CTU Presents

Contest Hints and Kinks – for Operators

Ward Silver, NØAX
Goals of the Session

- Provide tips, suggestions, and guidelines
- Give you ideas for your own circumstances
- Find “Score dB’s” and “low-hanging fruit”
- Develop confidence in your own abilities
- Laff
Assumptions about you

- Contesting for a couple of years
- You feel comfortable with CQ or S&P
- Maybe a Division, State, or Regional winner?
- Decent radios and antennas
- Taken and given some lumps
- Want to give some more lumps
- What’s the best way to get better?
How To Use This Course

- Not a how-to cookbook
- Follow in the text
- Take short notes
- Record those ideas!
Continuous Improvement

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- Incremental improvement, applied relentlessly, is unstoppable.
- Plaques are won a dB at a time
- Hints & Kinks are the ham radio equivalent of incremental improvement.
Cycle of Life

Observe

Judge

Act
Cycle of Life

Observe

Repent!!

Judge

Act

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Layers

- Contest success is incremental
- Peel the onion
- Operator improvement is continuous
- Study and analyze and plan
- Address the obvious deficiencies first
- Choose wisely, grasshopper…
Ergonomics

- Incredibly important
- Fun or Slog? – Choose!
- Maintain concentration, remove distractions
- Make it EASY to do the right thing!
  - Especially when you are tired…
- Labels and logical layout
- Preserve and enhance accuracy
Ergonomics

- Head and Eyes
- Back & Arms
- Your Butt
- Fitness (Before and During)
- Stay Alert & Engaged
- Caffeine – manage your body
Fitness

- Personal fitness
  - Blood flow and stamina
- Techniques for remaining alert
  - Diet, Catnaps, Breaks
- Understand your body rhythms
- Pacing - trade low-rate periods for sleep
  - Review old logs to find the right off-times
- The 90-minute magic
Knowledge

- Know your station equipment
- Study propagation – include possible events
- Learn your software
  - Turn OFF unneeded features and options
- Recognize calls
- Learn the goofy prefixes and zones
- Memorize approximate bearings by zone
Plan

- What is propagation likely to be like?
- What is propagation Plan B?
- What did you do wrong last time – fix that
- Set goals on a time line
- Look for active station lists and recent spots
- Set break times in advance
Technique

- Number one source of score dB’s
- Practice makes the master
- Listen to the masters – up close and personal
  - Start working with multi-op teams
  - Or start one!
  - Ask them questions!
- Trade recordings or listen live
Technique Gimme’s

- Run more and whenever you can
  - Find propagation that allows your station to run
  - You don’t have to be on the band edge!
  - Think signal-to-noise on both ends
- Learn when **NOT** to log it! Avoid penalties!
- Type – send – speak – copy accurately
- Breathe, be consistent, find a rhythm
- Keep your BIC (Butt In the Chair)
Accuracy

Error Rate vs Total QSOs

Number of Logs

Logs As or More Accurate

Here are the Top Ten – get there!

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Go for world class accuracy (<1% error)
Study that LCR/UBN report
  • What do you consistently miss?
  • What do others consistently miss from you?
Pull out full calls
Avoid databases and be wary of prefill
Don’t trust spots from any source
Learn not to guess and when to move on
Resources

- Your club, other contesters, public logs
- Record your operating and review (painful)
- Review your LCR and compare to the log
- Use analyzers like CBS, SH5, LogView, etc
- NCJ and other magazine/web articles
- Study other brain-intensive sports and games
- Use simulators like RUFZ and MorseRunner
Thanks!

- And go get ‘em!