The 2007 ARRL September VHF QSO Party Results

They call it “sporadic-E” for a reason...

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VHF/UHF means different things to different people. Some amateurs have only used the VHF/UHF bands for local communications, handheld transceivers and repeaters, missing out on a lot of fun and exciting DX possibilities. By using a small beam installed for horizontal polarization instead of vertical and trying SSB or CW instead of FM, they could be working stations several states away! VHF/UHF contesters have long figured this out, of course, and enjoy themselves in their heart’s content — assuming, of course, there is propagation.

Beyond the Radio Horizon

VHFers all know how unpredictable propagation can be. Paul, AA4ZZ, summed it up best: “It’s not often that the big story for June is tropo and September is 6 meter sporadic E (Es), but that is the story for the 2007 VHF contests.” How right he is!

An E-cloud settled in over Arkansas for a few hours on Saturday and allowed some much-needed 6 meter opening. Those in the Northeast and South benefited from the unexpected 6 meter opening, while the rest of the country had to find QSOs by lots of CQing and sheer determination. There was also a touch of tropospheric enhancement to be found on the East Coast on Sunday morning, which led to some modest gains on 2 meters and up.

Keys to Success

Perhaps the biggest factor that leads to success in a VHF contest comes down to “chair time.” Sitting at the rig actively looking for or soliciting QSOs is going to lead to success in a VHF contest comes down to “chair time.” Sitting at the rig actively look

And lastly, pay attention to the rovers and where they are going to be. Rovers, by definition, activate more than one grid square, often activating any given square for a very short period of time. Since you can work rovers each time they appear in a different grid, it’s worth the effort to keep tabs on their schedule. Rovers make VHF contests much more exciting, especially during periods of marginal propagation.

Stories from the Trenches

The collective experience from a contest’s participants can be a place to learn a lot of valuable tips to improve your performance in the next event. We had a lot of great stories submitted to us from newcomers and seasoned veterans alike. Steve, K4GUN, had his first contest rover experience in the September VHF QSO Party. “This is when I discovered just how bad a vertical antenna is for SSB in the VHF/UHF bands. People had tried to tell me, but being as inexperienced (and perhaps stubborn) as I am, I didn’t quite understand the depths of this issue. I figured I have a pretty good vertical so how bad could it be? The answer: pretty bad.” Look for Steve as a rover in future VHF contests, with better gear.

Another Rover, Glen, KC0IYT, emphasizes fun during his operations. “I had a lot of fun and I think it was mostly because I was out roving purely for the fun of it and not caring what my score would be. I know operators who won’t even turn their radios on if they’re not sure that they can WIN some category of the contest.”

Dan, W1QK, offers this insightful piece of information: “One of the reasons why we contest is to continuously assess what works and why, as well as determine how to make the deployment, operation and equipment better for the next competition.” One of the operators at W1QK was Harlan, KB1ILY, participating in his first event. “My first major contest was a hoot! The propagation seemed average, as I understood, but usually there were stations that responded to my CQ calls. The friends, food and radio fun-factor were astounding. Will I contest again? You betcha!”

The Contest — By The Numbers

Participation was up slightly this year, with 557 logs received compared to 2006’s 532, and 2005’s 628 logs. Although conditions were generally down this year, we saw a few divisional records broken, including some
that have stood for quite a long time.

**Individual and Team Results — National**

**Single Operator**

Bob, K2DRH, pulled off a repeat of 2006 and won the SOLP category yet again this year, improving his 2006 score by almost 50k points and setting a new central division record. The Saturday 6 meter opening, enhancement on Sunday morning and lots of tower and antenna work a week before the event led Bob to his best September VHF score ever. He was 80k ahead of second place K1TR, who received a visit from Murphy atop his Wachusett Mountain QTH in FN42, fying his IF and T/R switch for his 903-3456 MHz transverter box. Roger, W3SZ, set a new Atlantic Division record with his third place score, with only 882 points less than K1TR. K1TR had 239 points less than K1RZ. K1RZ had 239 points less than K1TR, who received a visit from Murphy atop his Wachusett Mountain QTH and won the SOLP category yet again this year, improving his 2006 score by almost 50k points and setting a new central division record. The Saturday 6 meter opening, enhancement on Sunday morning and lots of tower and antenna work a week before the event led Bob to his best September VHF score ever. He was 80k ahead of second place K1TR, who received a visit from Murphy atop his Wachusett Mountain QTH in FN42, fying his IF and T/R switch for his 903-3456 MHz transverter box. Roger, W3SZ, set a new Atlantic Division record with his third place score, with only 882 points less than K1TR. K1TR had 239 points less than K1RZ, despite encountering more problems than he’s experienced in some time. Persistence paid off and Jeff was able to coast to victory even though his score was down almost 70k from 2006. Dave was hardly a slouch, scoring over 300k in his second-place effort. Herb, K2LNS drove WA2FGK to third place overall, with KА1ZE and K3TUF completing the top five.

