HF Contesting 101: The Very Basics

AB8OU

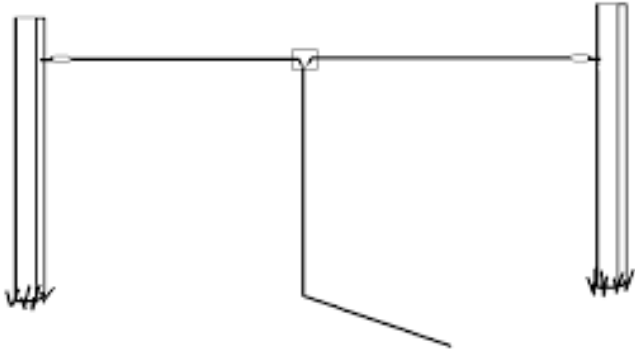# HF Contesting 101: The Very Basics

RADIO SPORT

AB8OU

About AB8OU

- **Allan "Zeke" "AL" Zadiraka**
- **Originally licensed as KN3MCP in 1960**
- **Previous calls - K3MCP & WA8VWX**
- **40+ years power plant automation & control**
- **Little operation until 2014 - ARRL Centennial**
- **First contest - 2014 – ARRL DX Contest, SSB,**
  Field Day is not a contest!
- **Feeder fish in 20+ contests a year**
- **DXCC, WAS, WAC, WPX, WAE, …**

What you need – 1970's
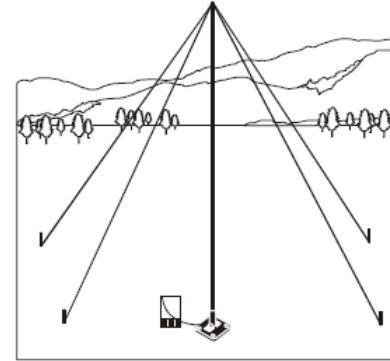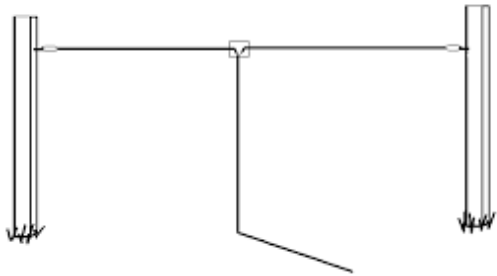

Antenna

Rig

Log Sheet

Dup Sheet

What you need – Today

Antennas

21st Century Rig
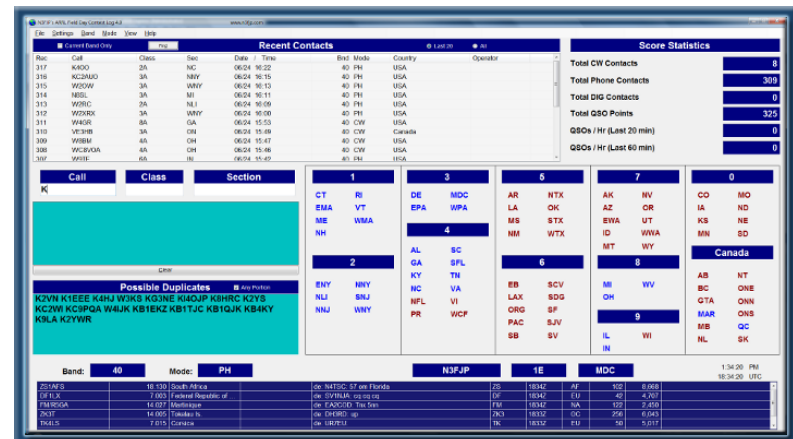
Logging Software

Contest Logs

- Cabrillo format - standard for electronic logs
- Paper logs increasingly not accepted
- Contest logging software will create Cabrillo file with a click
- Web forms available to manually enter log data to produce a Cabrillo file
- File name - <your call>.log
- Submit through contest web form (or email)
- File checking and scoring automated
- Send in your log before you forget!

