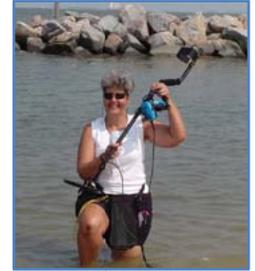




COMPETITION HUNTING

By Ina Finn

If a club has been around for a long time, they will have experienced seeders who understand the importance of evenly distributing targets. Our club usually breaks the hunt field up into 4 or 6 quadrants, and each seeder gets a quadrant. Usually, an official of the club or someone who is not hunting will seed the prize tokens, so none of the regular seeders can be accused of cheating.



Success in a competition hunt depends on 2 things - speed and luck. First and foremost, you must completely embrace the concept that **EVERY SECOND COUNTS!** When the whistle blows, everyone has an equal chance, but it's the fastest competitors who will walk off the field with the most coins and tokens. Do **NOT** spend time inspecting your targets. Just dump them in your waist basket (you **DO** have a waist basket, don't you?), and move on. If it takes more than 3 scoops, it's too deep and probably isn't a seeded target. Also, don't try and analyze every target because some clubs will hide a coin or token inside a bottle cap or tape it to a pulltab. At the beginning of the hunt, targets will be plentiful, so you may have to play a little "Twister." If you get into an area with multiple signals, while you're digging the first one, plant your feet on the others. In other words, try to spread yourself out to protect your nest of signals so the guy next to you doesn't come along and clean out your arc in short order. A sturdy, medium-size handheld scoop is best. With a long-handled scoop, you'll spend too much time reaching into the basket for the target, as opposed to just dumping the contents in your waist basket.

Field position.... try to avoid the corners because you will converge with other participants in a matter of seconds. Some people like to race to the center of the field immediately, and some will remain along the sidelines. If the field has been seeded properly, there should be no single area holding more targets. This is where the luck factor comes in. I've seen experienced hunters walk off the field with hundreds of coins and no tokens, and I've seen novice hunters find only a handful of coins and several tokens.

Some last thoughts on preparations... Of course, fresh or fully charged batteries are a must. **ALWAYS** check your detector at least a half hour before the hunt to make sure it's in good working order. It's also a good idea to mark your detector with fluorescent tape or a name tag so it's easily distinguishable from the piles of identical detectors, scoops and baskets. Plan to arrive early enough to register and get yourself situated before the starting signal. Is your car gassed up, your directions clear, and have you listened to the weather and traffic reports to adjust your departure time accordingly? These questions may seem overly rudimentary, but I've seen scores of people miss hunts for those exact reasons. Other incidentals would include rain gear or sunblock depending on the weather, a folding chair, a cooler packed with food and plenty of drinks if there are no concessions nearby, and a back-up detector if you have one.

The first time I entered a hunt, I felt completely intimidated and overwhelmed by the frenzy of activity going on around me. I found it very different from the peace and solitude I usually enjoy while detecting. I also found it fun and exciting and a terrific social opportunity to meet other detectorists. Since then, I've entered many hunts, made a lot of friends along the way, and have won a fair share of top prizes. If you go with the attitude of trying to make your entry fee back, you'll probably be disappointed. But if your intention is to have some fun, try a new experience, and meet some great people, you'll have a **BLAST!**