TALES FROM THE SWAMP

March 2020
Author: Kevan Nason, N4XL

New Kid Needed:

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Step right up to the Greatest Job in the SFCG!! Uncle Fox Wants You! Seriously, we need a President. Contact Dave, WN4AFP, and tell him you want to do your part to help the group.

Thank you to our current group leadership is
Interim President and VP - Dave, WN4AFP dave@pkministrywebs.com
Treasurer – Phil, NI7R ni7r45b@gmail.com
Secretary – Bill, N4IQ bill.n4iq@charter.net

From the Reflector:

- Tom, W1TEF, has been in ill health for quite some time. Yesterday Frank, KG4IGC, posted he had heard Tom passed away. If anyone has detailed information about Tom please pass it along. Charlie Brown, KD4CB, President of the Dutch Fork Amateur Radio Group, let DFARG know two weeks ago that Tom had been moved to the Dorn VA Medical Center. I tried to get in touch with him shortly after that, but there was no reply. His contribution to our group, amateur radio in general, and his presence in our lives has been minimal and sorely missed this past year. Tom had intended to become our President when Frank had to step down, but was unable to for health reasons.
- Some Foxes will be using different call signs for the upcoming WPX. Bill, N4IQ, will be using his brothers call of WN4GM and Kevan, N4XL, will be using WJ4X. Keep that in mind when tracking real time scores or while tuning across the band.

- Methods used for voice keying were discussed. Consensus is 100% voice keying works well for a S&P effort, but most use a modified version when running. Runners favor their own words for voicing call signs and when asking for fills and then switch to voice keying for the second half of the QSO where the exchange and TU formats are standard. CQ's are normally automated too.
- Members discussed how many DX stations were operating 40 meter split during the ARRL DX SSB contest. Keep that in mind for the upcoming CQ WPX.
- Dave, WN4AFP, asked if N1MM could display all counties on the state QP Mults window. Bill, N4IQ, pointed out a right click on the screen brings up a hidden menu. That reminded me to right click on windows to see what other hidden options are there. Thanks, Bill.
- The SFCG participated heavily in the SCQP with many operators posting great scores. Maybe Dave, WN4AFP, could find some time to write up a short summary for the next newsletter?
- SFCG dues are past their collection date. If you haven't yet taken the time to do so, please check the SFCG website or contact Phil, NI7R. Phil's email is at the beginning of this newsletter.
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Contest Tips:

K1AR Contest Tips

- Here's an idea for that 2nd VFO in your transceiver. When you're in "search and pounce" mode, try searching with both VFOs. While waiting to work one station on VFO "A", you can use that idle time to find another needed QSO with the second VFO. Try tuning up from the bottom with one and down from the top of the band with the other. If you are using a multi-band antenna, you can even try this technique across two different bands!

- Maybe this is an idea that David Letterman (U.S. TV talk show host) stole from me. For years, before every contest, I compile a "Top-10" list of strategies/events that I executed well and those that needed improvement based on the previous year's contest. What's different is that I have begun saving them, compiling a multi-year set of lists. The "well-executed" list can be a source of encouragement, while the areas needing improvement gives you something to shoot for each time you operate. This technique can only improve your score!

- Maybe you read the rules for many of the small contests in CQ each month (there are 12 different contests in this month's calendar) but never try them out. Specialized contests

Contest (continued):

EI8IC has a great contesting website. Years ago I saved some information about contesting tips he had gathered from several online reflectors. Here are some highlights. Go to his web page for the complete listing. You will likely see more from those pages in future newsletters.
http://www.mapability.com/ei8ic/contest/tips.php