Cabrillo File - ab8ou.log

```
START-OF-LOG: 2.0
ARRL-SECTION: OH
CALLSIGN: AB8OU
CLUB: Mad River Radio Club
CONTEST: STEW-PERRY
CATEGORY: SINGLE-OP 160M LOW CW
CLAIMED-SCORE: 468
OPERATORS: AB8OU
NAME: Allan Zadiraka
ADDRESS: 4110 State Rd
ADDRESS: Akron, OH 44319
ADDRESS: UNITED STATES
CREATED-BY: N1MM Logger+ 1.0.7403.0
QSO:  1819 CW 2018-12-29 2101 AB8OU        599 EN90   N8EA       599 EN82
QSO:  1816 CW 2018-12-29 2103 AB8OU        599 EN90   K1GQ       599 FN43
QSO:  1813 CW 2018-12-29 2104 AB8OU        599 EN90   AB3CX      599 FN22
QSO:  1811 CW 2018-12-29 2108 AB8OU        599 EN90   W4NA       599 FM19
QSO:  1816 CW 2018-12-29 2109 AB8OU        599 EN90   K3WW       599 FN20
QSO:  1819 CW 2018-12-29 2112 AB8OU        599 EN90   N1LN       599 FM05
```

Contesting is a game

- Players
- Rules
- Scores to determine winners
- Strategy

Players

- **Competitors**   (30-50 World Wide?)
  - Winning records
  - Peer recognition
  - Full time
- **Enthusiasts**
  - Enjoy the challenge
  - Chasing personal goals
  - Use time available
- **Participants**
  - Make contacts
  - Help others
  - Have fun

Feeder Fish Are Needed

Or Else

Low Contest Scores!
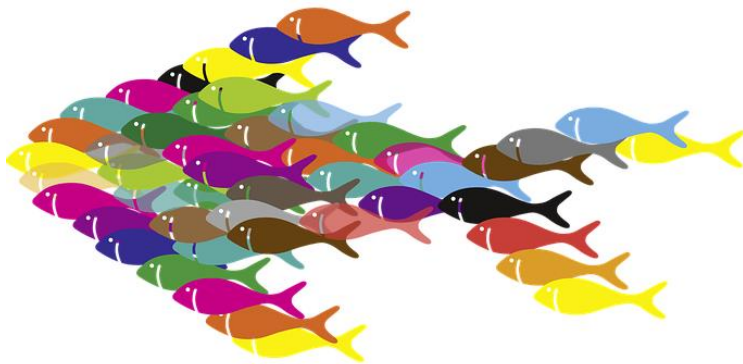
Strategy

- **Set a goal**
  - Have fun
  - Beat last year's score
  - Win a certificate
  - Set a record

- **Select category**
  - All band or single band?
  - Power - High, Low, QRP?
  - Assisted or unassisted?
- **Know the Contest's Rules**

Certificates Of Participation

Certificates Of Participation

Certificates Of Participation

Contest EXCHANGE

- Required exchange is contest specific.
- Penalized if your RECEIVED does not match the other station's SENT.
- Don't leave until you have correctly received the other station's exchange – Ask for FILLS.
- Contest logging software has the fields for the required information in the exchange.
- Don't send more than required information.
- Set up Function Keys in logging program to send the individual parts of the exchange

RST

- **All Contest RST's are 59 or 599**
- **Contest logging software prefills 59(599)**
- **Be alert, occasionally evil beings will send something else**
- **Not having correct RST in your log will cost you points.**

NAME

- NAME is NOT operator's name.
- <u>Cannot change names during a contest!</u>
- No requirement to use your real name.
- No requirement to use same name in every contest.
- Sometimes a number of stations will honor a SK by using their name.
- Will see DUDE, BOBO, BEAR, BUBA, etc.
- Common spelling & short names are good!

SERIAL NUMBER

- A counter that begins at 1 for the first contest QSO, and increments by 1 for each successive contact.
- Contest logging software will generate your SERIAL NUMBER.
- You have to log the other station's number.
- Some will add leading zeros to low serial numbers.
- Your SERIAL NUMBER should equal your number of contacts.

