2010 ARRL November CW Sweepstakes Results

There’s a first time for everything!

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Game One of the 1936 Stanley Cup finals, the Detroit Red Wings finally defeated the Montreal Maroons at 16:30 of the sixth overtime — the equivalent of nearly three full games. A minor-league baseball game in 1981 went 33 innings before a winner was declared.

In Sweepstakes there is no overtime, no playoff, no extra innings and no shootout. When the logs are checked and the numbers tallied, they are what they are. Ties at the top have never happened before in the single-op categories, but after 2010’s November 6–8 running of the CW Sweepstakes, it’s finally come about that Pat, N9RV, and Mark, AG9A (operating N0NI), shake hands as the cowinners of the contest.

Mark, AG9A, said that as rare as a tie may be, it is a sign that there’s no time to rest when trying to win SS. “It goes to show that whatever decision you make, every QSO you lose (for whatever reason) and QSOs that you weren’t quite able to complete can make the difference between winning and tying or dropping a spot,” Mark writes. “I do know that Pat had more QSOs than I did at the end of the contest, so I assume that the (log checking) made the difference.” That’s something Pat humbly acknowledges. “The tie has to do with all of my logging errors.”

Only 2200 points, or 14 QSOs, separated fourth-place WD0T from the cowinners. In third place, Dan, K1TO, actually finished with more QSOs than Pat and Mark, but with one fewer section. Missing Puerto Rico cost him the victory.

Regional Competition

One of the realities of any contest is that some parts of the world — or of the continent, in the case of Sweepstakes — have big advantages over others. Talk to a variety of East Coast operators and they’ll tell you that it’s easy to jump into the lead at the start, but as Sunday rolls around, “score compression” (as High Power cowinner Pat, N9RV, calls it) begins. Once that happens, the lead built up on the low bands by many East Coasters disappears. It’s a key reason Sweepstakes has not been won by a W1 in a long time.

Talk to anyone who wins High Power from anywhere other than Puerto Rico and invariably they will thank their lucky stars there wasn’t a competitive effort from that US possession. So for many operators, either because of geography or the reality of a just-average station, the ability to win their region or their division is an important achievement.

Earl, N8SS, says his goals for 2010 were to finish Top 10 (achieved), win the Great Lakes Division (achieved) and set the Michigan state record (achieved). On a regional basis, he came out on top of some top-notch operators, too. Steve, N9CK, missed snatching Earl’s Central Region crown by a mere 14 QSOs. Also hot on Earl’s and Steve’s tails was Hal, W1NN, who is showing up more and more, it seems, from his Ohio location than from his adopted country of Japan.

“Next year will probably be different as now that I have a Top 10 finish I may have to slide my goals up a little higher. And since the overall (win) is very elusive, I may have to have a more realistic goal of a (top) Regional finish,” Earl writes.

“I always look at the regional score charts for Sweepstakes. It’s a good way to gauge how you do with others in your region,” said Steve, N9CK. In many ways, Steve’s approach is a healthy approach to a contest when your geography might preclude an overall win.

Some of the most interesting regional and divisional victories: Art, K1BX, who squeaked out a win in the Northeast Region over WY3A in Low Power by only three QSOs. NY3A eked out a tight victory in the Unlimited category over W1UJ in the Northeast Region by a mere 24 QSOs. In High Power, also in the Northeast Region, N2NT (operated by John, N2NC) beat Jeff, K1ZM, operating from his Prince Edward Island, Canada location as VY2ZM, by 91 QSOs.

Not surprisingly, some of the tightest regional battles involved those who won their categories. Ken, N6RO, edged perennial Unlimited favorite Dave, K6LL, by only three QSOs — not only overall but also in the West Coast Region. Pat, N9RV, the overall cowinner in High Power, beat his West Coast rival Tree, N6TR, operating at KL7RA, by only 34 QSOs and one section.

Kirk, N0KK, operating at N0AT, beat Syl, VE5ZX, for the second spot in the Low Power category for the Midwest Region by eight QSOs.

QRP (Q) Category

You would think that in a contest with as complicated an exchange as SS, a category limited to less power than lights the dial face.
on a Ham-V rotator control box would be a tough sell. Yet, QRP is the fourth-most popular category for CW Sweepstakes with 143 logs. (Low Power — 649 logs, Unlimited — 356 logs, High Power — 256 logs, QRP — 143 logs, Multioperator — 57 logs and School Club — 8 logs was the order of popularity.)