- Be mentally prepared
- to compete at whatever level you have chosen.
- If you think your transmit signal is weak and find yourself in a lot of long, frustrating attempts at search and pounce contacts, notice whether you've got your receive preamp on and consider turning it off.
- One thing that I do is hide the summary window during the contest. I do this because if I see that I have 395 q's on 15, I will stay on the band and try to make 400, even though I should be going back to 20 because 15 is dying now. Probably just kind of a personal thing. I do check after 24 hours to see how the country totals are and whether to look for more mults or q's. The last CQWW CW, I didn't have any idea what my score was close to, until with about 1/2 hour to go, at the bottom of the CT screen, it said something like, "Boy you must be on the eastcoast with 3M" or "Boy you are good-3 million".
- If there is no reason why the other station won't come back to you, stop! Check your output power/swr first, then check to see if you are inadvertantly operating split.
- If your rate drops below a certain point (#Q's/hr will vary with the time of day, point in the sunspot cycle and the station itself), work 3 bands every hour - this does not include working occasional people on the second radio - it means going to that band and CQing or S&Ping.
- While it may seem like a no-brainer on CW to S&P by dumping your call in once at a nice snappy 35 wpm, it's all wasted effort if the guy you're calling can't copy it. Also, many beginning ops aren't sure you're calling them unless they hear their call too. So vary your speed and think carefully about when the type of operating at the other end might suggest that you use the other guy's call de your own. A smart contester varies his operating procedure according to the conditions of the moment. No, one size does not fit all!
- Situation: Big screaming pile-up to Africa/South American during CW contest. Tactic: Try slowly moving your VFO across the pile-up while sending your call. It is amazing how the frequency change will get the DX stations attention. Move slowly and not so much that you move out of his passband.
- At a rate of 60 Qs/hour, you would work 2,880 stations in a 48-hour contest.
  At 30/hour, you'd work 1,440 stations in a 48-hour contest.
  Even a rate of 15/hour (only one QSO every 4 minutes!), you'd still work 720 stations in 48 hours!
- Cherry pickers don't win. If you give up when the time between Qs stretches out to 4, 6, 10, or more minutes, you give up your competitiveness. A contesters mettle is measured in the dead of night when calling CQ endlessly on a seemingly dead band or when tuning 20m or 40m or any other band straining to pull that next new station out of the noise. (Hint: This is where 1 dB or less makes all the difference in the world.)

Observations by the Editor:

1. Frank, KG4IGC, says Sarah went through surgery just fine. She is recuperating at a facility in Summerville. Keep them in your prayers or at least give out a holler of support. Hope life is back to normal soon Frank.

2. State QSO Party Challenge
    Dave's, WN4AFP, efforts to get this up an running is going very well! It's being very well received in the contest community and state QSO Party organizers are reporting high turnout as a direct result. News of the event can be found all over the internet. It's even been covered in podcasts. Way to go Dave! Here are some comments found on the Reddit website:
    "An added dimension well worth looking into and trying. Upvote for concept", WZ7U.
    "Well, now. THIS could be fun!", iankahn
    "Finally a reason to get back on the air." Boem2126

    Tracking for the competition is easily seen since each QP entry of scores on the 3830 web site automatically results in your being included in the State QP Challenge. You need to record scores from two qualifying QP's to be ranked.

    http://stateqsoparty.com/
    https://www.3830scores.com/sqpsummary.php

3. Antennas. You can intellectually understand how important they are when people tell you things like "Put up the best antenna you can" or "Your antenna is the most important part of your station", but there is a difference between understanding and really knowing how danged important they are. (My apologies for stealing the word "danged" from you Dave, NJ4F). Bill, N4IQ, helped Frank put up a Super-Loop. Dave, AFP, put up his 80 meter OCF dipole – again with Bill's help. Kevan, N4XL, consulted with Bill, but then elected to make changes to his vertical situation instead of going either of those two routes. (Seems to be a theme developing here in regards to Bill. Great to have him for a technical resource!) Phil, NI7R, installed a zig-zag wire in his attic. And Matt, NU4E, is getting fantastic scores by constantly experimenting with the best temporary antenna to use in the parking lot where he works. All have reported modest to dramatic improvements in the number of stations they are now working. If you find yourself feeling "Ho-hum" about your shack's performance, then maybe you should get out there and jazz things up a bit. Besides, working in the yard and then working all those new stations antenna work will keep you away from what few public gatherings are still going on.

4. Guess I'll add this my list of odd ball things to remember. Scott, K9MA, wrote in the February 2020 CW Ops newsletter "Solid Copy" about trying to get an old A3 Tribander to work. He wrote "In spite of replacing, refurbishing, and retuning many traps it still won't work on 15. In addition, my attempt to screen the vents to keep bugs out apparently allows water to wick up into them, so even the

other bands don't work when it's wet. It's still up, sort of working in dry weather, but I've decided to replace it."

