)  
 View all Santa Barbara & Montecito area beach houses now for sale.  
[www.SantaBarbaraBeach.com](http://www.SantaBarbaraBeach.com)

[Philip S. Tseng, Esq.](#)  
 Attorney and Counselor (805) 624.6529  
[www.sbattoorneyatlaw.com](http://www.sbattoorneyatlaw.com)

[Wedding Make-Up Artist](#)  
 Santa Barbara, CA. Make-Up Artist. Look like a star on your big day!  
[www.avrilstyle.com](http://www.avrilstyle.com)

motorola Q<sup>+</sup> Exclusively from verizon wireless  
 The nation's slimmest smartphone  
 .45in  
 Now Only \$99.99  
 BUY NOW  
\*Rebate. SAVE \$200 AFTER REBATES\* 16/MBH 2-YR. ACTIVATION ON VOICE & DATA CHOICE BUNDLES™. \$79.99 OR HIGHER.