TALES FROM THE SWAMP

September 2020
Editor: Kevan Nason, N4XL

Thank you to our current group leadership.
> President – Ed, K3DNE
> Vice President - Dave, WN4AFP
> Treasurer – Phil, NI7R
> Secretary – Ed, WB4HRL

The Presidents Perspective

After some recent reflector chatter, private emails and suggestions on the membership subject, I thought this may a good time to discuss membership, participation and activity.

In early August I finished updating and submitting our ARRL Club Contest Eligibility List and our roster. Both are now current. I also updated the Groups.io email list and KG4IGC updated our website roster. I did trade emails with K1AR at CQ about an Eligibility List for CQ sponsored contests and he stated there isn't one - just the club list in which SFCG is included.

Our membership number now stands at 23. KG4IGC asked me via email recently if there are any ideas on how to attract new and active members? Since becoming president in May, I have sent more than a half dozen emails to prospective members based on noticing SC contest results without a club affiliation indicated. I received little response to my emails. I think WN4AFP sent several emails to others he found as well. We both reached out to our newest member KN4SMO and invited him to join. Honestly, I think contacting a prospective member by a club member who "knows" that person is more effective than a "cold-call" email. That's how I was recruited to join PVRC. Some may remember K3IXD (sk) – we knew each other through vhf contesting and he phoned me twice to get me to attend a PVRC meeting. I'm so glad he did as that was a

significant positive direction change in my ham radio contesting journey. Unfortunately, since I'm so new to SC, I don't know, either personally or via radio, almost any of the calls that are hitting my radar screen but I'm sure many of our members do.

I'm open to suggestions - how to increase our membership with active SC contesters? I will continue to look at contest results for stations from SC without a club affiliation and ask that our members do similarly either during the contest or post contest and reach out directly and/or pass that info on to an officer as appropriate. I usually send an email to the officers to ask about prospective members prior to reaching out since my SFCG membership and time in SC is so short that I may not be aware about previous members who have left our club or potential members that may not be a good fit. Due to the pandemic, other mechanisms (hamfests, conferences, community out-reach etc.) are not presently available to us. I did put a blurb about our club on my QRZ.com page and suggest we all consider that as well. WN4AFP posts a recruiting statement on his 3830 scores - I started doing that too. I was hoping to have a club picnic/meeting/get-together at my lake-house QTH this summer and invite prospective members but I've postponed that idea due to the pandemic. I know some of us are also members of other clubs - perhaps we should be reaching out to those clubs in an attempt to recruit? I did receive one suggestion via email to expand our geographical area outside of the SC section by using the ARRL eligibility radius circle of 175 miles (still the medium club category). I think this suggestion is worthy of further discussion as it would expand the area to pull new members from. On the other hand, we would no longer be the only contest club just in SC – I know some of our members take pride in that distinction.

How to increase activity and participation? N4XL noted that just the addition of new members tends to increase the dynamics and enthusiasm of the club based on reflector activity. I think the two (membership and activity) go hand-in-hand which emphasizes our need to regularly add to the membership role.

As a contesting club, competitions both internally and externally are the key components to what we do. The SFOTA program is our internal program and a great tool to promote competition within our club. Presently there are some very tight races in SFOTA – I find checking those rankings my internal incentive to continue to participate in more contests for longer periods of time to add to my QSO totals to try to keep up with my fellow club members.

I'd like to propose we pick at least 2 contests – one in the fall (ARRL SS) and spring (CQ WPX) where we, as a club, really focus our efforts in the club competition category. The club is making excellent strides improving our standing in CQWPX (up from a world ranking of 100 in 2017 to 73 in 2019) and I'd like to keep that momentum going and extend it to ARRL SS and possibly, in the future, to others as well. I mentioned to WN4AFP recently about challenging a similar sized club(s) to compete against in those contests where the club who wins will have bragging rights for the next year. A little rivalry may lead to positive activity and participation benefits. Give the challenge a catchy name and logo and post the award on the winning club's website. Dave mentioned he had an idea or two about which club(s) to challenge and I'll ask him to

move forward. SFOTA rules prohibit changes to the program until the next year so that is untouchable for this fall season. However, we could add a new category that will not affect SFOTA standings to include a separate listing for the two club competition contests - one for high power and low power - a distinction that does not presently exist with the SFOTA program. A prize of some type (cup, travel mug, t-shirt, another certificate, plaque etc.) be awarded based on the top total scores (not just QSO's), SSB and CW combined, in each of the two categories for each event and be displayed on our website or on the SFOTA program page (again – not affecting the SFOTA program's scores or ultimate results).