5. I hate using THHN wire because after a few months the plastic starts peeling off. This was posted on the TowerTalk reflector (dated Mon Feb 17 21:12:54 EST 2020):
    "In the spring I'm building new dipoles for 160, 80 & 40, instead of using THHN I see Home Depot has XHHW #12 stranded, like THHN but without the nylon jacket and it says its UV resistant. Has anyone used it? It's a bit more expensive at $98/500' vs $65/500' but if it keeps that nylon from hanging off the antennas....de Dick NY1E"

    Follow up posts said XHHW wire works fine and holds up to the weather very well.

Other Reflectors:

-   Dave, WN4AFP, wrote:
    I'll need to get me a shorter call when i get older so that I can remember
    it from beginning to end. :):)   I said when I get older.

    My call is so long and strange that some ops might think that I'm sending a
    W1AW code practice copy of a 'Brass Pounders' article.

    My call is so long that the hamfest 'badge guy' charges me a premium plus
    never the 'same day' pickup.

   My call was so long that the FCC Mailed it to me 'postage due'.

-   Our own Ed Overcash, WB4HRL, was featured in the CW Ops January 2020 Newsletter Solid Copy" with his biography. Check out page 33! He even mentions the SFCG and actually has something good to say about Dave, NJ4F.
     https://cwops.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/solid-copy-2020.01.2.pdf

N1MM+ Tips:

Most of the following probably isn't new to many of you, but some might be. Regardless, it is often good to refresh things. Also, to go with K1AR's tip about making a Top 10 list, some of the information readily available in the N1MM Entry Window might help should you decide to use K1AR's tip about making a Top 10 list. After realizing that I would notice a new feature of the Entry Window now and then. I summarized the features for a presentation on Radiosport I gave a few months back. By writing it all down it dawned on me what a fantastic tool it is. I realized that by making a point to actually look at those features while operating they would remind me to do things in real time. Stuff like thinking to pass mults to another band or to not send the wrong message when using ESM. I feel more in control of things now that I'm actually looking at what N1MM is telling me instead of just focusing on entering a call and their exchange.

The N1MM Entry Window
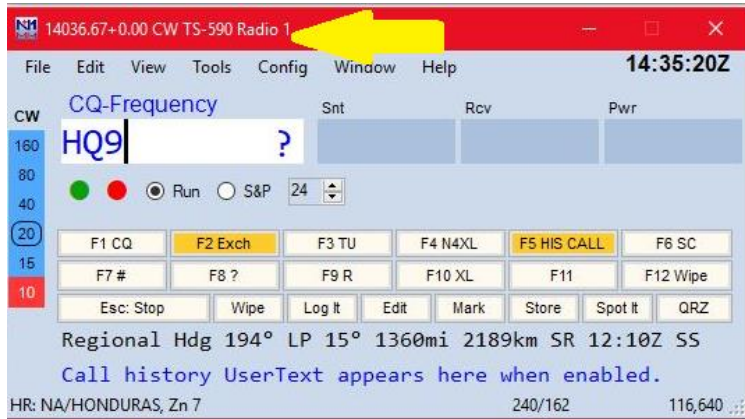
The top shows rig frequency, RIT status (+0.00), What the rig is, and that is assigned Radio 1 in my SO2R capable shack.

As an aside, there is a reason not to, but I use the {CLEARRIT} command in my TU macro to automatically reset the RIT to 0.00 after each q. As a Little Pistol station that particularly seems to help me get the next guy more quickly when running CW.


The band area shows the rig is on 40 meters (the white circle around 40), that OE2S is a multiplier on that band (because the 40 is red), that he is also a mult on 160, 80, 15, and 10 (They are all red), that even though he is not a multiplier on 20 (it is blue) I can work him for points there (if it was gray it would mean I have already worked him on 20). You can use this information to try and pass him to another band where you need the mult. Also note the check mark behind OE2S in the entry window. We will talk about that later.