GRID SQUARE

- **Alphanumeric geographical coordinate system, based on the Maidenhead Locator System.**
- **Four characters (or six characters) specifying your location.**
- **Most of us are EN90 or EN91.**

ITU Zone or CQ Zone

- **Two different divisions of world.**
- **All stations send their zones in some contests, other contests only DX stations send their zone.**
- **Most of us are ITU Zone 8 and CQ Zone 4.**
- **Logging software provides zones when it can identify zone from call prefix.**

STATE and ARRL Section

- **50 states and 80 sections.**
- **DX stations send their zone or "DX".**
- **Ohio (OH) is both state and ARRL section.**
- **Logging software typically prevents entering invalid but not incorrect state or section abbreviations.**

Counties

- **Used in State QSO parties.**
- **Have to use correct abbreviations in log.**
- **Logging software typically prevents logging invalid county.**
- **Most SARA members are SUMM, MEDI, or WAYN for Ohio QSO Party.**

Contest Exchange

CQ Ohio QSO Party **AB8OU**

N8CD

N8CD 59 Summit **SUMM**

59 Wayne **WAYN**

TU CQ OHQP **AB8OU**

W8TB

W8TB 59 Summit **SUMM**

59 Medina **MEDI**

TU CQ OHQP **AB8OU**

Contest Logging Software

2015 CQ-WW
With at least 200 submissions

Software	SSB	CW
N1MM	3458	3160
Win-Test	565	617
TR4W	382	546
CTESTWIN	268	356
WriteLog	237	259
UcxLog	252	258
N3FJP's	497	215
QARTest	295	163
CQWW	204	75

56%
10%
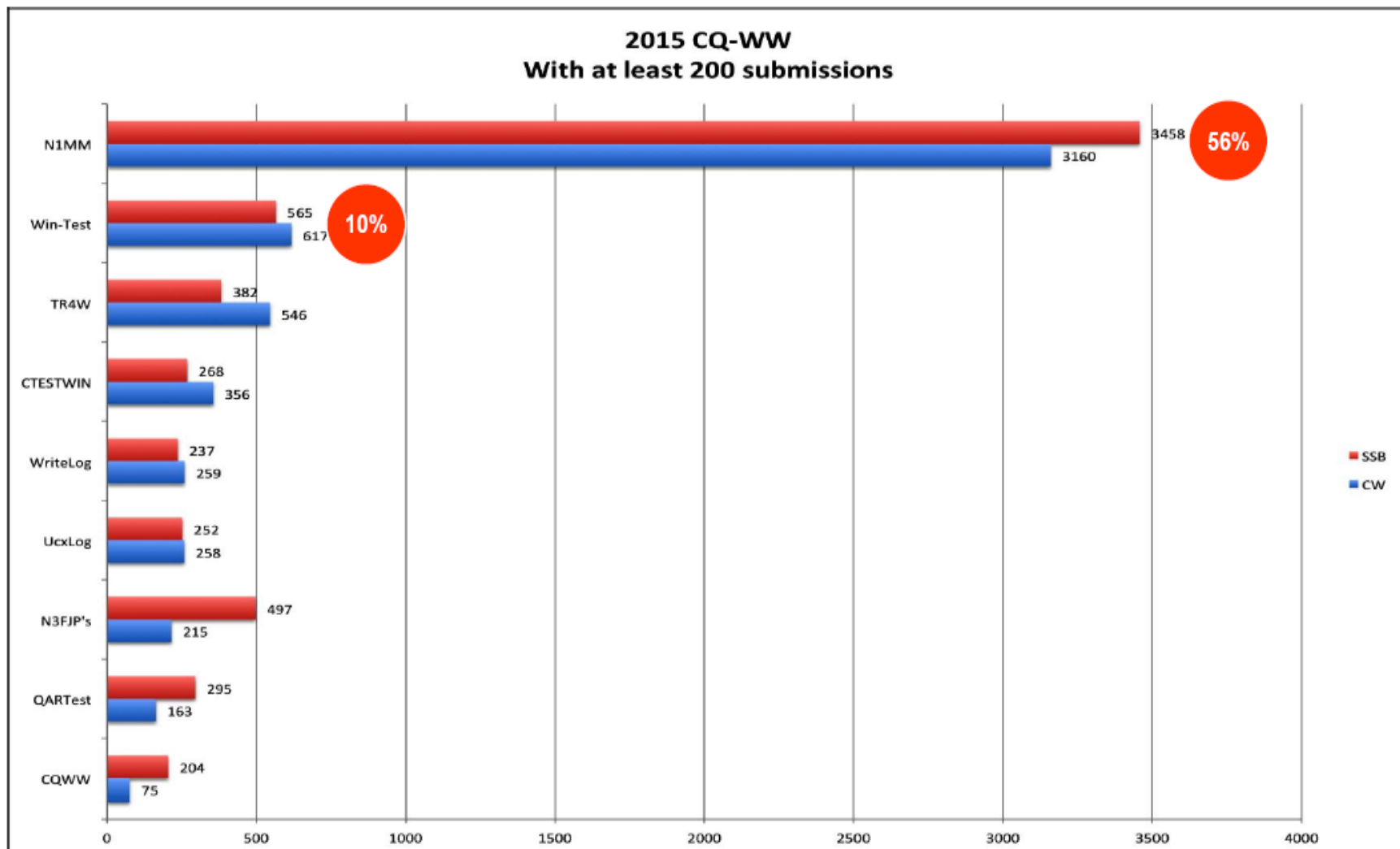
Chart generated by NY4I from CQWW Cabrillo logs