Additionally, I would like to propose periodic general membership Zoom meetings maybe 2 or 3 times per year and an occasional guest speaker Zoom meeting (similar to what WN4AFP arranged after the CQ WPX SSB contest). These Zoom meetings will not supersede our annual in-person meeting. Some clubs are having on-the-air meetings. Is that something we should consider?

Let's start an email dialog on our reflector about this - I'm hoping we can attract some new members and add the previously mentioned competitive operating incentives before the fall contest season begins!

Other thoughts and ideas are more than welcome.

73,
Ed K3DNE

From the Reflector:

- Our President, Ed, K3DNE, proposed the SFCG sponsor a plaque for the CQ WPX SSB contest. The group enthusiastically agreed, and Ed arranged for us to sponsor one for the USA Category of Tribander/Single Element Overlay Category. It is made in honor of past SK member Tom Francis, W1TEF. Thank you, Ed and the rest of the group, for agreeing to honor Tom in that way.
- Several SFCG members had fun in the NAQP SSB. New member Scott, KN4SMO, had a great time operating from Edisto Beach. He was able to put in a 10-hour effort, as did Ed, K3DNE, and Kevan, N4XL. Scott ended up with 240 contacts and 98 Mults. Good job Scott! Ted, K7OM, got in a few hours as did Matt, NU4E, Ed, WB4HRL, and Bob, AC4MC. Mr. Murphy decided to keep things interesting and brought Bob some AC hum to use in his headset. Murphy sat back and cackled while watching Bob simultaneously use a mobile hand mic, type a log, and run his radio. Glad you stuck it out and contributed to the team Bob.
- Turns out Scott, KN4SMO, is a bit like a tumbleweed. He can't keep still. Lives in Greenville. Vacations in Edisto Beach. Takes trips to St. Louis and Colorado. Wonder what he's using for a portable/mobile station? Bet propagation differences between the places he travels to and us here in SC might be helpful. Stations in the middle of the U.S. do better in domestic contests for example. Scott says he will be active on HF from Jackson County Colorado until 9/21/2020.

- Frank, KG4IGC, pointed out over 60 speakers were available for the Virtual Ham Radio Expo and the presentations were posted online. Unfortunately, they were scheduled to be removed on September 9th so may no longer be available. However, if you hear of one you were interested in you might be able to find it online somewhere or could contact the speaker directly and ask how to obtain a copy.

Contest Tips:

K1AR Contest Tips

05 This may sound like common sense, but it's worth a try. When calling in a big CW pileup, don't be afraid to move your transmit frequency a little off the center of the chaos. If you put yourselves in the shoes of the DX station, it begins to make sense. Except from the biggest stations or rare propagation advantages, brute force calling almost never pays off!

12 Here's one for the multi-ops! Have you tried every filter technology known to man and still have interference between stations? Try looking outside for the source of your troubles. A long-standing inter-station QRM problem was recently fixed at K1EA's station by tightening the back stay hardware on one of Ken's 20 Meter yagis. The S-8 interference it had previously generated on 15 Meters went completely away!

25 When does one QSY from a run frequency? This is one of the hardest operating strategies to learn in contesting. I tend to not overreact by moving too quickly. Think of it like the stock market--how many stocks have you sold at $20 per share in panic that eventually closed at $45 just 3 short months later? An extra 5-10 minutes of patience on a run frequency will often pay off in the long run.

Contest Focus (very long)

In 2007, well known contester Pete, N4ZR, posted a question to the CQ Contest reflector. The answers he received helped me develop as a contester. I still find value in reviewing them. I have abbreviated some of the excerpts.

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Contest Focus

Wonder of wonders, this message has nothing to do either with contest
rules or cut numbers.  Please don't tune out, hi!

Until recently, I was pretty much of a solitary contester - never had
any occasion to operate in multi-op situations, nor to compare my
results with top operators.

Over the last 8-10 years, though, I've built a fairly capable station
for the first time in my 53 year ham career.  I've also had a couple of
occasions to operate at multi-ops with some top operators, and I'm
struck by the fact that I do not seem able to consistently get the sort
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of results they do, even from the same station. This is particularly
the case in hell-bent contests like the CW Sprints, but I have the same
feeling about the first evening in Sweepstakes, and to a lesser extent
in the big DX contests.