Beam heading for both Long and Short path. Distance to station. SR is his Sunrise. SS is Sunset, but I have shrunk my entry window and that isn't visible. I keep a gray line window open so don't normally look at SR/SS info.
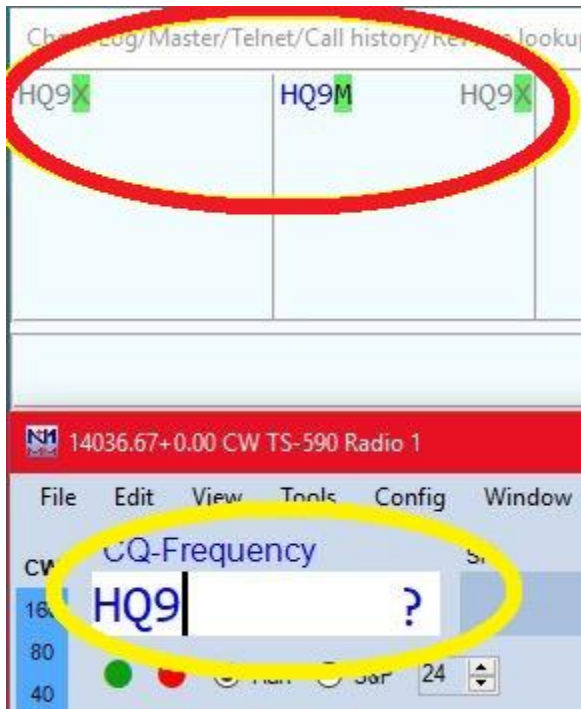
With Super Check Partial (SCP) turned on the call you enter in the Entry Window is compared to a call listing. If it does not find a match a "?" is shown at the right side of the Entry field. This doesn't mean the call is invalid, it just means it didn't find a match. Possible call signs that are contesters are shown in the Check window shown at the top. You can use this to help "guess" at what his call possibly might be should you be having trouble hearing it. Always confirm your guess though!

If the next letter I typed for the HQ9 call was "X", the call would turn gray, meaning it was a dupe, the word "DUPE" would appear in red in the center of the Entry window, and the "?" would change to a check mark meaning HQ9X was in the call list. Also, putting HQ9X in the call field would change its color to gray because he is a dupe. You can still, and should, go ahead and work him if running. Just tune on by if S&P.

If the next letter I typed for the HQ9 call was "M" instead of "X", the call would remain blue and the "?" would turn to a check because it found HQ9M in the list. It would stay blue because I haven't worked HQ9M yet. If it was a mult the call would turn red.

If the next letter I typed for the HQ9 call was "R" instead of "X" or "M", the call would remain blue and the "?" would stay there. This could indicate either you have his call wrong or he is a valid call sign, but just isn't in the SCP database.

Each of the above scenario's happen to me during every contest.

The green boxes around letters in the Check Window show what N1MM thinks are the possible missing letter in the stations call as pulled from the listing of calls it has loaded. If you decide to use this feature you should regularly reload the SCP file. Try type "4AG" and then "W8?G" into the entry window sometime to get an understanding of how the green box thing works. There are several Super Check Partial files available. Some for are for regional or domestic contests and others are for major DX contests. The results you get from typing in a partial call sign will vary depending on what file you have associated with the current contest.
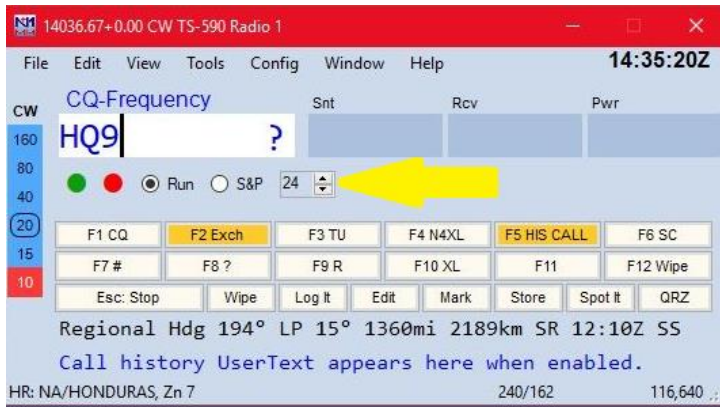
This area shows my selected CW speed (24 WPM), that I am in Run instead of S&P mode (you may have different macros for each), and the receive/transmit focus/status. The latter is used for SO2R setups. The red dot turns orange if you are transmitting using that particular entry window
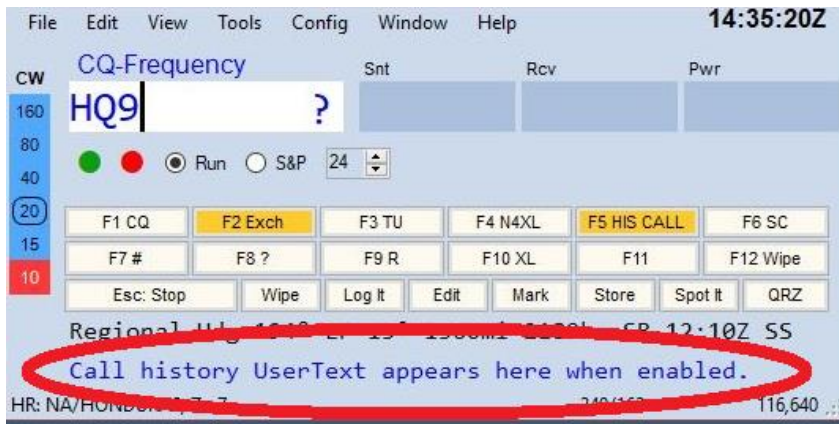