Contest Logging Software

2015 CQ-WW
With at least 200 submissions

"*N1MM Logger+, representing over 60% of nearly any contest's "market share" for loggers*"
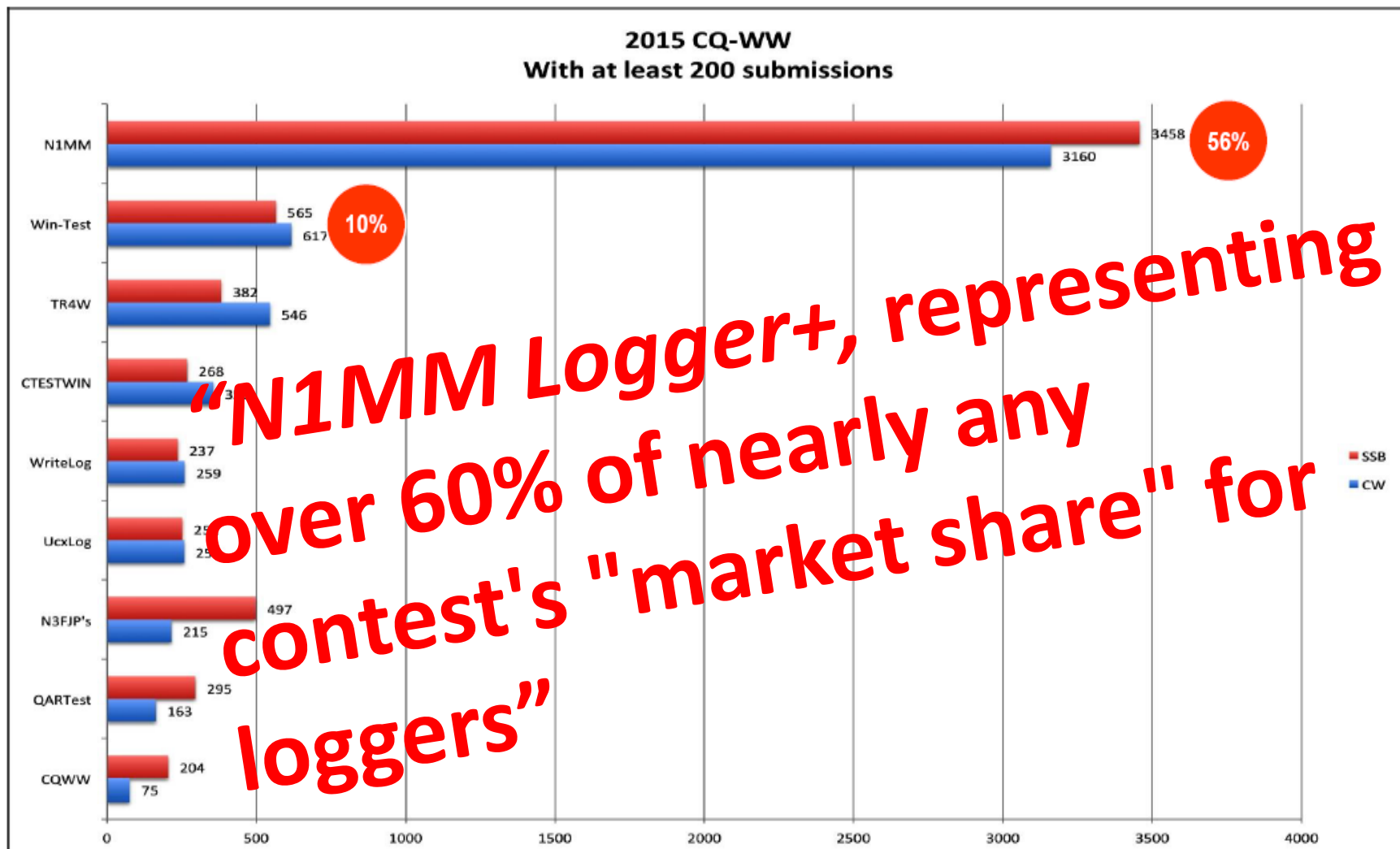
Chart generated by NY4I from CQWW Cabrillo logs