To the extent that I can isolate the problem, I think it lies in the
inability to keep myself totally focused in the moment. Even in the
midst of a 120-150 hour on CW I find myself not always totally "zoomed
in" on the pileup. Watching good ops, they seem to have a really
special focus that I find hard to maintain, even for a 4-hour sprint.

If there's anything to be done about this, I'd like to try, even though
at age 65 I am inevitably losing some of my edge. So I'm wondering
what others have done about this, whether there are particular
techniques that you use to help stay focused. I don't know what I'm
looking for here, so any suggestions would be welcome. If you want to
send them to me off the reflector, I'll summarize anonymously.

Thanks!
        Pete N4ZR

> *operators, and I'm struck by the fact that I do not seem able to*
> *consistently get the sort of results they do, even from the same*
> *station. This is particularly the case in hell-bent contests like*
> *the CW Sprints, but I have the same feeling about the first evening*
> *in Sweepstakes, and to a lesser extent in the big DX contests.*

There are more things that just focus and concentration - I think much
of it is learned by operating many many contests until most of the
operating actions and techniques become second nature.

It has been very interesting to me over the last few years hosting
different operators here at my station. One of the ops has been
WM5R - and since he has been coming back for a number of contests
year after year I have gotten to see his operating skill evolve.

When Ken did his first ARRL 10 meter contest from here there were
a number little things that he was doing or not doing that were
making an impact on his score and rate.

But the one thing that really struck me was not any one operating
style or error - it was that when he was running stations that was
about all he could do. He just did not have the mental bandwidth to
do anything more than run stations on one radio and get them in the
log. He could not think about where he should turn the antenna or
answer a short question from me or for that matter use a second radio.

Over the years I have seen this change, Ken can now process much
more information, he can use the second radio, he can answer my
questions etc. He is no longer just doing all he can to work
guys and get them logged.

I have seen this evolve slowly over time and each year of the
10 meter contest he was doing a better job of operating. It was

not only the 'mental bandwidth' issue but many things that were
learned by doing contests over and over - improving his skills
with each one.

I still almost always learn something every time I operate a contest.

> *To the extent that I can isolate the problem, I think it lies in the*
> *inability to keep myself totally focused in the moment. Even in the*
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> *"zoomed in" on the pileup. Watching good ops, they seem to have a*
> *really special focus that I find hard to maintain, even for a 4-hour*
> *sprint.*

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> *though at age 65 I am inevitably losing some of my edge. So I'm*
> *wondering what others have done about this, whether there are*
> *particular techniques that you use to help stay focused. I don't*
> *know what I'm looking for here, so any suggestions would be welcome.*
> *If you want to send them to me off the reflector, I'll summarize*
> *anonymously.*

I don't know what will work for you but here are a few the things
that have really helped me over the years.

- Contests have a duration that is fixed. The contest ends in 4, 12,
  24, 36 or 48 hours. You can not get any of the time back that
  passes by during the contest. I found that once I really understood
  that it helped me stay in the moment and not think about my place
  in the results or what I will be doing next week or whatever.
  The time is NOW. The time is now to make contacts.

- I have learned to push myself through the rough spots and low points.
  Instead of letting them get you down you need to learn how to push
  and work through these points. You must keep pushing if you want to
  have a good score. There will be some pain along the way, there will
  be times when you are having problems finding rate or a frequency or
  whatever but you need to keep going - this is no time to give up.
  The contest will be over at a fixed time - you can rest then.

- I find I do best if I do not have rate sheets or projections of
  how I should be doing - as often as not these can just be very
  depressing if you are not doing as well as you were hopping or
  as well as last year. So over the years I have avoided having
  these around or setting goals like that - it just did not work for me.
  As I have done more and more contests I have gotten to the point that
  even if I am not doing as well as last years rates or score I do not
  let that bother me - because I have learned that even if you are not
  doing as well as your 10th place score from last year you could be
  winning the contest. You just need to keep pushing forward.

- I keep pushing myself to tune the second radio, to keep calling
  CQ etc. Sometimes it is hard to keep it going when the rate
  sags in a DX contest to 20/hour but it is the slow hours that
  that are the hard ones - they are also the ones that you have
  the most chance of improving on percentage wise. Changing a
  20 hour to a 30 hour is a much bigger deal than changing a

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   100 hour to a 110 hour.  The slow times are very important.

