The 75th anniversary edition of the ARRL Phone Sweepstakes was a record breaker in so many ways — increased activity, numerous records broken in all categories, challenging multipliers, and some of the closest races in recent memory. While the sunspot cycle remains stuck at the bottom, conditions were indeed improved over the 2007 running. In 2007, many participants bemoaned the long skip conditions on 75 meters. This year, 75 meters was much better behaved, with nearby contacts being easy to complete and strong signals from coast-to-coast. Even 15 meters was improved this year, especially if you were fortunate enough to be on the East or West Coasts, Hawaii, or in the Caribbean. 20 meters took the brunt of the activity during the daytime hours, resulting, expectedly, in very crowded conditions.

The Elusive Clean Sweep

Of course, most participants don’t expect to be setting a new record, but Sweepstakes does provide a meaningful goal for all — the “Clean Sweep” (working at least one station in each of the 80 ARRL sections). This year, like most years, there were a small number of sections that presented challenges for many participants. In fact, many lamented missing the Clean Sweep this year. One section really stood out this year for its relative rarity — Puerto Rico. For each of the previous 10 years, Puerto Rico was quite common. This year a number of Puerto Rican stations made QSOs in Sweepstakes, but the total number of contacts from KP4 was not large. Despite the challenges, 258 made the grade for a Clean Sweep this year and another 109 participants were disappointed to come so close, missing only one section.

Close Races

This year, the most exciting close race was for Low Power in Southern Texas. Rene, K5JX, edged out Phil, KD5MMM, by just a single contact! In Eastern Washington, Low Power, Jay, WA6WWW, finished with a seven QSO lead over Tony, W7VY. Only eight QSOs separated Richard, KV2R, from Manny, W2MF, in the Southern New Jersey, Low Power race. Similarly, in the West Virginia, Low Power competition, Marty, W8AKS, bested Gary, W8VF, by eight QSOs while operating portable from an RV park! Ironically, Marty did not work a single West Virginia station! In Illinois, Low Power is always a competitive section and category, and this year was no exception as nine contacts separated Greg, WR9L, from John, N9LYE. You can’t get much closer than a tie, and the Roanoke Division saw just that in 2008. Rich, N3W (@N4RV) and Jeff, NB8L, both scored 264,000 in the Single-op High Power category. Who buys the frosty malts in that battle?

High Power Category

After 10 consecutive High Power victories, concluding last year, WP3R took the year off. This opened up the High Power field to serious competition for the #1 spot. Looking at the top runner-ups for the previous years, W7WA, KP2TM (op K9TM), KH7B (op K4XS), K5TR, KD0S (op WD0T), W0SD (op W0DB) and K6NA (op N6ED) were all going to be gunning for the top spot in 2008. The result was the tightest race in any category that this author has seen in many years. Only 4% separated the #1 spot from the #5 spot. Only 26 QSOs separated Number 1 from Number 3. The race between Dan, W7WA; Tim, K9TM, at KP2TM, and Bill, K4XS, at KH7B can only be described as a classic.

Figure 1 shows that KP2TM got off to a quick start, with a 20 QSO lead over W7WA in the first hour. The Caribbean advantage quickly vanished with the sunlight, however, and W7WA jumped ahead in the 2nd hour, a lead that Dan held throughout the evening and night. Surprisingly, KH7B was almost out of the running during the first 12 hours due to a 30-minute power outage during the second hour. At 0900Z, W7WA had a formidable 135 QSO lead over KP2TM, and a 151 QSO lead over KH7B.

Things got more interesting in the next six hours, with differing
off-time strategies. Dan took all six hours of off-time, from 0600Z-0630Z. With fickle New England propagation this year, but cut his error rate by two-thirds. John, KK9A, using the W4AAA call sign, moved up from 3rd place to #1 this year, taking the 3rd place spot. Art had a much lower error rate than any other Top Ten finisher, moving him up several places in the standings.

In his 55th year as a ham, Paul, N4PN, took the 4th place spot, with 1286 QSOs from Georgia. Bob, the “Green Hornet,” W3GH, stung the competition, with a 5th place finish from Western Pennsylvania. Steve, NA4K, moved into the Top Ten this year, with 1170 QSOs from Tennessee and the #6 spot. Showing that the Top Ten can be made from Minnesota, Kirk, N0KK, placed 7th. Lu, W4LT, jumped into the Top Ten this year as number 8. Not only did he make more QSOs in less time than last year, but cut his error rate by two-thirds. Great show! Outing the Top Ten were John Comella, N8AA, from Michigan, and Bill Lippert, AC0W, operating from Minnesota.
QRP Category

Operating the Phone Sweepstakes with less than 5 W takes patience, skill and determination. This year, 62 entries were received in this challenging category.

