2010 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes Results

Cold winter weather throughout most of North America coupled with the usual winter TV sporting event distractions. Yet activity improved from recent years — a good sign.

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There is good news to report for the 2010 January VHF Sweepstakes competition, held January 23-25 — the second highest log submission total in six years (761), which followed the lowest reported total (650) for the 2009 January VHF SS. The highest number of logs submitted during this period was 793 in 2006. The second highest number of logs submitted in the past six years indicates improving interest in the January VHF SS competition.

As is usually the case, winter weather conditions play a significant part in the January VHF SS competition, particularly in the colder regions of the USA and Canada. Rover enthusiasts are often subjected to difficult weather situations and I find it very encouraging that rover activity continues at a significant pace in spite of the winter obstacles. In cold winter weather, Gerald, K9PY, Midlothian, IL, hiked to the top of Wasson Peak at 4687 feet ASL near Tucson, Arizona carrying an FT-817ND with a portable 4-element Yagi for the 2 meter band and a 3-element Yagi on 446 MHz. That takes dedication as well as a serious commitment to Amateur Radio!

**Propagation**

Jon, N0JK, of Wichita, KS mentioned that there was no tropo at all on the 144 MHz band and no sporadic E skip on 50 MHz. He set up his portable station early Sunday morning at the “Cattle Pens” in the heart of the Flint Hills. Jon noted that his best DX with 10 W transmitter output on 144 MHz was about 250 miles. Ken, WBZAMU, of Patchogue, NY noted that this was the first time in years in FN30 on Long Island that there was no snowfall or cold weather for his QRP portable operations. Bob, K2DRH, Albany, IL noted that “conditions were flat, flat, flat with no enhanced propagation to speak of” and “nothing like the usual tropo inversion to the east that we’d had just a weekend before.”

The few reported sporadic E and enhanced tropo contacts reported were few and far between. This was a typical winter event with tropo scatter as the primary propagation mechanism, generally reaching maximum QSO distances out to about the 300- to 400-mile range.

**The National Scene**

Another interesting observation is the number of HF contesters who have submitted entries in the January VHF SS competition for 2010. As I look through the ‘Logs Received Report’ of 761 logs, I have found

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This map shows the path of the meteor scatter SSB QSO between W9RM in EN52 and N0JK in EM18.

With the exception of a short sporadic-E opening from Arizona to Washington state on Saturday and some meteor scatter between Illinois and Ohio and Kansas Sunday morning, conditions this year were pretty flat.

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many entries from primarily HF-oriented clubs, such as the Yankee Clipper Contest Club (YCCC), Potomac Valley Radio Club (PVRC), Northern California Contest Club (NCCC), Western New York DX Association, etc. I hope that this growing trend produces more HF enthusiasts who also choose to compete in VHF+ competitive events.

### Single Operator Categories

Roger, W3SZ, of Reading, PA took the top position in the Single Operator, Low Power (SOLP) category with a score of 144,979 points, more than two and a half times the fourth place score he produced in 2009. This score was down slightly from last year’s SOLP leader, Bob, K2DRH, of Albany, IL who finished in second place with a 139,671-point score. The number three spot was captured by Phil, WA3NUF, of Warminster, PA with 138,810 points, followed by Fred, N1DPM, and Dale, A1FT, in the number four and five spots. The top six through 10 spots in SOLP were filled by W3RJW, W3PAW, WB2SH, K2SMN and K1KG. Like most of last year’s scores, this year’s totals are down primarily because of low levels of harmonic E propagation.

The Single Operator, High Power (SOPH) category leader was last year’s winner, Jeff, K1TEO, of Trumbull, CT with a total of 415,492 points, slightly less than his 432k point 2009 effort. Jeff has been a consistent winner in the VHF+ arena, the result of an outstanding location coupled with well-organized and implemented electronics and tower/antenna/transmission line systems. The second place position goes to Dave, K1RZ, of Damascus, MD, up one notch from the second last year’s second with a 222,772 point score. Phil, K3TUF, Ephrata, PA takes the number three position, down one place from last year at 194k points. Charles, K0VXM of Merritt Island, FL claims the fourth spot with 171k points, followed by W3JB, K3DNE, WA2FGK, K1JT and W2JS rounding out the top 10, all with very close scores.

### QRP Portable (QRP)

Nick, N3YMS, of Felton, DE took the top position in the QRP Portable category again this year with 32,184 points. Nick improved his score by more than 12,000 points compared with his results last year. Second place in QRP goes to Phil, N8XA, Dayton, OH with 6864 points, followed by Zach, W9SZ, with 2268. Ken, WB2AMU, at 1518, and Tom, K9TMS, at 1420 points rounding out the top 5. The final top 10 QRP entries include K0NR, W0UC, N0HJZ, K8BSK and N8JJK in order.

### Limited Multiop (LM)

The Limited Multiop category permits entrants to operate on a maximum of four bands of their choice. There were a total of 33 LM entries covering the four bottom VHF+ bands (50, 144, 222 and 432 MHz), representing three fewer entries than last year and nine fewer than in 2008. This trend appears to be in the wrong direction.

The leader in the Limited Multiop category by a wide margin is W3SO, the Wospsononok Mountain Top operators of Altoona, PA with a score
of 174,564 points produced by 36 club members. This was a substantial effort, surpassing the excellent 2009 top score of 102,382 by K1JT. Second place goes to Ken, KA2LM, of Dayville, CT with 90,297 points, followed in third position by Kim, KB1DFB, also of Dayville. Keith, W9RM, of Hampshire, NH took the number four position followed by the Keystone VHF Club, W3HZU in fifth place. The remaining top six through 10 LM finalists are W1QK, W9OS, W4NH, N8ZM and K2QO in order.