Anyway - maybe there will be something useful in all of that
rambling.  Those are some of the things I have worked on over
the years to help me do better in contests.  I also hope that
it is not to scattered as I just typed that off the top of my head.

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George Fremin III - K5TR
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> I don't know what I'm looking for here, so any suggestions would be welcome.
Try putting either Post-It Notes or computer generated BOLD font text notes
(cut 'em down to size), and put one on your monitor screen, at the top of
your keyboard, and on every piece of equipment which read:

"EVERY SECOND COUNTS !!!"

You might also try "STAY FOCUSED !!!"

It's kinda hard to forget what you really want (and need) to do when
everywhere you look you see a friendly "Reminder". I use the first one,
but may also now add the second.

"STOP PIDDLING AROUND !!!" might also help.

73...
Rick, K6VVA

On Fri, 2007-01-05 at 08:29, George Fremin III wrote:
> So over the years I have avoided having
> these around or setting goals like that - it just did not work for me.

Something that helps for me (though not enough judging from the number
of part-time entries<grin>) is to set very short-term goals.

For example, if I have 367 QSOs, my goal is 400. Once I have 400 QSOs,
I notice I have 48 mults. My goal becomes 50 mults. Once I have 50
mults, I notice my raw score is 78,223; my goal becomes 80,000 points.
By the time I have 80,000 points, I might have 471 QSOs, so the goal
becomes 500. I keep pushing for the next even number -- there's always
an achievable goal hanging in front of me. Until with two hours to go,
the goal becomes simply to stay awake until the end of the
contest<grin>!
--

Doug Smith W9WI

> There are more things that just focus and concentration -
> I think much of it is learned by operating many many contests until
> most of the operating actions and techniques become second nature.

George is correct here. There was an article in the New York
Times just this week that indicates our conscious mind has
quite limited control over the subconscious, and that we
operate primarily at the subconscious level. Here is an
excerpt from the article:

"But most of the action is going on beneath the surface.
Indeed, the conscious mind is often a drag on many
activities. Too much thinking can give a golfer the yips.
Drivers perform better on automatic pilot. Fiction writers
report writing in a kind of trance in which they simply take
dictation from the voices and characters in their head, a
grace that is, alas, rarely if ever granted nonfiction
writers."

Dave Hachadorian, K6LL

Comfort is a big deal to me, Pete.

If I'm not comfortable, I'm cannot focus.

1. I turn off the room lights. I have one of the clamp-on type flex lamps
with a 20w bulb in it for 'ambient' lighting so I can see the keyboard.
Otherwise, the rest of the room is dark. I don't wear shoes during a
contest. My shack is carpeted, but my feet still get chilly. I put down
two or three beach towels for my feet to play with. My footswitch is large,
made of 1x6"x3' boards, springs, piano hinge and momentary switches. It's
no problem 'finding' the footswitch and the towels aren't a problem.

2. I have a fan running at slow speed in the far corner of the room to
augment air circulation so my little world doesn't get stuffy... I have a

couple of muffin fans blowing across the Omni VI's heat sinks, but at 5w
output, the heatsinks aren't really getting THAT warm.

3. The inspiratonal, morale-building, and reminders-why-I'm-doing-this
post-it's referred to in a previous responder's post are also used here. I
also post my previous scores with 6-hour QSO number breakdowns to gage how
I'm doing.

73 and HNY,

Dale, kg5u

I agree all around with Dave and George, K5TR. There is a book titled
The Ethical Brain, which goes into how important extensive practice is
for all expert-level people who deal with physical and mental
coordination. It stresses how crucial practice is. Top golf and tennis
and baseball players as well as singers and violinists and pianists
excel in part because of incredibly dedicated practice schedules, and
in part because they have unusually high aptitudes. Some of this is
genetic. Contesting is a combination of physical and mental capability.
From my experience, the best contesters get a great deal of experience
(they do a lot of contesting) and also they are talented in this area.
It's the combination of both practice and inherent ability that
produces the top levels. Maintaining focus and concentration is one
area of expertise aided by practice.

From my experience, as K5TR stated, after a while one has experienced
most "highs" and "lows" in contests, and can continue, and not get
sidetracked, when difficult things happen. There are fewer mistakes.
There is a saying in sports that "the game slows down" as one gets
better and more experienced. I agree with that, and have found that
contesting "slows down" even as it gets faster the more experience one
gets. You can "hear the world turn" more clearly.