Ian, K8MM, leads the way with 982 QSOs, 80 sections and 157,120 points. On his heels is Kirk, K4RO; Alan, K80 sections and 157,120 points. On his heels is Kirk, K4RO; Alan, K80; Dave, W7FB operating NC7W; Jim, N0UR; Gary, N7IR; Bob, W7YAA; and Ralph, K9ZO.

Low Power (A) Category

The very busy A category, with some 649 logs, was won by Randy, K0EU, with Matt, K7BG, right behind. Randy has won four out of the last five CW Sweepstakes in Low Power, surrendering first place in 2009 to NSF. It’s shaping up to be quite the friendly rivalry between Randy and Matt. For his part, Matt, having had his 10th straight year in the Top 5, says he needs to improve his accuracy after developing some skills at two-radio contesting (SO2R). Tor, N4OGW, continues to bear Mississippi’s flag well, placing third and only about 4000 points behind Matt. Because Matt lost one section to log checking, Tor’s sweep means he needed just 28 more QSOs to claim number 2. Once again, it’s crowded at the top.

From there, the gap widens. Fourth place went to Dick, K4XU, in Oregon while Earl, N8SS, and Steve, N9CK, battled for fifth place, separated by just eight QSOs. You can read more about Steve and Earl in the Regional Competition section.

Kirk, N0KK, rode NOAT to seventh place while Syl, VE5ZX, Hal, W1NN, and Bill, N6ZFO fought for the last three Top 10 posi-
tions. Just squeezing by Bill, Hal actually beat Syl’s 1,042 QSOs by seven but Syl’s sweep made the difference to Hal’s 79 sections.

High Power (B) Category

There is no tiebreaker in the rules for SS if for no other reason than there’s never been a need for one. But if there were, about the only metric that would have made any difference is minutes operated. Cowinners Mark, AG9A (operating from N0NI), and Pat, N9RV, had the same number of QSOs (1453) and the same number of sections (80). The only thing separating the two was minutes operated. Mark achieved his score operating 1436 minutes to Pat’s 1438.

Like Low Power, High Power is also crowded at the top, with fewer than 100 QSOs spread across the Top 10. After the cowinners are Dan, K1TO, with Todd, WD0T, right behind. Because of Dan’s 79 sections to Todd’s sweep, Todd would have needed just seven more QSOs to take second (or third, depending on how you look at it) place.

Tree, N6TR, traveled to KL7RA for fifth place, followed by John, N2NC (operating at N2NT; Robert, K5PI (operating at W5KFT); Bill, K5GA (operating WX0B); Stan, K5GO, and Ken, K6LA.

Unlimited (U) Category

Dave, K6LL, who regularly appears at or near the top of Unlimited, once put it best why the category is popular, “Who wants to be ‘Limited’?" So it’s no surprise that U is the second-most popular category after A. Because it allows for the use of spotting networks, rare is the U operator who doesn’t get a sweep and that’s certainly true for the Unlimited Top 10, where none of the operators missed a section.

Ken, N6RO, won Unlimited, beating K6LL by only three QSOs. Ken’s station is a multi-multi powerhouse, with towers for 40, 20, 15 and 10, loops and four-squares for 80 and a four-square for 160. As such, it’s actually suited well to two-radio (SO2R) contesting, with lots of separation between towers to cut down on interference.

Only 18 QSOs behind K6LL was Bob, N4BP. Rounding out the heavily western Top 10 were Gene, KB7Q; Don, N4ZZ; Lee, KY7M; W4MR, operated by Will, AA4NC; K6TA, operated by Dean, N6BV; Risto, W6RK, and Dean, N6DE, operating at K6DX. All told, seven of those stations were from the west, from Montana to East Bay to Sacramento Valley and Arizona.

Multioperator (M) Category

A short contest such as SS doesn’t cry out for a Multioperator category the way a 48 hour contest might, yet it remains a popular entry category with 57 logs submitted for 2010. Like most stations, the Multioperator winner W6Y1 team is always looking to improve. For 2010, they added a new 15 meter beam and Elecraft K3 transceivers. Jim, W6Y1, says operating from California is a challenge without the natural 80 meter cluster of stations that stations farther east might enjoy. “We have both lost and won by small margins (as little as one QSO),” he writes.

KP2M, operated by Dave, N3XF, and East Bay to Sacramento Valley and Arizona.

Online Extended Version

For more about the contest including conversations with the leaders, please log onto the ARRL website at www.arrl.org/contest-results-articles. You’ll find photos and comments from the contest entrants on the ARRL Soapbox page at www.arrl.org/soapbox.