Radio Contesting – Having Fun is Easy

Doug Grant, K1DG
Explaining Radio Contesting to a non-ham (or non-contester)

“We operate for 24/48 hours, log all the stations we contact, and see who can make the most contacts in the most states, countries”

“How do you know who won?”

“We send our logs to the sponsor, and they check them”

“How much money do you get for winning?”

“Nothing”

“Huh?? Then why do you do this?”
The Four Stages of Contesting

- Starting out
- Getting hooked on the game
- Making it more fun
  - The right way
  - The wrong way
- Passing it along
My First Contest: 1968 Novice Roundup (WN1ICD)

- 2 QSOs x 2 sec = 4 points
- Wait! Where’s the score?
- You mean you have to submit a log?
- Would have been dead last in W1
What’s this Sweepstakes thing?

- 1969: WA1JYY, Advanced Class
- DX-100, SB-10 SSB adaptor, SX-110, fan dipole at 20 feet
- Band changes took 5 minutes
WA1JYY
1969 SS
183-41-19 CW
117-39-16 SSB
Who else was in the 1969 SS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.W.</th>
<th>Multi Operator</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Operator</td>
<td>Multi Operator</td>
<td>Single Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2K1R</td>
<td>W3NKI</td>
<td>W3AZD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W9RQM</td>
<td>W9YB</td>
<td>W9YT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K00RK</td>
<td>WØHSC</td>
<td>WØAIH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4PUZ</td>
<td>W5YM</td>
<td>W5RUB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W8SH</td>
<td>WA8LVT</td>
<td>W8SH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1BGD/2</td>
<td>W25Z</td>
<td>W2MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAØEMS</td>
<td>K0GXR</td>
<td>WAØEMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1BPW</td>
<td>W1MX</td>
<td>K1PKQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K7WWR</td>
<td>WA7LPF</td>
<td>W5QQQ/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K6EBB</td>
<td>W6BIP</td>
<td>WA6IVN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W4KFC</td>
<td>WB4KPD</td>
<td>W4KFC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA7KUW</td>
<td>WAØVPQ</td>
<td>K9LBQ/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4B1I</td>
<td>WB4IQD</td>
<td>K4B1I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W6RW</td>
<td>WA7IFD</td>
<td>K6UYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5YAA</td>
<td>K5L2O</td>
<td>W5JAW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE7BDJ</td>
<td>VE5AA</td>
<td>VE5US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why are these guys still at it 50 years later?

- The abundant cash prizes
- The admiration of family, friends, and co-workers
- The groupies

Must be something else…
1973 Open CD Party (prehistoric version of NAQP)

Top Scorers

Eastern Massachusetts

WALRBR (WALJYY, opr.)*
331, 055-903-73-20
WA2

KLOME* 160, 300-158, 70-12

WALOLV 83, 250-333-50-16

WILAX 71, 390-235-59-5

WALNIK* 22, 145-103-43-12

WALLAI* 11, 900-66-34-7

WALPGY 11, 725-64-35-8

WALQIK* 10, 850-70-31-4 WA3

WILUF 1820-26-14-3

WALLKU (+WALS LAK LKX)* E
151, 470-455-66-

Maine

K3H
K3K
K3O

Illinois

W9DOB 331, 150-889-74-

WB9HAD 183, 400-520-70-18

K9UQN 24, 420-106-44-5

W9BV 21, 000-100-40-2

WB9EBO 20, 865-104-39-12

WA9MESS* 15, 990-78-41-15

W9LKV* 11, 715-66-33-1

W9AES 10, 560-59-33-2

W9GQX* 7840-56-28-11

W9DOB (now W9XR) beat me by about 0.3 QSO
Top Scorers in 1973 Open CD

- CW
  - W6PAA  WA2UOO  K4PUZ  WA5LES  W9YT

- SSB
  - WB2OEU  WA5RXT  WA5LES  K5PFL  W9DOB

Still crazy after all these years !?!
Fun!
It comes in many forms

- Personal Satisfaction
  - Better score than last year
  - Better score than “that guy”
  - Cool band opening
  - Finessing through pileups