Jim George N3BB

Some ideas from my experience:
    - I do like to watch how my effort is doing compared to either a
previous effort or a newly created goal. It is important that the
comparison be something that can be in reach, and not too low. If you
are way off - high or low - then it will no longer be helpful. The goal
also has to be something you can think about at any point in the
contest - like a rate sheet with cumulative totals.
    - When in a competitive effort, I will sometimes focus on the fact
that there's got to be somebody out there doing it all better than me
(us) at that very moment - S&P'ing faster, breaking pileups quicker,
copying calls with less fills, choosing bands better - and I say to
myself, "Can't get too far behind; don't want to be embarrassed!"
    - Thinking about getting to the end of the contest isn't very
helpful in the wee hours of the first night. The goal is just too far

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away. So, it's best to think in terms of smaller chunks of time. Set a
goal for the next hour or even just 30 minutes, and work towards that
goal. Try a new goal in the next period.
    -  Stay busy. Keep the brain moving from one thought or idea to the
next. There's nothing like getting stuck in a 'thinking rut' to bring
on a desire to sleep!
    -  Hold yourself to your commitments. Think about how you will feel
when the event is over. Will you be upset with yourself if you look
back and realize you didn't gve it your full effort?
    -  Mental and physical conditioning is helpful, too. Mentally, you
want to clear the decks before the contest. Reduce and eliminate
distrations that could draw your focus away - work and family are the
big ones. Physically, being in decent shape gives you the ability to
use energy more efficiently. If not overweight, you will generally feel
more comfortable in the chair. Doing your short-term sleep and eating
strategies correctly can also help a lot with fatigue avoidance and
improved concentration.

73,

Jim Idelson K1IR
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There are plenty more replies in that thread if you care to look it up.

Observations by the Editor:

- Likely you have heard of Zoom. I have given a couple talks using it. Using N1MM spotting capabilities was given to the Deep Dixie Contest Group. The other was to the Columbia Amateur Radio Club. It was the vertical presentation I gave at our last SFCG meeting in Lexington. I'll be giving one on Baluns to the North Augusta club next month. (Send me an email if you are interested and I'll see if they will let me share the link.) It's a good way to visually see each other and could be used by the SFCG for presentations, SFCG meetings, or just to help one another out with problems. Google has a similar service that is still currently free. I haven't used it, but believe it requires everyone to be using Google. I do not have a Zoom account so can't set them up. I also have a monthly internet usage limit so do not join as many presentations as I would like too, nor will that let me become a Zoom administrator for the SFCG. However, if there is interest in doing something like that maybe someone could step up and become a Zoom coordinator for the group? Maybe the treasury has enough bucks on hand to pay for, or at least lessen the financial burden, on whoever takes those reigns.
- I have heard of two hams falling from towers recently. One in New England and the other in Georgia. Both men were experienced climbers who have been doing tower work professionally for years. I understand both were wearing harnesses. One died. The other, K1TO of the Florida Contest Group, is self-employed and is seeking donations to help with his medical bills. It only takes a split second of inattention to change or end your life. Be safe.

N1MM+ Tips:

What if you make a logging mistake and need to edit a logged q?