If you have loaded and associated a Call History file with the contest when you type a call into the window just like with SCP the call will be compared to the Call History file for supplemental information.

For example: I think the CW OPS mini-test history file provides operator names and what state the station is in.

In addition to putting general information on this part of the screen Call history files can also provide what exchange information the call has provided in the past. For example, if you are in the CQWW contest it could provide the CQ Zone. If you are using that N1MM feature then just by typing a call into the Entry window the Zone would be automatically filled in when you left the Entry Window Call Sign field – assuming the history file provided a match to the call. Don't trust what you are given by the computer though. Be sure to actually copy what the other station is sending in case it is different.
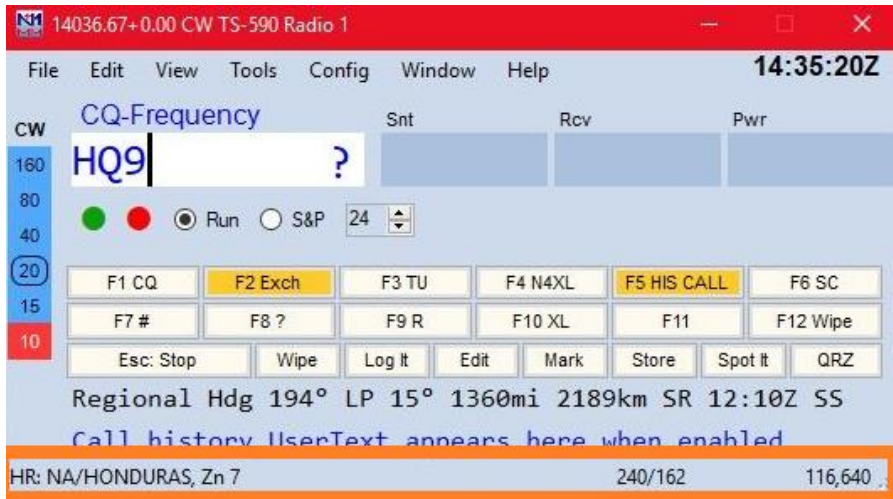
At the bottom it shows the country and CQ zone for the callsign. If you were having trouble hearing the zone sent by the HQ9 station you might "guess" zone 7. Verify it of course by getting him to acknowledge with a "R R R" or "CFM"

It also shows I currently have 240 q's and 162 mults for a score of 116,640. Not highlighted is that the current UTC time in the upper right corner.

In closing, I've lately been training myself to pay attention to what the Entry Window has to offer. It has helped keep me more focused on the q, available additional scoring opportunities, and has improved my "situational awareness" in regards to the current operating state of my station. By doing all that it keeps me more interested in the job at hand of making more q's and the best score I can.
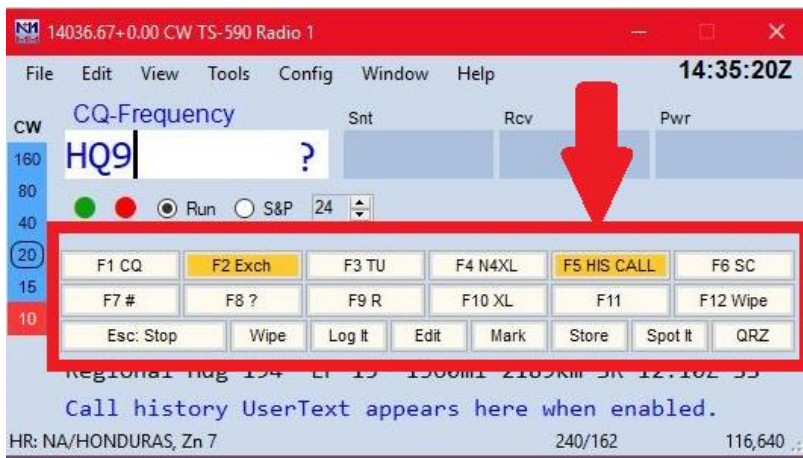
This section shows what macros are assigned to what Function keys. You can change them to whatever you want, but these are typical. F1 key is CQ. F2 Exchange. F3 Thank You. F4 My Call. And so on. You can either use the keyboard F-keys or click on the button with a mouse.