**Multioperator (MO)**

The Multioperator category is a truly unlimited event — no holds barred! A participant in this category may operate on any number of bands simultaneously for the full 48 hour contest period. There are a total of 37 entries in this category for the 2010 event, down from 53 entries in last year’s competition but significantly higher than the 27 entries in 2008. The high-scoring MO entry is N3NGE of Morgantown, PA with a score total of 717,676 points, up significantly from their 568k score in 2009. The second place is awarded to the team at the station of Marshall, KSQ5E, in Hemphill, TX with 156,060 points, down significantly from their 2009 showing. Position three goes to Allen, K3EOD, of Vineland, NJ scoring 104,339 points, followed by Jim, W0EAA, of Ramah, CO and the Trowell Radio Club, W6TV, in Fresno, CA. The final 6 through 10 top MO finalists include KB0HH, WB3JR, N2GCZC, N1JEEZ and KE11L in order.

**Rover Categories**

There are three distinct categories for rover stations, each of which had participation: Rover (R), Limited Rover (RL) and Unlimited Rover (RU). In the Rover (R) category operation on all bands is permitted but there can be no more than two operators. This category can produce some very large scores using a technique known as “grid circling.” Perennial VHF SS competitor Wayne, N6NB, from Tustin, CA was very pleased with his results, saying “We’re happy that West Coast clubs can now be competitive in VHF contests for the first time.” I hope that Wayne’s observation proves to be correct and that West Coast VHF/UFH/VHF+ activity levels continue to expand. There must be a limit as to how high these scores can reach, although it is likely that creative West Coast rover enthusiasts will find a way to reach even higher achievement levels! All but one of the top 10 Rovers were located in California.

The leading score for the 2010 competition was produced by Wayne, N6NB, of Tustin, CA with a score of 591,300 points, which exceeded his winning score in 2009 by more than 195,000 points! Second place was taken by Dave, N6TBR, of Downey, CA with 557,925 points. Third place goes to Art, W6XDR, of Costa Mesa, CA with 556,660 points, followed closely by Carrie, W6TAJU, of Yucca Valley, CA with 553,926 points and John, K9JR, of Palatine, IL at 539,160 points. K9JR is the only non-California entry in the top 10 Rover listing. The bottom five of the top 10 competitors in the Rover category include AF6O/R, K6KJ/K, N6V1/R, K6CNN/R and W2B2W/K/R in order.

The Limited Rover (RL) category requires that participants use their choice of only four bands. Most RL activity will be found on the bottom four VHF+ bands (50, 144, 222 and 432 MHz). The top position goes to Steve, K2CQZP/R, of Clarence Center, NY with 28,842 points, which is a significant improvement over his 2009 fifth place, 7805 point score. Second place was taken by Mike, WB8BZK/R, of Algonquin, IL with 12,410 points, followed in third place by WS1MC/R of Alexandria, VA with 5688 points. The fourth place slot goes to Mel, WR0/I, of Sedgwick, KS, with the fifth place listing awarded to John, K2ST/R, from Floral City, FL. The sixth through 10th RL places are awarded to NL7HJR, KB2BSL/R, WA7AK/R, KC9ML/k/R and K4XW/R
WA4JA/R in order.

The final category is Unlimited Rover (RU), which allows more than two operators in a single vehicle. There were only two competitors this year compared with five in the 2009 event, although there was only one competitor in the 2008 competition. The top position was awarded to David, W6TE/R, of Fresno, CA with 212,812 points, followed by Eric, K90VER/R, of Littleton, CO with 24,327 points.

Club Competition

VHF clubs are a great source of knowledge, inspiration and camaraderie in and out of contests. If you’re a VHF+ weak-signal operator and not a member of a club, join one today — you won’t be disappointed! 2010 saw activity from 41 clubs that submitted the minimum-required three logs to be eligible for the Club competition.

In the Unlimited Club category, the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club (aka the Packrats) submitted a whopping 70 logs worth a combined 2.6 million points to be the only club that qualified for the Unlimited Category. This year’s effort was dedicated to long-time club member W2KKN who became a Silent Key in 2009. The Packrats continue to set a very high mark of both technical ability and in “rallying the troops.”

In the Medium Club category 26 clubs met the criteria. The winner was the Southern California Contest Club with 12 logs and 5,06 million points. SCCC’s pack rovers accounted for all but 261 points of their score.

The North East Weak Signal Group took second place with 35 logs and 993,000 points and only one Rover in the bunch. Third place went to the Potomac Valley Radio Club with 22 logs and just under 840,000 points.

The Local Club category saw 14 clubs submit scores. This year, the gavel goes to Eastern Connecticut ARA, pulling off a repeat of their 2009 Local Club victory, submitting 5 logs for 87,423 points. Second place is awarded to the Chippewa Valley VHF Contesters, up from third place in 2009. From the Midwest, the Fort Wayne Radio Club took third. Congratulations to all clubs for submitting scores and enjoying the event.

Next Year

Will 2011 bring more activity? Could we get some aurora, winter tropo or other enhancement? Let’s find out together! The 2011 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes will be held January 22-24, so mark your calendar now!

Much More Online

For more on the January VHF Sweepstakes, see www.arrl.org/contests.

2010 ARRL August UHF Contest

1800 UTC Saturday, August 7 - 1759 UTC Sunday, August 8

■ 220 MHz and up is the place to be! UHF operating offers some great propagation possibilities, making QSOs over hundreds of miles possible. Operate from home, find a great hilltop in a rare grid square or hit the road and go “roving” through multiple grids. Get several of your ARRL-affiliated club members active and go for a club competition gavel.

■ E-mail Cabrillo-formatted logs to augustuhf@arrl.org. All logs must be received by 1800 UTC Tuesday, September 7, 2010.

■ Complete rules can be found at www.arrl.org/contests.