Call History

- **Fills in exchange info from previous contests**
- **Fills in exchange info from previous contacts**
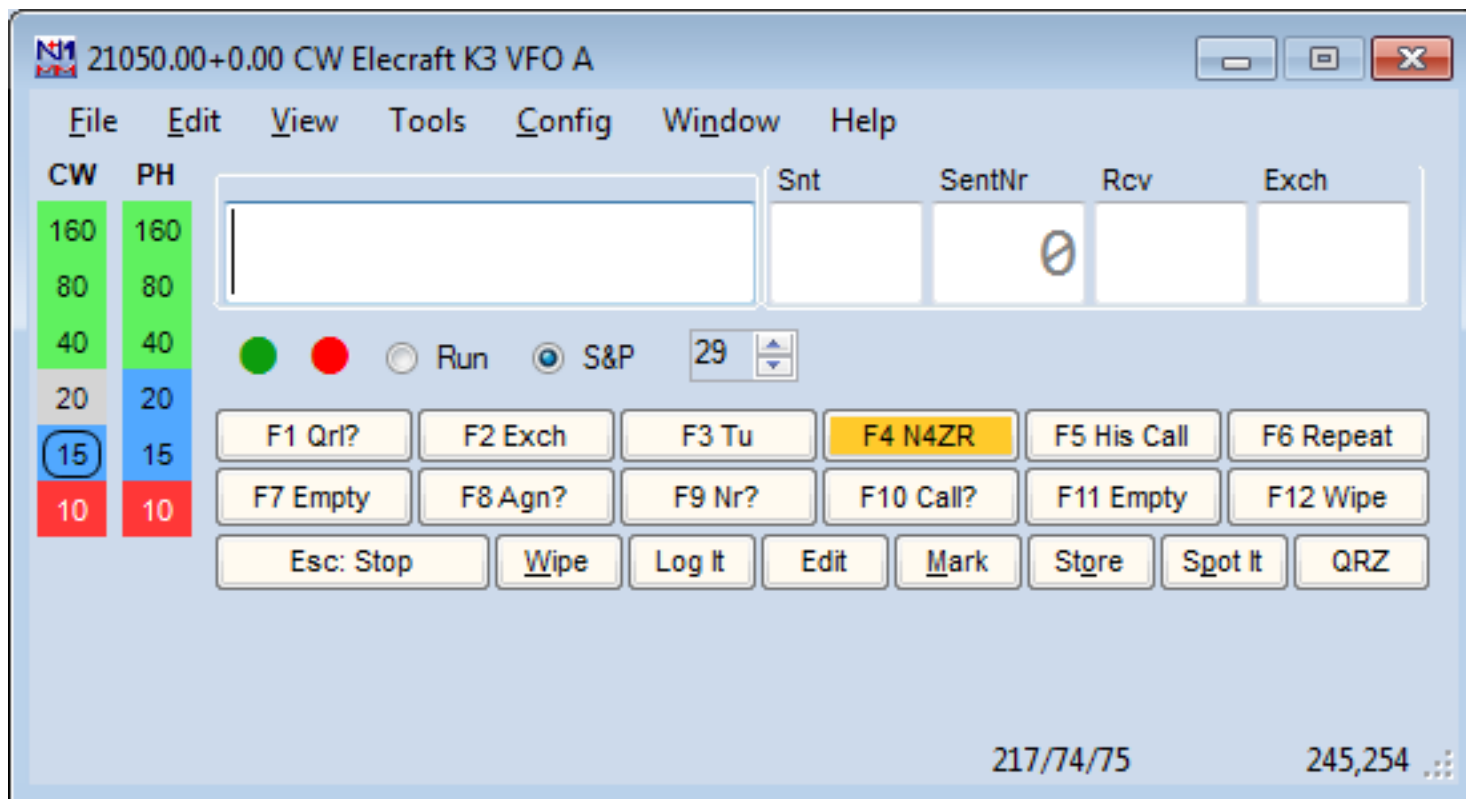
Super Partial Check