The F-keys shown in orange are colored because I have Enter Sends Message (ESM) activated. What that means is when I move the cursor from one Entry Window field into another N1MM will automatically send what I've told it to do. For example: Let's say I type an "M" after "HQ9" and then hit the space bar to move to the Exchange (PWR) field. As soon as the cursor leaves the entry (HQ9M) entry field the computer will automatically send those F-keys highlighted in orange. In this case I am in Run mode so simply by hitting the space bar N1MM sends "HQ9M 5NN SC".

If I was in S&P mode and ran across HQ9M I would type the call into the entry window call field. N1MM would then "know" the next thing I would send would be my call sign in answer to his CQ. It would have the F4 key highlighted. When HQ9M answered me I would hit the space bar, N1MM focus would go to the exchange field and be ready for me to enter his power. At the same time ESM would know the next

thing I would send would be my state so the F2 key would turn orange. After he sends me his exchange is waiting for my reply all I have to do is hit enter. N1MM automatically logs the q and sends whatever I have in F2. In this case it would be "5NN SC".

You can easily get tripped up by ESM if you get out of sync. Say you didn't copy his power and needed a fill. Or say he has your call wrong (copied N4XR instead of N4XL) and you need to correct it. It took a bit of practice to seamlessly handle those situations. In the call case instead of hitting "enter", which would send my exchange, I instead reach up and hit F4 twice sending my call out again letting him know he has the call wrong.

Upcoming Contests: Including VHF/UHF

See WA7BNM. I will mention Dave's, WN4AFP, effort to get the State QSO Party Challenge up and running is going very well.

SFOTA Current Leaderboard http://www.sfota.com/

Although the SFOTA awards were discussed last month, thought I'd mention again that Ed, WB4HRL, was the most improved member. He's jumping out there again this year by being out in front on the Leaderboard. Way to go Ed.

2020 OVERALL STANDINGS

	CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1)	WB4HRL	47	1926	747	0	1378	4051
2)	WN4AFP	33	2318	601	0	640	3559
3)	K3DNE	8	0	2948	0	0	2948
4)	N4IQ	9	1087	0	165	967	2219
5)	NU4E	5	950	391	0	737	2078
6)	KG6MC	7	901	799	0	0	1700
7)	N4XL	7	894	769	0	0	1663
8)	NI7R	9	1255	50	0	313	1618
9)	K7OM	6	486	120	0	680	1286
10)	NJ4F	3	50	0	0	779	829
11)	KS4YX	7	419	55	7	346	827
12)	KG4IGC	2	245	0	0	550	795
13)	WU0B	1	0	358	0	0	358
14)	AJ4UQ	2	0	0	6	61	67

2020 INDIVIDUAL MODE STANDINGS

CALL	CW QSO'S		CALL	SSB QSO'S		CALL	DIGITAL QSO'S		CALL	RTTY QSO'S
WN4AFP	2318		K3DNE	2948		N4IQ	165		WB4HRL	1378
WB4HRL	1926		KG6MC	799		KS4YX	7		N4IQ	967
NI7R	1255		N4XL	769		AJ4UQ	6		NJ4F	779
N4IQ	1087		WB4HRL	747					NU4E	737
NU4E	950		WN4AFP	601					K7OM	680
KG6MC	901		NU4E	391					WN4AFP	640
N4XL	894		WU0B	358					KG4IGC	550
K7OM	486		K7OM	120					KS4YX	346
KS4YX	419		KS4YX	55					NI7R	313
KG4IGC	245		NI7R	50					AJ4UQ	61
NJ4F	50									

