2015 ARRL International DX CW Contest Results

The snow in the US changed the object of this contest from digging out weak ones to just plain digging out.

Kelly Taylor, VE4XT, ve4xt@mymts.net

A massive snowstorm blanketed the northeastern United States over the weekend of February 21 and 22, laying waste to many well-laid contesting plans. Jeff, K1ZM, had planned to travel to Prince Edward Island to activate VY2ZM, but the weather had other ideas. Airports were closed, parking was banned, and forget about taking the bridge across the Northumberland Strait.

“The snow drifts were 15 to 18 feet in the capital (Charlottetown), and all parking was banned for days while they tried to find a place for the snow,” Jeff said. “My biggest surprise was hearing VY2TT on the air. I guess Ken, K6LA, managed to fly in between the storms, and his station is only a short walk from the road.”

While Jeff’s plans didn’t work out, his operation at home did, claiming a win and a record in the W/VE Single Operator, Low Power category.

Snowy Struggles

Ken, K6LA, meanwhile, said getting to the end of his street wasn’t a problem, if you don’t consider landing at 2 AM with a 1 hour and 15-minute drive remaining a problem. All went well, except for the last few hundred feet, when he discovered his street wasn’t plowed.

“I started hiking through the snow. It was only about 100 yards, but it took 20 minutes because I kept falling into the snow. Finally, I crawled most of the way and there was a thin crust of frozen snow that I could stay on top of,” Ken said.

Kudos to Paul, K1XM, who humbly offered this quote: “The snow played a big part in people’s plans for the ARRL contests in W1 land this year. For me, that is a bigger story than what K1XM and KQ1F did.”

What Paul and Charlotte did, however, was win, for W and VE, the Multi-single, Low Power category. But even they weren’t immune to Mother Nature at their location not far from Boston.

“We spent several hours Saturday shoveling snow off the roof,” Paul said. Then he had to fix the rotator that half died on Friday. “I opened the rotator control box and found the problem was with the rotator itself or with the wiring on the tower. So I disabled the stops and ran the rotator until the top antennas were pointed at Europe and left it that way. We lost some Caribbean and Pacific multipliers because of this.”

For Dave, N1IX, winner of the W/VE Single Operator QRP category, the snow added a fair bit of work to the task of diagnosing a wonky 80 meter antenna.
“With each snowfall, a little bit more weight pulled on my coax connections,” Dave wrote. “Saturday night, I was getting a very high SWR on my 80 meter antenna. I had to snow-blow a path out to the shed that houses the remote antenna switch. Fortunately, I only had to reset the PL-259 connector.”

Dave said he had some of the best runs ever while QRP, even if the conditions seemed a bit down.

**Warmer Climates**

Gerry, W1VE, had the perfect antidote to the killer storm: go somewhere else. He scurried off to Aruba with Andy, K2LE, to win the DX Multi-Single Low Power crown from P40LE, activating the former P49V made famous by the late Carl Cook, AI6V.

That was pretty much the case on the DX side, where, if the winners had snow to deal with, we’d have had much more of a problem than who won a radio contest. All but three winners were located in either the Caribbean or Central America.

At PJ4X, news of their status as the DX winner of the Multi-Two category came as a bit of a surprise. Marty, W1MD, said they were convinced T15W was pulling away from them.

“At the end of the contest, we thought we were about 25,000 points, or 20 QSOs and one multiplier, behind the T15 crew. Was it accuracy?” Marty wondered.

Nope. Just plain brute force. While they did finish six multipliers behind T15W, they had 180 more QSOs. “Wow, QSOs are king,” Marty wrote after being told the score breakdown.

“I think six multipliers behind TI5W, they had 180 more QSOs. ‘Wow, QSOs are king,’ Marty said. ‘Just plain brute force.’ While they did finish six multipliers behind T15W, they had 180 more QSOs. ‘Wow, QSOs are king,’” Marty wrote after being told the score breakdown.

Imagine how happy they’ll be to learn they now have the team clicked well together considering we said. “There was no one shining star, but rather the rest of us from various locations in the US,” he said.