- Part of a team
  - Help your club (or multiop) win

- Peer recognition
At some point, you make a decision

**Play by the rules**
- Work on improving skills
- Power consistent with class
- Don’t use cluster when SO
- Submit log when contest ends

**Make your own rules**
- Work on being obnoxious
- More power (turn to “11”)
- Use the cluster – who will know?
- Take time to scrub log (fix calls, add calls, “adjust” times, etc.)
Why people cheat

- Desire to be a “hero” on the field of competition
- Achieve immortality via community legend, fame, and lasting peer recognition
- Seeking current community “stardom”
- Prove superiority over others (sibling rivalry)
- A means to prove self-worth
- These are *Powerful forces*, worthy of study and caution
Rationalizations for cheating

- Everybody is doing it
  - (#1 Reason, and provably false)

- Nobody was hurt
  - (Except those you beat)

- Nobody was watching
  - (Not any longer)

- Overcome unfair disadvantages
  - (Life is not fair)

- Rules don’t specifically disallow a practice

- Rules apply to others, not me/us
CALVIN AND HOBBES

I don't believe in ethics any more.

As far as I'm concerned, the ends justify the means.

Get what you can while the getting's good—that's what I say! Might makes right! The winners write the history books!

It's a dog-eat-dog world, so I'll do whatever I have to, and let others argue about whether it's "right" or not.

Hey!

Why'd you do that??

You were in my way. Now you're not. The ends justify the means.

I didn't mean for everyone, you dolt! Just me!

Ah!
But people *DO* notice...

- “That guy was too loud in the NAQP”
- “That guy uses a pair of 8877s”
- “That guy has remote receivers in …”
- “That guy uses spots but enters as unassisted”
- “That guy padded his log with bogus QSOs”
- “That guy operated with a broad signal to push away nearby stations and keep his channel clear”
Don't be "That Guy".

Nobody likes "That Guy".
Cheating = Rudeness

Breaking a written rule

Breaking an unwritten rule
Excessive Power

- Do not exceed power limits for your category
- Just because the knobs go to 11…
- Applies to ALL power categories
Examples of Unwritten “Rules”

- Do not make pre-arranged schedules
- Do identify frequently
- Do not ask friends to work you … only
- Do encourage club members to work everyone
- Do not work friends with multiple calls
- Do work and spot stations equally
Examples of Unwritten “Rules”

- **Do not** telephone or text message multipliers
- **Do** make an effort to help casual callers enjoy the contest and make a contact
- **Do not** let others “help” your single-op effort
- **Do not** plop down 100 Hertz away from your competitor to intentionally disrupt their run

See the ARRL’s “HF Contesting - Good Practices, Interpretations & Suggestions”
No “Log Washing”

- Using QRZ.com, spot history, 3830 reports, LoTW, club databases
- Using utilities to analyze and correct the log
- Replaying the contest to change the log
- Asking others who they worked or if a call sign is correct
- “Fixing” off times or band changes
- It’s over when the 2359 rolls over to 0000
Some people just don’t “get it”

Lance Armstrong admits he would still be lying about doping if he had not been found out

Seven-times Tour de France winner, who is serving a life ban from sport, says only federal investigation stopped his lying about taking drugs
Honest competitors earn respect; cheaters do not

Hank Aaron
755 Home Runs

Barry Bonds
762 Home Runs
- Banned from all CQ Contests for 5 years
- Previous wins deleted
- This does not sound like fun
Cultural differences (according to Wikipedia, not me!)