3830 Activity:

(Activity from the last 30 days postings on 3830scores.com where postings listed club affiliation as being SFCG. The list does not include the CWOPS mini-tests)

Timestamp	Call	Class	Power	Score
ARRLDX CW				
2/17/2020 0:26	AC4MC	SOAB	HP	219,492
2/16/2020 23:58	KS4YX	SOAB	LP	132,822
2/16/2020 23:04	N4XL	SO Unlimited	LP	116,640
2/17/2020 2:32	NI7R	SO Unlimited	HP	418,383
2/17/2020 0:31	WB4HRL	SO Unlimited	HP	150,732
2/17/2020 0:12	WN4AFP	SOAB	LP	248,970
ARRLDX SSB				
3/9/2020 17:41	AC4MC	SOAB	HP	148,005
3/9/2020 1:30	K3DNE	SO Unlimited	HP	403,323
3/9/2020 12:25	N4XL	SO Unlimited	LP	5,472
3/9/2020 3:34	NI7R	SOSB/40	HP	4,500
3/9/2020 0:33	WB4HRL	SO Unlimited	HP	60,003
CQ160 SSB				
2/23/2020 17:36	K3DNE	Single Op	HP	46,158
2/23/2020 15:54	N4XL	Single Op	LP	50,545
2/23/2020 13:02	NU4E	Single Op	LP	7,110
2/23/2020 14:07	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	418
NAQP RTTY				
3/1/2020 14:59	KS4YX	Single Op	LP	9,782
3/1/2020 13:28	WB4HRL	M/2	LP	15,180
NCCC RY-Sprint				
3/13/2020 2:28	N4IQ	Single Op	LP	490
NCQP				
3/2/2020 1:17	AC4MC	SO Mixed	HP	3,915
3/2/2020 1:26	K3DNE	SO SSB	HP	2,240
3/2/2020 1:09	KS4YX	SO Mixed	LP	3,960
3/3/2020 3:51	NI7R	SO CW	LP	1,546
3/2/2020 12:46	WB4HRL	SO Mixed	HP	3,300
3/2/2020 5:36	WN4AFP	SO Mixed	LP	630

SCQP				
3/1/2020 17:47	AC4MC	Single Op FixedMixed	HP	176,336
3/1/2020 2:16	N4XL	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	230,234
3/1/2020 5:08	NI7R	Single Op FixedCW	HP	21,020
3/1/2020 3:26	NU4E	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	257,478
3/1/2020 15:14	WB4HRL	Single Op FixedMixed	HP	44,592
3/2/2020 4:52	WN4AFP	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	119,897
3/1/2020 6:11	WW4SF(@K3DNE)	Single Op FixedSSB	HP	123,431
3/2/2020 21:00	WW4SF/GVIL	M/M FixedMixed	HP	184,133
	(AC4Q,WW4SF,@N4IQ)			
UK/EI DX CW				
2/23/2020 22:10	WN4AFP	SO12 1-Element Ant	LP	12,376

Guest Article:

I've asked a couple people to write up something and hope to hear back from them soon. If you have anything you'd like to share shoot me an email. It can be an actual article, simple bullet points, or a link with an explanation of how that information helped you or why it caught your interest.

Space WX: (From TamithaSkov's YouTube page)
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkXjdDQ-db0xz8f4PKgKsag

CQ WPX Contest Rule Excerpts:

- 48 hours. Single Operator stations may operate 36 of the 48 hours – off times must be a minimum of 60 minutes during which no QSO is logged.
- A station may be worked once on each band for QSO point credit.
- Contacts between stations on different continents are worth three (3) points on 28, 21, and 14 MHz and six (6) points on 7, 3.5, and 1.8 MHz.
- For North American stations only—contacts between stations within the North American boundaries (both stations must be located in North America) are worth two (2) points on 28, 21, and 14 MHz and four (4) points on 7, 3.5, and 1.8 MHz.
- Contacts between stations in the same country are worth 1 point regardless of band.
- The prefix multiplier is the number of valid prefixes worked. Each PREFIX is counted only once regardless of the band or number of times the same prefix is worked.
- A plaque will be awarded each year to the club that has the highest aggregate score from logs submitted by its members. To be listed in the results, a minimum of four logs must be received from a club.

73,
Kevan N4XL