Can you say three-peat? Congratulations to Al, KCS5R, QRP operator extraordinaire, on winning the QRP category. While QRP involves hours of tedious search-and-pounce, Al was able to take advantage of a few holes in the QRM to run some stations, making 697 QSOs. Al also was one of only two QRP entries to make a Clean Sweep.

The 2nd place entry was also a “repeat performer” from last year. Dave, N9KT, was the other QRP Clean Sweep. Dave made 633 QSOs — not easy from the Indiana “Black Hole.” Jeff, NX9T, moved up one place this year to number 3, with 600 QSOs, an increase of 81 from last year. Mark, K6UFO, operating at the NN7SS club station in Western Washington landed in 4th place with just under 90k. Another MidwestBlack Hole entry came in 5th place—congratulations to Ralph, K9ZO.

Unlimited Category

Thanks to the rivalry between two major contest clubs, Unlimited has become the second most popular category, with 391 entries this year.

After years of intense competition for the top spot, Mitch, K7RL, ran away from the pack in 2008. His 2138 QSOs was a personal best for Mitch. Washington was clearly a hot spot this year, with two category winners residing near Puget Sound.

Matt, WX5S, operating W7RN in Nevada, moved up to 2nd place this year. Mitch, WB1GQR, made many folks happy with the Vermont multiplier. Mitch moved up to 3rd place this year, thanks to outstanding conditions on 40 and 75 meters.

In 4th place was a newcomer—congratulations to Ken Long, NØQO! Ken has only been a ham for two years, but is already making a name for himself in contesting. The historic W3GRF call was proudly used for the KØWHY, and a number of not-yet-licensed locations. Third place went to Worcester Polytechnical Institute Wireless Society, K4FAU. The Multi-operator Category has become an extremely popular and highly contested choice for many SS participants. It’s a great opportunity to contest with friends and improve your operating skills.

The W6YI team of Jim, W6YI; John, K6AM; Dan, N6MJ, and Dennis, N6KI, were again the winners, with their best score ever. These guys have operated together for many years — clearly, a well-oiled team. Like Team Avis, 2nd place was also a repeat of last year. K5NA owners Richard, K5NA, and Susan, K5DU, were very happy to have Colin, KUSB, and Richard, N52C, do 99% of the operating, with their best score ever.

The Kansas team of WØNO moved up from 6th to 3rd place this year. Team Step-pRIr, this year sporting the call K7PU, moved up to the number 4 slot this year. Only eight QSOs down, in 5th place, was the Iowa N0NI team.

The next four slots turned into the “Battle for New England.” Congratulations to the K11Z team for their 6th place finish. In 7th place was the W1AW HQ station, followed by another classic call, W2PV. In 9th place, was K2NY from the rare Northern New York section. Another rare multiplier rounded out the Top Ten — many thanks to the NSDO ops for making West Texas an easy QSO.

School Club Category

The Hesston College Amateur Radio Club, K0HC, again won the school club category, with 1455 QSOs, an increase of 65 QSOs over the previous two years. A great job by Bob, W0BH; Eric N0LQU; Lorna, K0WHY, and a number of not-yet-licensed members.

The MIT Radio Society, W1MX, came in 2nd place, despite their very noisy city location. Third place went to Worcester Polytechnical Institute Wireless Society, W1YK. The Nacogdoches School Amateur Radio Club, KD5VVI, placed 4th, and the Clarkson College Amateur Radio Club, K2CC, placed 5th.

Other schools making the Top Ten were Florida Atlantic University, K4FAU; Michigan State University, W85H; University of Arkansas, W5YM; University of Nebraska, N0UNL, and South Dakota School of Mines, K0VYV.
Thanks to the generous sponsorship of numerous clubs, individuals and Icom America — the principal awards sponsor for the 2008 ARRL November Sweepstakes — we are pleased to announce that the Overall and Division leaders in each category receives a sponsored Sweepstakes plaque. The ARRL wishes to thank the plaque sponsors for their continued commitment to the ARRL Plaque Program. Without their support and dedication, the Plaque Program would not be possible.