- **Calls that have shown up in past contest logs**

Band Map

- **Shows spots you have entered.**
- **Spots from spotting networks if you are operating assisted.**
- **Click on spot to jump to it.**

Spectrum Display Window
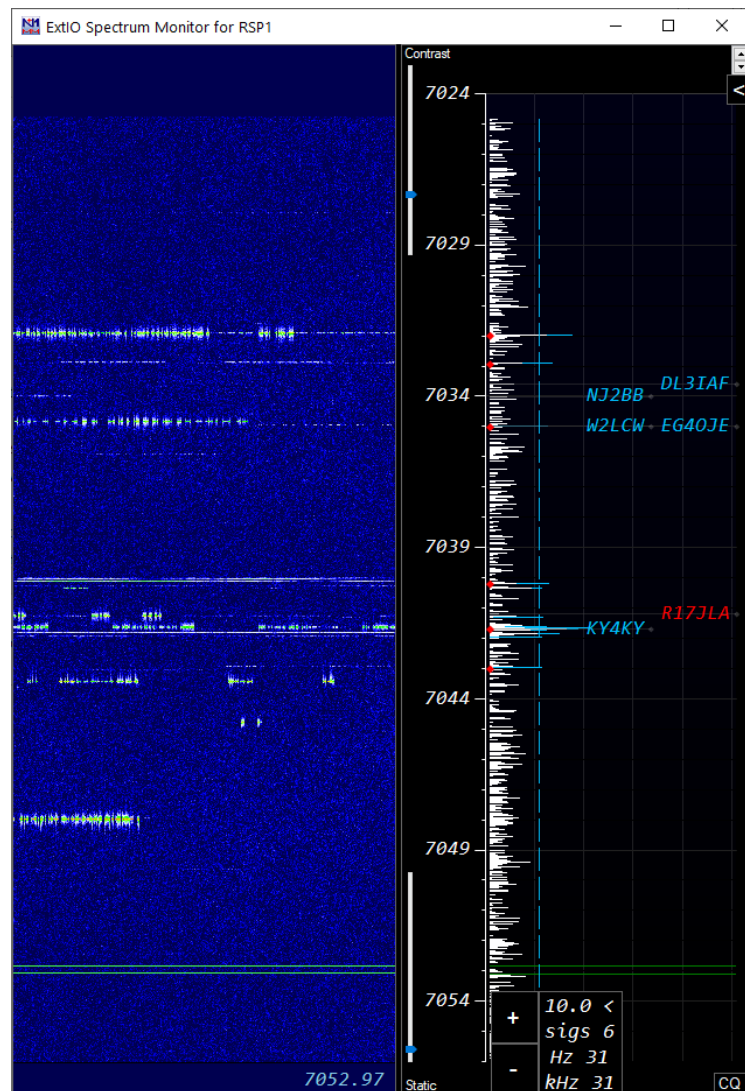
- **Need**
  - **CAT spectrum output from radio.**
  - **Separate SRD radio with spectrum output.**
- **Click on spot to jump to it.**