“One thing I can for sure say is we had a very diverse group, with Martin, G4XUM, from the UK; Hans, P4LS, as a ‘local’ on PJ4, and the rest of us from various locations in the US,” he said. “There was no one shining star, but rather the team clicked well together considering we were a new ‘pick-up’ bunch. This was a great group of guys who all chipped in and performed at the top levels of radio sporti...”

**The Bell-Ringers**

Back in the land of the free, the crew at K9CT is celebrating its win in the W7E Multi-Two category, a hard-fought battle considering the location — Trivoli, Illinois.

“Fortunately, it is a competitive, state-of-the-art contest station,” wrote Bill, K3WA, one of the operators. “Unfortunately, it is located in the epicenter of the Black Hole, the place where RF goes to die.”

The crew has been at this a while, with host Craig, K9CT; Ryan, K89OWD; two Steves (N5AC and N9CK); Ralph, K9ZO; Jim, N9TK, and Bill, K3WA, getting quite familiar with the station.

The four Elecraft K3s, two Alpha 87s, five-element 160 meter array, 80 meter foursquare, stacked 4/4 on 40 meters, 6/6/6 on 20 meters, 7/7/7 on 15, and 8/8/8 on 10 helped, but what Bill pointed to as a key piece of technology dates back centuries: a simple bell.

“Like many multiop teams, we announce working a new mult by ringing a bell,” Bill wrote. “On Sunday afternoons, we accompany the bell ringing with a round of applause. And the ops at K9CT kept applauding and applauding while keeping their runs going.

“The bell goes on 24 hours a day for the contest,” Bill said. It is a happy sound that we all respond to, even during sleep periods.”

John, K6AM, admits to being ready to give up trying to work a 48-hour contest solo. So, he assembled a dream team and headed to the Cayman Islands. There, ZF1A won the DX Multi-Single, High Power category. The team

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Top 10 — W/VE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single Operator, High Power</th>
<th>Single Operator, Low Power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N2NT 7,929,830</td>
<td>W2NT 4,435,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1ZV 7,217,509</td>
<td>WW2A 1,897,439</td>
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<tr>
<td>VY7TT 5,949,485</td>
<td>K7DR 9,037,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1UR 5,898,495</td>
<td>K8JW 9,234,742</td>
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<tr>
<td>N9Rv 5,471,280</td>
<td>WA3ZW 1,513,927</td>
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<tr>
<td>A1AK 5,406,840</td>
<td>KD2WV 1,482,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1RR 5,379,300</td>
<td>KB5IV 1,410,327</td>
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<tr>
<td>(QK, K96N) 5,288,964</td>
<td>KB5S 1,385,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1TD 5,187,492</td>
<td>K3DY 1,360,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WXSB 5,140,251</td>
<td>N9CK 1,344,107</td>
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</tbody>
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Top 10 — Multiope Single, Low Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multioperator Single Transmitter, Low Power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K6LL 3,457,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5RX 3,844,992</td>
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<tr>
<td>W2X1 3,742,260</td>
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<td>K5RX 3,844,992</td>
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Jean-Robert, HH2JR, struggled to keep the generator working throughout the contest. [Dale Long, N3BNRA, photo]
consisted of no less than reigning WRTC champ Dan, N6MJ, while another op was Dan’s runner-up, Kevin, N5DX, and, of course, John. They were set to “take an all-out assault on the multi-single record.”

“Conditions were just fantastic,” John wrote. “All bands were quiet and signals were very loud. I got the feeling we were loud, too. We set a goal of 7000 QSOs, 350 multipliers, and 7.5 million points. The contest ended about five minutes too soon.”

Still, their 6939 QSOs and 358 multipliers were good for the record, with 7.4 million points.

A Worthwhile Risk
The battle of the titans, the grandaddy of all categories, Multi-Multi, on the W8VE side, at least, often falls to the Maryland powerhouse, W3LPL. But Tim, K3LR, as always, was ready for the challenge, even taking a risk by dropping a new radio on the boys just as the contest was starting.