- <u>Editing the Log</u>
  Double-click any user-entered field in a QSO record to edit it; type the correction and hit Enter to save it. This can be done in either the upper or lower panes of the Log window, to facilitate correcting earlier QSOs with a station when you need to.
  - o Program generated fields, such as QSO points, cannot be edited. If you want to edit the sent serial number in a QSO, you will note that up/down arrows are displayed, on the assumption that you probably are just off by one. Click the appropriate arrow and hit Enter, or type the correction if you need to.
  - o If you want to edit the timestamp (date and time) of a QSO, first make sure that the date/time column is no wider than it needs to be. You can accomplish this, if there is white space to the right of the time, by rightclicking in the Log window and selecting "Auto Set Column Widths." Now double-click on the time, and you'll see the time in hours:minutes:seconds format, with the hours selected and a calendar icon with down arrow at the right end. If you need to enter a new hour, do so, and then hit Tab or Enter to exit. If you need to change the minutes, click on them with your mouse to select them, enter the new value, and hit Tab or Enter to finish editing. If you need to change the date, click on the down arrow next to the calendar icon, click on the date to change to, and hit Tab or Enter to exit.
  - o The Log window displays the RX frequency. If you want to change the RX & TX frequency use the right click – Edit Contact option
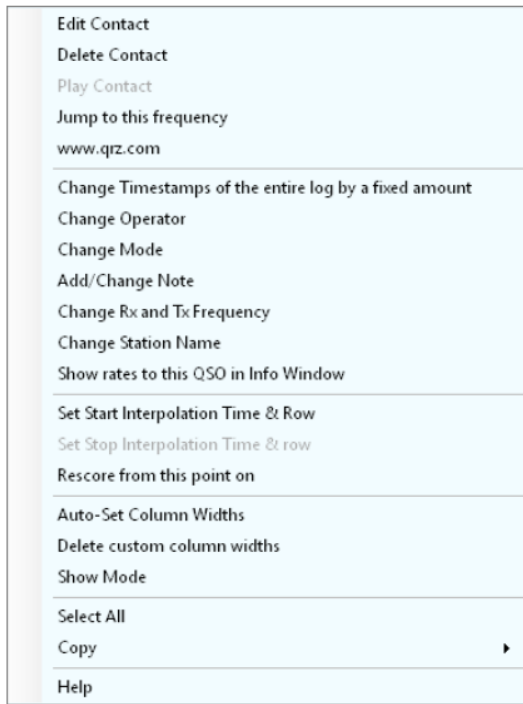- <u>Editing QSOs does not update your score</u>
  When you edit one or more QSOs in the Log window, that might result in a change in the multiplier status of that QSO and/or in your claimed score. The score is not recalculated automatically when you edit QSOs, so you can end up with incorrect multiplier counts and claimed scores. To correct your claimed score after performing edits in the Log window, use the Tools > Rescore Current Contest menu item in the main Entry window.
- <u>Keyboard Shortcuts</u>
  - o Delete (Ctrl+D) – Delete the last contact in the log.
  - o QuickEdit (Ctrl+Q) – Moves the last QSO in the log into the Entry window, and signals the mode with "QuickEdit" in the call-frame. You can tab or space through the window, make the changes you need, and then hit Enter to save them. Hit Esc to exit QuickEdit without making changes, or Ctrl+Q again while in this mode to switch to the next previous QSO.

- Right-click Menu
  Right-click in one of the rows in the upper pane – not in the title bar – and the following menu will appear.

Edit Contact
Delete Contact
Play Contact
Jump to this frequency
www.qrz.com

Change Timestamps of the entire log by a fixed amount
Change Operator
Change Mode
Add/Change Note
Change Rx and Tx Frequency
Change Station Name
Show rates to this QSO in Info Window

Set Start Interpolation Time & Row
Set Stop Interpolation Time & row
Rescore from this point on

Auto-Set Column Widths
Delete custom column widths
Show Mode

Select All
Copy ▸

Help

(Explanations for each of these choices is found beginning on page 397 of the N1MMplus.pdf documentation as of the file available on 9/1/2020)

Upcoming Contests: See WA7BNM webpages

SFOTA Current Leaderboard:

2020 OVERALL STANDINGS

	CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1)	N4IQ	52	6321	1292	411	2544	10568
2)	WB4HRL	158	6723	1346	74	2122	10265
3)	K3DNE	40	409	7482	209	0	8100
4)	WN4AFP	71	5433	1639	0	640	7712
5)	NU4E	14	2404	1926	331	1109	5770
6)	N4XL	14	2390	1649	0	0	4039
7)	KG6MC	24	2108	1463	12	2	3585
8)	K7OM	20	1444	255	0	1553	3252
9)	NI7R	26	2747	66	0	313	3126
10)	KG4IGC	6	408	18	0	971	1397
11)	KS4YX	10	664	55	43	404	1166
12)	NJ4F	3	50	0	0	779	829
13)	WU0B	1	0	358	0	0	358
14)	KN4SMO	2	0	243	0	45	288
15)	NE4EA	1	92	0	0	0	92
16)	AJ4UQ	4	5	2	6	61	74