Plaque Winners

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of numerous clubs, individuals and Icom America — the principal awards sponsor for the 2008 ARRL November Sweepstakes — we are pleased to announce that the Overall and Division leaders in each category receives a sponsored Sweepstakes plaque. The ARRL wishes to thank the plaque sponsors for their continued commitment to the ARRL Plaque Program. Without their support and dedication, the Plaque Program would not be possible.

Division/Plaque Category | Plaque Sponsor | Winner
---|---|---
**Overall**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Mike Fatchett, WDMU | W7WA
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Ken Adams, K5KA | W4AAA
Single Operator QRP Phone | QRP Amateur Radio Club International | KCSR
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | K7RL
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | K6YI
School Club Phone | Icom America | K6HC

**Atlantic**
Single Operator High Power Phone | North Coast Contesters | KD4D
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Potomac Valley Radio Club | W3GH
Single Operator QRP Phone | Icom America | N3YD
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | W3GFR | (K3MM, op)
Multi-operator Phone | Mark Dickmeyer, KGBGJ Memorial | K2NNY
School Club Phone | Icom America | K2CC

**Central**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Society Of Midwest Contesters | WB9Z
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Sean Kutko, K9XIX | N9KT
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | N2BJ
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | KG9TC
School Club Phone | Icom America | KG9BC

**Dakota**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Minnesota Wireless Association | W2SD
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Minnesota Wireless Association | N2DK (@ N2AT)
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | N2BJ
Multi-operator Phone | In Memory of Jim Dobko, KWFFV - Minnesota Wireless Association | KK9FV
School Club Phone | Icom America | K9VF

**Delta**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Icom America | W5WMU
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Icom America | N4AK
Single Operator QRP Phone | Icom America | K4SZ
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | W5PS
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | W5YM
School Club Phone | Icom America | W5YM

**Great Lakes**
Single Operator High Power Phone | North Coast Contesters | K8AD
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Mad River Radio Club | NW8A
Single Operator QRP Phone | Mad River Radio Club | N8BE
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | W8MJ
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | W8BH
School Club Phone | Icom America | W8BH

**Hudson**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Icom America | N2LH
Single Operator QRP Phone | Icom America | KU6M
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | W8T
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | K2Z

**Midwest**
Single Operator High Power Phone | Society Of Midwest Contesters | K2DEQ
Single Operator QRP Phone | Icom America | K2DV
Single Operator Unlimited Phone | Icom America | W0NO
Multi-operator Phone | Icom America | K2HC
School Club Phone | Icom America | K2HC

**New England**
Single Operator High Power Phone | CTRI Contest Group | NN1N
Single Operator Low Power Phone | Icom America | K1BX
Single Operator QRP Phone | QRP Club of New England | KAI1MR

In the Local Club category, the New Mexico Big River Contesters repeated last years’ win with ten entries and 1 million points. Congratulations!

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to “Tree” Tyree, N6TR, for his hard work checking the logs, ARRL Contest Branch Manager Sean Kutko, KX9X, for promptly answering my many questions, and Sweepstakes Contest Manager Ken Adams, KSKA, who maintains the SS records. In addition, a team painstakingly typed in the handwritten logs, so that they could be properly adjudicated.

Club Competition

Activity in Sweepstakes is a long-standing tradition for many clubs. Without their promotion of Sweepstakes, there would be far less activity for us to all enjoy. It takes a tremendous amount of planning, promotion and execution to “beat the drums” and “bring out the troops” for Sweepstakes every year. Thanks!

Again this year, the Potomac Valley Radio Club (PVRC) and the Northern California Contest Club (NCCC) battled for the top spot in the Unlimited Club category. This year, the mid-Atlantic-based PVRC was victorious, with an amazing 317 entries and over 22 million points! Only 10% behind was the NCCC, with 278 entries and 20 million points. Honorable mention also goes to the Society of Midwest Contesters, for putting together 236 entries and 13 million points for 3rd place.

The Southern California Contest Club easily took 1st place in the Medium Club Category, with 43 entries and nearly 4 million points. The Tennessee Contest Group put together even more entries, 48, in their fine 2nd place showing. The next eight slots were remarkably tight. Just one or two more big scores could have moved any of these clubs into 3rd place!