That new radio was an Icom IC-7850. “So there was some risk on 20, with the new radio. The IC-7850 worked flawlessly and provided an advantage with its narrow roofline filter and clean transmit, which helps with two-radio sharing,” Tim wrote.

New Records
The year 2015 turned out to be one for the books. If it wasn’t a record snowfall in the Northeast, it was records falling all over the contest.

Eleven continental records and 34 W8VE records were set in 2015, including a South American Multi-Two record at PJ4X, a W9 record at Multi-Two W8VE winner K9CT, a W1 Multi-Single Low Power record by winner K1XM, an Asian Multi-Multi record at JA3YBK, among, obviously, 41 others.

Ron, VE3VN, who had been silent for a number of years, is back with a splash not only as the new holder of the VE QRDR record, but also coming close to beating N1IX for the category. Welcome back, Ron.

Visits from Mr Murphy
Down in Belize, the Single Op, Low Power DX winner had a number of issues to deal with, not the least of which was not operating in his usual category of Multi-Single. Rob, K5PI, didn’t let other plans by WC0W and Mark, AG9A, stop him from heading to his haunt on the border with Guatemala and building, by himself, this year’s V31TP.

“We’ve got a good system to set up our antennas in pretty short order, but this year, it was just me (and some hotel staff),” Rob wrote. “So over the course of 3 days, I put up the A3S tribander, 80/40 inverted V and a 160 meter inverted L (a modified Butterbut HF2V).
I brought my K3 and used a TS-690 as a second radio."

Of course, Murphy will find you, even if you’re out of the way in the wilds of Belize. If anyone wondered where Rob went in mid-exchange, his switching power supply had its own ideas of when to start up and when to shut down. “The other big disappointment was my brand of when to start up and when to shut down,” he explained.

“Stations farther south are working Europe but we can’t hear them in New England (or at least in Maine),” he explained. "There was a foot of snow in his driveway on Monday between two major storms,” he wrote. "There was a foot of snow in his driveway on Monday as I left."

“The weather had also done some significant antenna damage earlier in the winter with a major ice storm breaking off the tips of several of the parasitic elements.”

How’d he do as a newly minted septuagenarian? How’s being the W/VE winner of the Single Operator Unlimited, High Power category sound?

“No problem, fire up the Kenwood, he thought. “That happened this year, most notably on 10 meters Saturday morning and again Sunday morning on 20, where openings for us were significantly delayed.”

So while he won the category (last year he was narrowly beaten by K11G), he fell short of the Unlimited record. Though he calls himself a “dyed-in-the-wool unassisted operator,” he said he actually enjoys operating Unlimited, particularly with his new skills at using the Reverse Beacon Network (RBN).

“It was less stressful, especially on Sunday afternoon. Concerns over being on the wrong band or missing a rare mult are significantly reduced with the RBN data in front of you.”

“And, I took off four hours and didn’t feel guilty.”

An Unexpected Victory

Though he had two radios (an Elecraft K3 and a Kenwood TS-440) and several power supplies, when the second supply died, it “let the smoke out” of the K3, rendering it inoperable. No problem, fire up the Kenwood, he thought. Except there was no computer-keying interface. So, he struggled through several QSOs using a Benchy paddle as a straight key before packing it in and exploring the Honduran mountains.

From this, he got two lessons: Always prepare all your equipment before the contest, and never give up when you think you’re behind, “because you can never tell when their radio may go down in flames!”

Check those rotators, get the snow shovels handy, make sure you can key all your radios, and join the fun next year. The 2016 ARRL DX CW contest takes place February 20 and 21.

Sponsored Plaque Winners

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of numerous clubs and individuals, we are pleased to announce the winners of a sponsored ARRL DX CW 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. Unsponsored plaques may be purchased by the plaque winner. If you wish to purchase an unsponsored plaque or order a duplicate plaque, contact ARRL Contest Branch Manager Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW, at (860) 594-0232 or by e-mail at w1msw@arrl.org. The cost for plaques is $75 (includes shipping).

Work the Full Results

The full results of the contest are available online at www.arrl.org/contest-results-articles. You’ll find detailed analysis and more play-by-play along with the full line scores. Improve your skill by reviewing your log checking report, too!