3830 Activity:

Contest / Date	Call	Class	Power	Score
50FallSprnt				
8/23/2020	K3DNE	Single Op	HP	418
8/23/2020	NU4E	Single Op	LP	1
AlQP				
9/14/2020	WN4AFP	SOCW	LP	3,052
ARRL Sep VHF				
9/14/2020	K3DNE	Single Op	HP	7,137
CoQP				
9/9/2020	WN4AFP	M/SMixed	LP	4,154
HiQP				
8/25/2020	K3DNE	SOAB	HP	44
8/24/2020	WN4AFP	SOAB	LP	135
KsQP				
8/30/2020	K3DNE	Single Op	HP	4,188
8/31/2020	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	507
8/30/2020	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	32,890
NAQP SSB				
8/16/2020	AC4MC	Single Op	LP	20,655
8/16/2020	K3DNE	Single Op	LP	122,303
8/16/2020	K7OM	Single Op	LP	3,450
8/18/2020	KN4SMO	Single Op	LP	23,520
8/16/2020	N4XL	Single Op	LP	133,650
8/16/2020	NU4E	Single Op	LP	36,050
8/17/2020	WB4HRL	M/2	LP	6,375
8/17/2020	WW4SF(WN4AFP)	Single Op	LP	23,520
NCCC RY-Sprint				
8/21/2020	N4IQ	Single Op	LP	600
9/11/2020	N4IQ	Single Op	LP	170

OhQP				
8/23/2020	K3DNE	Single Op	HP	4,900
8/24/2020	NI7R	Single Op	HP	1,426
8/23/2020	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	3,822
8/26/2020	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	21,528
SARTG				
8/16/2020	K7OM	SOAB	HP	64,515
8/18/2020	KN4SMO	SOAB	LP	765
8/16/2020	N4IQ	SOAB	HP	356,160
8/17/2020	WB4HRL	SOAB	HP	54,050
TnQP				
9/7/2020	AC4MC	SO FixedMixed	HP	3,492
9/7/2020	NI7R	SO FixedMixed	HP	6,814
9/7/2020	WB4HRL	SO FixedMixed	HP	2,450
9/9/2020	WN4AFP	SO FixedMixed	LP	23,164
TxQP				
9/14/2020	WN4AFP	SO CW	LP	7,869
WAE SSB				
9/14/2020	NU4E	Single Op	HP	160,000
WWDigi				
8/30/2020	AJ5E	SOAB	LP	8,786
8/30/2020	K3DNE	SOAB	HP	4,292
8/30/2020	N4IQ	SOAB	HP	79,104
8/30/2020	NU4E	SOAB	LP	42,968
8/31/2020	WB4HRL	SOAB	LP	3,710

Guest Article:

Antenna Switching at N4XL

(I love technology. Wonder what kind of scores I could get if I put as much effort into actually contesting as I do playing with gadgets? Maybe some might find this of interest.)

A requirement for my SO2R station was automatic antenna switching. Unlike Bill, N4IQ, I chose to go the commercial route and purchased equipment from Hamation. The system senses radio band changes and automatically tells the 2x8 antenna switch to select an antenna for that band by energizing a particular antenna port on the switch. Band pass filters are also automatically

selected. The system includes front end protection by using a hardware lockout to prevent both radios from simultaneously using the same antenna port.

Since one antenna may work better than another at any given time it is good to be able to quickly cycle antennas if you are having trouble making a contact or want to target a different region. The switching software allows for several antennas per band, many more than the two (and dummy load) that I show in the screen shots below. To change from the default antenna (which is the last antenna used on that band) you move the mouse cursor and click an icon for another antenna in the antenna switching program window. Unfortunately, doing so moves the cursor focus away from the N1MM entry window. That has caused me problems when I've tried to enter contact information because typing on the keyboard didn't enter anything into N1MM. You can tell the software to automatically return focus to the entry window after selecting another antenna, but that didn't always work well either. The return point was based upon the X-Y coordinates you told the cursor to return to. If I moved the N1MM entry window I would have to reset the X-Y coordinates. If I had that automatic return function activated, clicked on another antenna, and then discovered the signal was worse, the focus would be back in N1MM. So, I would have to move the cursor back up to the switching software and go back to the original antenna. By the time I did that I've missed a chance to copy the other stations info. If I was using the second radio entry window the cursor would return its focus to the X-Y coordinates of the first radio's entry window instead.