For those who enjoy some fresh air — and a significant challenge — the QRP Portable category offers both a chance to get outdoors and a chance to do a lot with a little — or bang their head against a brick wall. Only 13 amateurs braved the category this Sep-

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**Regional Leaders**

**Northeast Region**

(New England, Hudson and Atlantic Divisions; Maritime and Quebec Sections)

**Southeast Region**

(Delta, Roanoke and Southeastern Divisions)

**Central Region**

(Central and Great Lakes Divisions; Ontario Section)

**Midwest Region**

(Dakota, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and West Gulf Divisions; Manitoba and Saskatchewan Sections)

**West Coast Region**

(Pacific, Northwestern and Southwestern Divisions; Alberta, British Columbia and NWT Sections)

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**From March 2008 QST © ARRL**
s eptember and the general lack of propagation shows in the scores. Chris, KA1LMR, took first place for the fourth straight September contest, somehow scoring five more times than second place George, W1JHR. Coming in third was Phil, N8XA, while Ken, WB2AMU, enjoyed some good enhancement on Sunday to earn fourth place. Tom, WA6OSX, led the West Coast QRP contingent with fifth place overall.

**Multioperator**

2007 saw a lot of familiar faces in the Limited Multiop Top Ten. Seven of last year’s Top Ten are back again this year. The team from FN00, W3SO, managed to add 12k more to their score this year and take the top spot. Using older equipment and a station that has been pieced together little by little over the years, the Wopsononock Mountaintop Operators were able to overcome computer crashes and rig failures and edge out second place W3SZ by just under 200k. While W2SZ certainly has an advantage of more people to work on 902 MHz and up, The Grid Pirates were dominant on 50 MHz-432 MHz, making over 100 more QSOs and doubling the number of grids on 6 meters that their second place competition, K1WHS earned 100k more than last year’s effort, which translated into third place this season. Rounding out the top five are N3NGE and K5QE, who broke their own West Gulf Division record from 2004 with 472,256 points this year.

**Rovers**

The big news this year was the shattering of the previous top rover score not once, not twice, but three times in the same contest. Three different rovers headed up the California coast in tandem and all scored over 500,000 points. The winner this year was N6NB with a new record score of 636,939 points. K6M1 was second with 617k and KK6KK came in third with 578k. Bruce, W9FZ, opted for a route in completely unfamiliar territory, venturing south of his home turf and amassing just under 77k to earn fourth place. Dave, K3LFO (+W3DIO) enjoyed great success around Virginia and Maryland to earn fifth place, scoring just over 70k.

**Club Competition**

The September VHF QSO Party is one of many ARRL sponsored events that allows ARRL and RAC affiliated clubs to combine the scores of their members and compete with other clubs. The 2007 September VHF contest featured six competing in the Local Club category and 16 in the Medium Club category. In the Local Club category, the group from the Pennsylvania mountain territory, the Murgas Amateur Radio Club, used their skills honed from the Pennsylvania QSO Party and beat out a great effort from the North Texas Microwave Society (NTMS) to take top honors with 668,036 total points. Murgas scored 72k more than their brethren down South even though they submitted only four logs, compared to the NTMS’s five entries. The Chippewa Valley VHF Contesters managed third place with six logs.

In the Medium Club category, heavy hitters Potomac Valley Radio Club went up against New England’s premier VHF/UHF club, the North East Weak Signal group. Both clubs submitted 21 logs, with NEWS utilizing five rovers to the PVRC’s 1. Both clubs racked up over 2 million points in their combined members’ score! When the dust had settled, the difference was a mere 26,818 points! Despite their best efforts, the North East Weak Signal group fell short this year and the PVRC won the Medium Club category. The Mount Airy Pack Rats came in third on their way to 642k, while Wisconsin’s Badger Contesters submitted an impressive 25 logs — the highest number of any club — on their way to fourth place.