- England: “Everything which is not forbidden is allowed”
- Germany: “Everything which is not allowed is forbidden”
- France: “Everything is allowed even if it is forbidden”
- Russia: “Everything is forbidden, even that which is expressly allowed” (Everything which is expressly forbidden is the best way to succeed)
Covering your cheating takes too much effort to be fun

- The RBN and wideband recording systems can verify what really happened.
- Packet/Skimmer cheating is easy to detect.
- Power outliers sometimes obvious (plots, RBN).
- Waiting until the log deadline so you can pad your log with guys who did not submit a log will be detected.
- Open Logs allow an element of crowd-sourcing.
Cheating leads to more rules
Expend your time and energy in more positive ways

- If someone beats you, ask to exchange logs/rate sheets

- If you are getting clobbered on a specific band, figure out why and work on it (hint: antenna)

- Review your Log-Checking Report and learn from it

- You will gain great satisfaction from improving your station and skills
Applying Positive Peer Pressure to a Suspected Cheater

- Be aware of your motives
  - Is it personal?
  - If necessary, enlist others to help deliver the message
- Give the benefit of the doubt
  - They may not realize what they are doing is against the rules
- Choose the right time
  - Can they listen without feeling attacked?
- Don’t be angry or accusatory
  - Treat the issue as a mistake, not a crime
  - Focus on actions, not character
- Be there
  - People cheat because they see others get away with it
  - Not confronting the problem hurts everyone
Communication Success is Defined by the Receiver
Non-contesters Don’t Like Us

- And we give them plenty of reasons!
  - CQ first, ask if frequency is in use later

- A few bad apples create a bad reputation for all of us
  - “Contesters all run high power”

- Contesters take over all the bands
  - (pssst...ever try those “new bands”?)
When you are confronted by a non-contester *during* a contest

- Assess the situation
  - Did you just fire up on the frequency?
  - Maybe there really *is* a net there
- Are you possibly overdriving things?
  - A clean signal attracts more callers
- Try to compromise
  - “I’ll move up a little if you move down a little”
- The bottom line – put your ego aside
  - Which approach will put more QSOs in your log?
Outside a contest…

- Assure the hater that the vast majority of contesters run legal power
  - They are loud because they have good antennas and locations and are on the best band
- Tell them that contesters do some good
  - Their skills apply in EmComm situations
  - Have you done something you can use as an example?
- Be polite!
Contest Code of Ethics, expanded

1. I will learn and obey the rules of any contest I enter, including the rules of my entry category. *No spotting if not permitted, no second op or skimmer for single ops, off-times per rules, correct output power*

2. I will obey the rules for amateur radio in my country. *Power, frequencies, licensing – wherever you transmit. Remote operations must be especially vigilant!*

3. I will not modify my log after the contest by using additional data sources to correct call sign/exchange errors. *When it’s over, it’s over*
Contest Code of Ethics, expanded

4. I will accept the judging and scoring decisions of the contest sponsor as final. *No whining, no lawsuits, no threats or defamation of any sort. No operation is that important.*

5. I will adhere to the DX Code of Conduct in my operating style (see dx-code.org). *Listen, listen, listen; only call when you can hear the station; never trust the cluster (copy the call!)*
Contest Code of Ethics, expanded

6. I will yield my frequency to any emergency communications activity.

Contesting is a game. Emergencies are real life.

7. I will operate my transmitter with sufficient signal quality to minimize interference to others.

Mic gain set properly; amp not overdriven; no splatter!

Note that CQWW rules have added language specifically emphasizing this rule of conduct. Expect increased scrutiny as SDR archives reveal the worst offenders!

www.wwrof.org
Acknowledgments

This presentation draws on material developed by:

- Ken Adams, K5KA (SK)
- Randy Thompson, K5ZD
- Larry Tyree, N6TR
- Dave McCarty, K5GN
- Ward Silver, NØAX
- Kirk Pickering, K4RO
- Tim Duffy, K3LR
- Joel Harrison, W5ZN

And my biggest contest influence, K1HHN/W9HG (SK)

“Relax, kid. This is supposed to be fun!”