A couple years back I had found a presentation about using a small 7-inch touch screen monitor to handle the switching. The operator said once you started using it you wouldn't go back to clicking again. I finally decided to try it out and added a $69 Raspberry Pi touch monitor to the shack. Haven't done a contest with it yet, but it works great in trial runs. The colored icons in the screen shots below show the selected equipment. The green icons show the band of the selected radio. That is read from the radio and not controlled by the touch screen. The orange and blue icons show what radio is ready to have its antenna changed. By touching the other (uncolored) radio or antenna icons the system quickly switches to those antennas. That ought to cut down on my frustration with how things used to work. Like the guy said, I don't think I'm going to go back to clicking again.
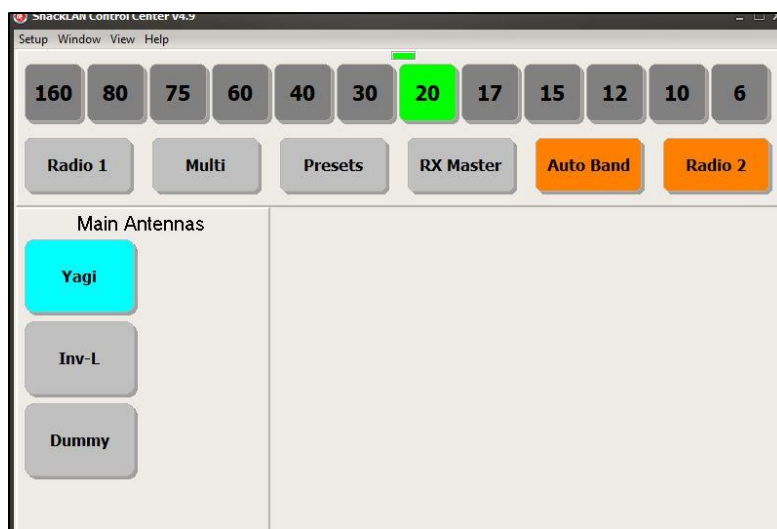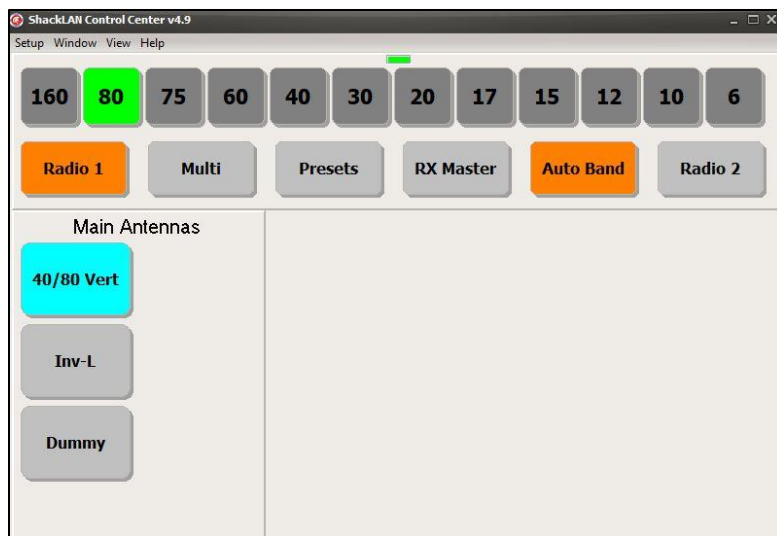
There are two things about the system I would like to change. First is the software only shows one radio at a time. Not a big deal there though. It's easy to quickly tap the screen and change the selected radio. The second is a Microsoft Windows issue that others are unhappy with too. The touch screen monitor problem happens if you have multiple monitors – which you will if you add a small 7" touch screen to your station. Apparently, Windows applies touch screen commands to the Main Display. Think about how you use your computer. Whenever you open a new program or adjust settings it generally opens on your main monitor. For most of us that is a 21" or larger screen and it is easy to see. To get the touch screen function to work that little 7" screen is now the Main Display. You will be trying to display every new thing you open on a screen about the same size as a smart phone. Fortunately though, most programs in multi-monitor systems know where they are supposed to open up. After positioning them once N1MM, Google, and most other programs come up on the bigger screens like they should. But having things open so they are easy to use is no longer a given. They too often pop up on that small screen. A work around is to keep the bigger display as the Main Display until I start a

contest and then switch that to the smaller monitor as part of contest preparations. The convenience of having touch screen antenna switching should make that minor annoyance worthwhile for me.

I won't need it, but the Hamation Control Center software is expandable to include multiple antenna switches, stacks, rotor, and receive antenna control for extremely large stations.

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73 es QRT de N4XL