Other Windows

Ohio QSO Party 2018 - SARA

OHIO QSO PARTY - 2018

Ohio Club Scores
SARA - 17 of 31

Ohio QSO Party 2018 - SARA

CALL	QSOs	Mult	CW QSO	CW mult	PH QSO	PH mult	Score	QTH	PWR
KS8Z**	198	106	34	22	164	84	24,592	MEDI	L
N8JDM*	259	88	0	0	259	88	22,792	SUMM	L
AB8OU	135	86	50	38	85	48	15,910	SUMM	L
N8CD	109	72	48	31	61	41	11,304	WAYN	H
WD8KNL	16	14	0	0	16	14	224	SUMM	L

*now N8EIEIO

**now W8TB

Ohio QSO Party 2018 - SARA

Competitors |--------- Enthusiasts ----------|--------- - - Participants------------------|
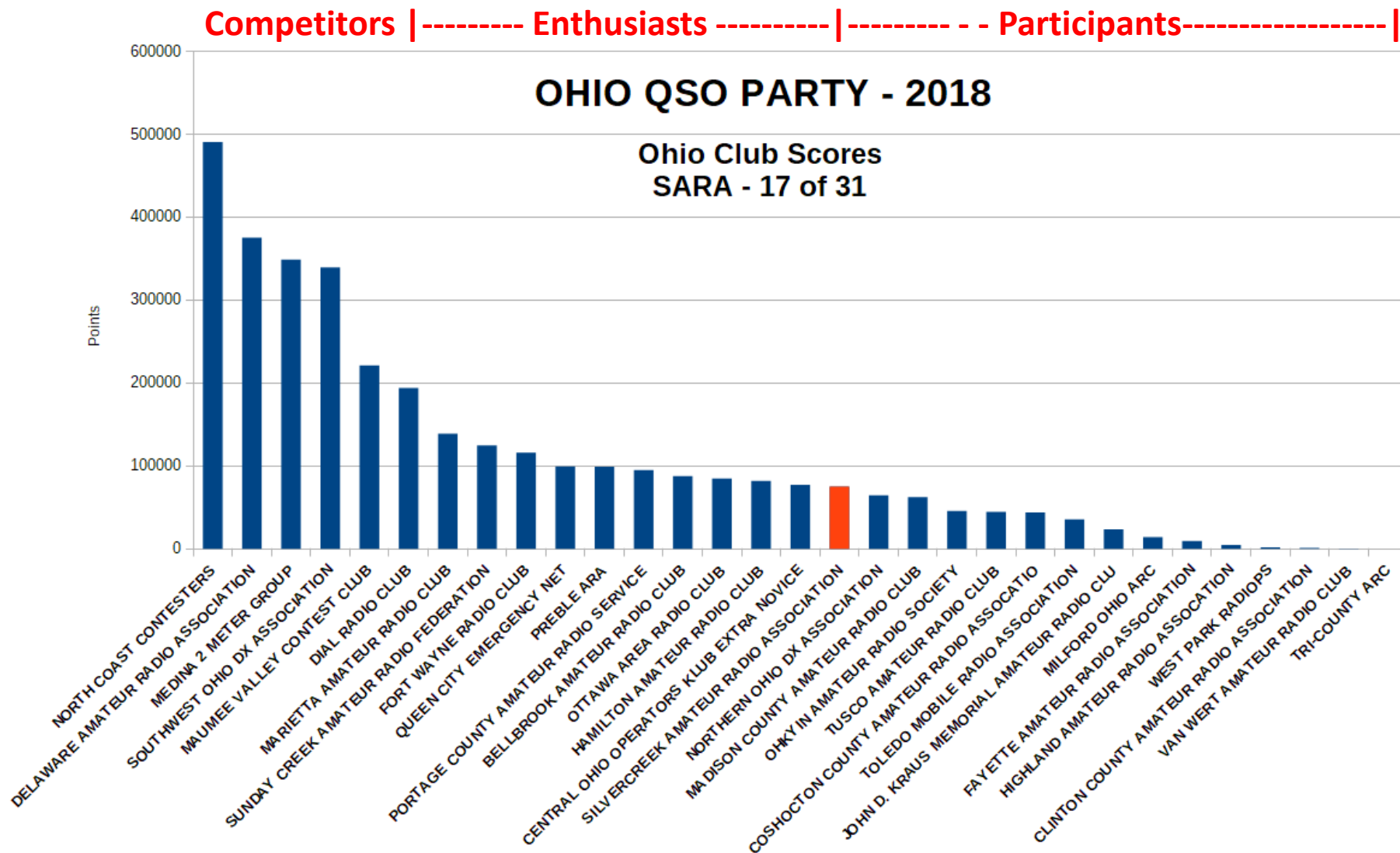
How to improve your contest scores

