2014 RTTY Roundup Results

New categories and interesting propagation liven up the Roundup.

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In his writeup of the 2013 RTTY Roundup, last year Jay, WS7I, opined that “the great unknown next year will be the propagation.” Judging from the comments and results for this year’s Roundup, Jay was right. Propagation was great for some, a challenge for many, and produced some shakeups in the results.

Despite the slight drop in overall participation this year, there were many new participants and many of them were also new hams. No stranger to RTTY, but a first-time Roundup contestant, 15-year-old Georgia, NY2GB, noted: “I had a total time on of 4 hours, 49 minutes and made 172 QSOs. My run on 21080 lasted 59 minutes from 1849 to 1948 (QSO numbers 86 to 137) for a total of 51 QSOs.” An excellent run for any operator.

Not to forget the slightly longer-in-the-tooth hams among us, Will, WC2L, wrote, “First semi-effort and had a blast. Got to do this more often!” John, N8FYL, said, “My first RTTY Roundup. Learned a lot. Had fun. Need to be more prepared next year!” and Daniel, N2DD, “Not bad for my first day of RTTY ever!”

Propagation, or “Where the Heck is Europe?”

Even though the solar flux and sunspots were fully on the march towards the apparent Solar Cycle 24 maximum, mixed conditions confronted many participants. Stations toward the east seemed pretty happy, while stations to the west were less so. Don’s, AA5AU, comments echoed the experience of many: “I thought 10 and 15 meters would be better — they were not. I expected a 10 meter band full of EU stations Sunday morning but it didn’t happen. Ten meters did not even open until well past 1400Z and then signals were weak.”

Meanwhile in 4-land, Mike, K4GMH, was pleased: “That was interesting with the nice propagation on the higher HF bands and low noise on the lower HF bands.” Sam, W4PK, agreed: “Conditions were excellent Sunday morning to Europe on 10 meters and I probably spent too much time there. During the evening hours they were also excellent on 80 meters with many Europeans in the log.” And in Europe, Bernard, F5RD, enjoyed “Very good conditions for this contest with a lot of stations on the five bands.”

Unlimited Fun!

Unlimited made its debut in the 2014 Roundup as a category for single operators. Let’s compare the total entries by category for single operators. From 460 in 2013 to only 69 in 2014. A little “pivot table” magic in a popular spreadsheet program revealed at least 150 calls that entered MSLP or MSHP in 2013 opted for an Unlimited category this year.

Affiliated Club Competition

Ever since the big contest clubs realized there was more to life than Sweepstakes, friendly competition between the clubs has helped drive participation in other contests like the Roundup. The rivalry between the Northern California Contest Club and the Potomac Valley Radio Club for the coveted gavel got a little closer with the PVRC pulling to within 800,000 points, but the NCCC prevailed, with 65 logs submitted. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Wireless Association pulled up into the Unlimited Club category this year with an impressive 3rd place score of almost 1.8 million.

Competition was even tighter in the Medium Club category, with an especially close race for third place. In first place with over 1.5 million points was the Society of Midwest Contesters. Second and third place were separated by less than 15,000 points, with the Arizona Outlaws Contest Club edging out the Frankford Radio Club, who managed an impressive 1.25 million on only 16 logs.

The Local Club category found the Orleans County Amateur Radio Club in first place with 655 thousand points and 10 logs, more than twice as many points as second place Boeing Employees ARS — St. Louis. The Kansas City Contest Club rounded out the top three with just three logs making it happen.
New Records
I have good news for all of you who entered in SOULP or SOUHP and won your division or your section: you have just set a new record! For the rest of you, your targets for next year have been set. And I can’t help but notice that some section records remain unclaimed. (The full table records from WMSR are available online at www.arrl.org/contest-results-articles.)

Only two new DX records were set in the existing categories, including P49X’s new world record and new SA record. V5/DL9NDS demolished the African record that stood for 7 years, increasing it by almost 50%. In the new Unlimited categories it is interesting to note that records for Oceania in the Low Power and in Africa for the High Power lay unclaimed — hint, hint!

Wrap Up
This was my first time ever writing anything for QST, spending so much time looking at the results of a contest can really give you a different perspective. So often we have been told by our contesting mentors “a few Qs either way won’t make a difference” — but some of the close finishes in these results contradict that max. In fact, I noticed in a couple of categories that the results were affected by the accuracy of the operator: based on claimed scores Operator A was the winner, but after log checking (and penalties) Operator B came out on top.

So, under the very crowded conditions of a big RTTY contest like the Roundup, getting the other call and exchange in the log correctly can be quite a challenge — whether your goals involve making a personal best, winning your division, or even the whole thing — so making sure your station is up to winning your division, or even the whole challenge is important.

A proper description of how to configure your software for the signal conditions you are experiencing is way beyond the scope of this report, but a great resource for both the beginning and experienced RTTY operator is AASAU’s excellent rttycontesting.com website. You can find basic and advanced setup instructions, as well as contest rules and Don’s own contest reports. Also, the RTTY email reflector on contesting.com is a great place to ask questions and share ideas.

As of this writing it appears that we are at the start of the downward half of the solar cycle. I still remember well the feeling of emptiness at the start of the downward half of the solar cycle. As of this writing it appears that we are at the great place to ask questions and share ideas. A proper description of how to configure your software for the signal conditions you are experiencing is way beyond the scope of this report, but a great resource for both the beginning and experienced RTTY operator is AASAU’s excellent rttycontesting.com website. You can find basic and advanced setup instructions, as well as contest rules and Don’s own contest reports. Also, the RTTY email reflector on contesting.com is a great place to ask questions and share ideas.

As of this writing it appears that we are at the start of the downward half of the solar cycle. I still remember well the feeling of emptiness that came the first time I experienced that dread time at the bottom of a cycle when a 15 meter opening was a reason to miss work, and 10 meter openings were but a wistful memory.

What better reason, then, to join us for the 2015 RTTY Roundup, before it’s too late? Perhaps next time will be your turn for thePropagation Fairy to favor your efforts. Maybe try to set a new record, or how about a full 24-hour effort? You might be surprised at how far up the leaderboard you find yourself.

A Character Shift
For 12 years, Jay Townsend, WST7I, has penned these reports. For many of us, Jay has been a RTTY elder and a willing friend. Even considering my own size 14s, these will be large shoes to fill. — Wk6I

For the full results, more photos, and regional coverage, see the online version of this article at www.arrl.org/contest-results-articles.