2016 ARRL RTTY Roundup Results

How was the weather at — and above — your station this year?

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Success in the RTTY Roundup is not only achieved by overcoming obstacles regarding your station, your RTTY setup, and your chosen (but frustrating) software, but also the weather way up there in space and down closer to the ground. For some parts of the country, the “way up there” weather came through on January 2 and 3, providing a bunch of contacts, while for other parts, the “closer” weather made staying on the air a challenge in itself.

Tales from 10
Let’s take the space weather, for example. While perusing the scores in preparation for this article, I couldn’t help but notice the disparity in 10 meter QSOs. Some stations had hundreds, and others almost none. I started to notice a pattern and decided to sort the score database by ARRL section and average number of 10 meter QSOs. The table shows the results (omitting sections with fewer than five entries or an average less than 30). Sure enough, you can see that 10 meters was very much favored all the way up in the Canadian northwest, down the West Coast and Nevada, and through the Desert Southwest and Mississippi Delta.

Ken, WØLSD, in Colorado was happy with conditions on 10 meters:

Propagation seemed to be decent and I had a third radio dedicated to 10 meters that was networked with the station. I would check 10 occasionally, and at times there seemed to be enough activity to run, which I did. In the last several contests, I noticed 10 was acting almost like 6 meters, in that there would be propagation to a very narrow part of the country and you would work that area dry pretty quickly. But in the RTTY Roundup, propagation on 10 meters for me in the mountains seemed to be much more general, thus offering more states and ham population centers.

Whither the Weather?
Meanwhile, “safely” back in the troposphere, let’s take a look at the Great White North and the folks at WL7F. I received a note from one of the operators, Wes, WL7B, where he talked about having to climb the tower every time they wanted to rotate the antenna. I wondered why the antenna wasn’t rotated from the ground, with a rope tied to one end of the boom. I figured there must be a reason for that. Indeed there was. According to Wes, WL7F, “Deep snow, for one, and I have the mast pinned at the top. Walking around with rope in deep snow sucks...and if I tie the ropes off and they freeze, the knot would be difficult to get apart.” The snow where I operated at W7RN in northern Nevada only gets a couple of feet deep, so I guess I’d better stop complaining.

Across the deep blue sea, one of my favorite multipliers, Phil, GUØSUP, was dealing with rain and gale-force winds. He said:

Heavy rain and strong winds made starting on the low bands impossible, so I

The RTTY tests are a favorite of Mike, W7VO, and this was his first time ever in the Roundup. Mike placed first in the SOHP category from Oregon. [Mike Ritz, W7VO, photo]
got up early on Sunday morning, and it was still raining and blowing, plus there were strong static crashes, so the low bands were out for me. My dipoles were banging around in the gales, and the resulting SWR was very poor on both. On both 40 and 80 meters, I had S9+ of noise, and could hear very few stations.

**Speed-bump Selfies**

Some entrants create their own obstacles so that they have the challenge of over-

No, it's not a form of data compression, just the miniature wireless keyboard and mouse combo that Scott, N0IU, used when leaning back in his chair and calling CQ. [Scott Schultz, N0IU, photo]

coming them. As Dave, W5DT, explained in his own words:

I won't get any awards or plaques, but I managed to make 208 contacts on 15 and 10 meters all with the [Teletype] Model 33. She ran straight for 12 hours today (I oiled her on the fly around 4 PM with a syringe). Didn't drop a single bit — what a workhorse! I even got to run some punch tape macros — they worked great!

Just remember this next time you are puzzling through a RTTY software issue! [If you ever get the chance to watch a mechanical teleprinter in action, take it! — Ed.]

Operating right after New Year’s Day undoubtedly caused some headaches for many operators (at least, for those who didn’t get their headache via the festivities). In fact, in the Soapbox comments, one operator complained:

Why was everyone calling me ‘Honey’? After receiving ‘HNY’ several times and doing some fruitless Google searches of ‘HNY CW PROSIGN’ and the like, I finally figured it out. Maybe a second cup of coffee would have helped.

**Affiliated Clubs**

After a year off, the Northern California Contest Club (NCCC) got back into the gavel-collecting business with an Unlimited Club score second only to their record-setting performance in 2013. NCCC President, Bob, W1RH, noted that a big push was made to get new RTTY operators set up and on the air. The Potomac Valley Radio Club (PVRC) ran a solid 2nd, the Society of Midwest Contesters (SMC) climbed into Unlimited for the first time, placing 3rd, and the Minnesota Wireless Association (MWA) was 4th. In fact, this year was the first time we had four of the major contest clubs submit the 50 or more logs required to qualify for the Unlimited Category. Let’s have more next year!
Meanwhile in the Medium category, with the extra efforts of the PVRG and SMC to make Unlimited, the Franklin Radio Club — with only 19 logs submitted — edged out the Yankee Clipper Contest Club and the Arizona Outlaws to score their first-ever Roundup gavel! And for the Local Clubs — those submitting 10 logs or fewer — the Orleans County Amateur Radio Club continued their domination of the category with a score more than twice that of their nearest rival for a fifth win in a row.

Thank You, Plaque Sponsors
Every year, I put out the word about plaque sponsorship to all RTTY enthusiasts and contest clubs around W/VE-land and the world. The response is always wonderful and overwhelming, or as ARRL Contest Manager Bart, W9JJ, put it, “These things are going like hotcakes!” Please take a look at the table to see who has stepped up to help. And if you have received a plaque, please take a moment to thank the sponsor!