- **Get on air a lot - 10,000 hour rule**
- **Learn the bands, propagation and your station capability.**
- **Practice your timing at breaking pileups.**
- **LISTEN to good operators and learn.**
- **RUN as much as you can rather than S&P**

Act & Sound Like A Big Dog

"If you think and act like you're a big dog, you will convince most of the pack that you are, although you may get bitten once in a while."

de K2YWE
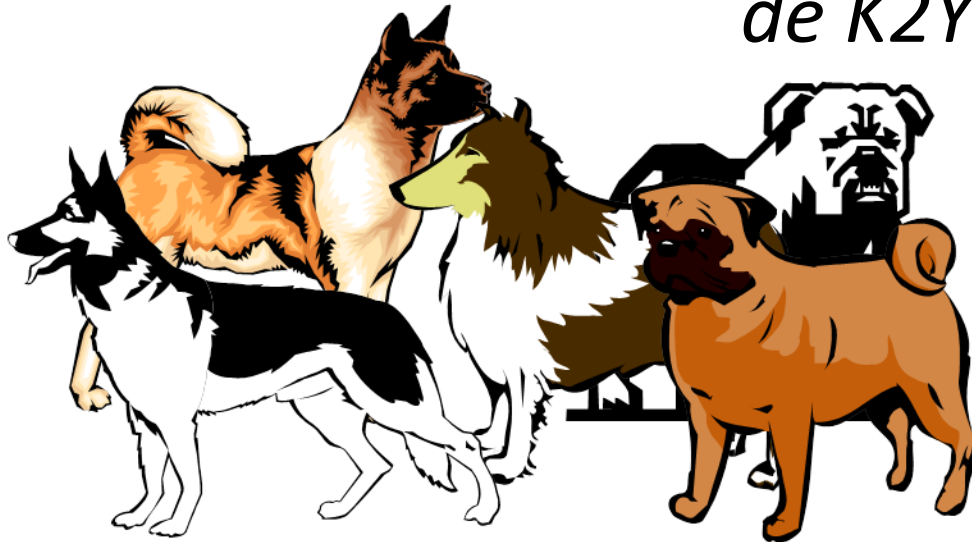
Upcoming Operating Events

- **ARRL Field Day - Jun 22 - 23**
- 13 Colonies – July 1 - 7
- **IARU HF World Championship - Jul 13 - 14**
- North American QSO Party, RTTY - Jul 20 -21
- RSGB IOTA - Jul 27 - 28
- **North American QSO Party, CW - Aug 3 - 4**
- **North American QSO Party, SSB - Aug 17-18**
- **Ohio QSO Party - Aug 24 - 25**
- Ohio State Parks on the Air - Sep 7
- CQ WW DX Contest, RTTY - Sep 29 - 30

Contesting is a game

ARRL Contest Update

- **ARRL Contesting Newsletter** – Every two weeks.
- Timely information on contests, operating and **technical** for both active and casual contesters.
- Sign-up on ARRL Web site.

National Contest Journal

- **North American QSO Parties**
- **Articles on Contest Stations, Contest Operators, Station Design, Antennas, Contest Operation, Little Pistols, etc**
- **6 Issues a year**

3830scores.com - (Contest Score Rumors)

Live Scoreboard

I love the live online scoreboard! It makes it feel more like a competition because you know where you stand …I think it makes you try harder…" -ZL4YL

Ohio QSO Party 2019

Get ready for the 2019 OhQP Aug 24, 2019 noon-midnight Eastern Time