**Across the Continent — Regional Notes**

**Northeast Region**

The battle for top honors in the Single Op Low Power category continued to be fought out by familiar calls. Ed, K1TR, fought off high-band equipment failures to win the region, just edging out W3SZ, who managed to set an Atlantic Division record. Jeff, K1TEO, made the most of high-band enhancement to claim Single Op High Power and first place nationwide, beating Dave, K1ZR, by almost 200k. KA1LMR won the QRP category nationally and beating second place W1JHR by 500%. W3SO bested W1QK for the top Limited Multiop score, while K1WHS put in a very impressive score from their Maine hilltop QTH in the Multioperator category, second only to perennial region winner W2SZ. K3LFO (+W3DIO) cruised in...
style to the top rover score in the Northeast.

**Southeast Region**

Doug, K4LY (ex-W0AH) took the region for the second straight year in the Single Op Low Power category, despite his score being down 18k from last year. Russ, K4QI, improved last year’s score by nearly 40k to claim the Single Op High Power regional title. Jim, N3AWS, took the top spot in the QRP Portable category with only 13 QSOs and a score of 140. The teams from W4IY and AA4ZZ slugged it out in the Limited Multioperator category again this year, with W4IY taking top regional honors in addition to second place nationally. The Grid Pirates, K8GP, fared the best, with 637k points.

**Central Region**

Bob, K2DRH, continues his dominance from Illinois as the top Single Op Low Power entry both in the region and overall, while Glenn, K8TQK, repeated his Single Op High Power regional victory, scoring just under 8k fewer points than in 2006, but was the Southeast’s best rover in September 2007.

**Midwest Region**

Bill, W3XO, in south Texas was able to take advantage of the 6 meter opening on Saturday afternoon, snagging over 200 QSOs in five hours to earn the Single Op Low Power honors. Ron, K5LLL, combined the 6 meter opening with effective rover management to win the Single Op High Power honors, smashing the West Gulf Division record held by K5IUA since 1999. In what may be the most concentrated contest effort in history, Bob, K0NR, needed only five minutes’ worth of operating time to capture the QRP Portable category in the entire Midwest region! Marty, AB5GU, needed just 230 QSOs and 21k to take the region in the Limited Multioperator category, and in the Multioperator class, the K5OE crew was able to muscle their way to a new West Gulf division record in the Multioperator category for the fourth consecutive year. The regional rover title was contested between the efforts of K0QTYT and WA0VPJ, two members of the Northern Lights Radio Society. K0QTYT was the winner, thanks to his use of the microwave bands. While John had more overall QSOs (208 vs 192) and more overall multipliers (53 vs 46), especially on 6 and 2 meters, it was Glen’s QSOs on 903 MHz plus 2304 MHz and up that took him over the top.

**West Coast Region**

If there’s no propagation to speak of, VHF contesting out west can be especially tricky. That doesn’t deter the Pacific Northwest VHF Society folks, including Lynn, N7CFO, from getting in there anyway! Lynn walked away with the region’s best score in the SLP category. Norm, KC6ZWT, increased his 2006 score by 33% taking the Single Op High Power category and a regional victory. With the difference in propagation between the left and right coasts, QRP scores were decidedly lower out west. Tom, WA6OSX, fared the best, with 98 QSOs and 31 Multipliers from 50 MHz through 1296 MHz to earn first place in the region from the field. With only two entries in the Limited Multioperator category from the Western sections, WA7ISL had no trouble taking AD6IJ for top regional honors. K0DI was able to use the southern California population density to take the Multioperator title for the West Coast Region. So who were the rovers? K6MI, N6NB and KK6KK followed their noses up the California coast in tandem to a West Coast and national rover record score. Wayne, N6NB, was the leader of the pack with 637k points.

**Conclusion**

More activity with some odd propagation made the 2007 ARRL September VHF QSO Party an enjoyable event. With some newcomers participating in their first VHF contest and many amateurs purchasing rigs that have VHF bands built in, now is a great time to get involved with VHF/UHF contesting and get on a band or mode you’ve never tried before. With the ARRL sponsoring three VHF/UHF contests a year plus an event dedicated to UHF only, you have plenty of opportunities to get in on the VHF/UHF fun. Join us! You’ll be glad you did. The 2008 September VHF QSO Party will be September 13-15. I look forward to working you!