



ARRL January VHF Contest 2018 Preliminary Results

By KK6MC James R. Duffey

While January VHF contests are always a crap shoot, the 2018 event more than held its own with good activity despite sparse propagation enhancement. Variables such as weather, road conditions, NFL playoffs, conflicting contests, and, most importantly, the presence of sporadic-E propagation, often drive wild swings in participation. With no, or very little sporadic-E propagation this year, participation was up - likely due to the rapid adoption of the easy digital mode FT8 and the spreading use of digital meteor scatter with MSK144 to increase grid count. Several regions, notably southern Arizona, had widespread Summits on the Air (SOTA) activity which added to many scores while they activated normally sparsely populated grids. The weather was good over most of the U.S., and was not really a factor.

The big news from the 2018 January Contest was the widespread use of the digital mode FT8 by participants. Nearly 30% of all QSOs on 6M were made with digital modes, and 57 entrants submitted logs that consisted exclusively of QSOs made on digital modes, with 49 of those logs on 6M. While the extensive use of FT8 has fomented some controversy, many operators (who do not use CW) used FT8 to their advantage in working what would otherwise be marginal or nonexistent contacts, and many old hands made QSOs with FT8 under marginal Es openings that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. There will be more on this in the full write-up.

The Winners

Limited Multioperator (LM)	N2NT	137,298
Unlimited Multioperator (M)	N3NGE	471,835
Classic Rover (R)	N6NB/R	280,350
Limited Rover (RL)	WW7D/R	38,400
Rover Unlimited (RU)	K6MI/R	264,348
Single Operator High Power (SOHP)	K1RZ	311,430
Single Operator Low Power (SOLP)	N3RG	106,250
Single Operator, 3 Bands (SO3B)	WA4GPM	7,450
Single Operator, FM, (SOFM)	KG6IYN	8,172
Single Operator, Portable (SOP)	W4DVE	5,460

KG6IYN's move to the SOFM category (from SO3B in 2016) paid off handsomely as he not only won the SOFM category, but also set a new National and Southwestern Division record in doing so.

N3RG took the always-competitive SOLP category, moving up from fourth place in 2016.

K1RZ took the SOHP category, taking advantage of perennial category winner K1TEO's absence to move up a notch.

W4DVE took the potentially brutal, at least in January, Single Operator Portable (formerly Single Operator QRP) category.

In the very competitive Limited Multioperator category, N2NT (with N2NC and WW2Y as additional ops) moved up from their 2017 second place finish, swapping places with K2LIM, last year's winner.

N3NGE (with K9PW, WA3WUL, K3EGE, N3EXA, and NE3I as additional ops) repeated as Unlimited Multioperator champions again this year.

After a short hiatus, N6NB/R returned as winner of the Classic Rover category.

WW7D/R repeated his recent dominance of the Limited Rover category.

And K6MI/R took the Unlimited Rover category, which had a higher than normal 13 entrants.

New Records

While it is rare that a January VHF Contest without sporadic E propagation generates much in the way of new records; there were several set this year:

Overall SOFM - by KG6IYN with an impressive score of 8,172 from 156 QSOs and 36 multipliers using FM on all 4 of the allowed bands. This is also the new record for the Southwestern Division.

SOFM records were also set in two divisions, as well as Canada:

- Midwest, by N2VHZ, with a score of 1 from 1 Q and 1 multiplier on 144 MHz only. This was the first SOFM entry ever from the division, demonstrating that submitting a log, no matter how small, counts for more than one would think.
- Rocky Mountain, by WAØKXO, with a score of 180 from 33 Qs and 4 multipliers on 144 and 432 MHz.

- Canada, by VA6TDG, with a score of 320 from 27 Qs and 8 multipliers on 144 and 432 MHz.

SO3B Records were set in two Divisions:

- Southeastern, by WA4GPM, with a score of 7,450 from 124 Qs and 50 multipliers.
- West Gulf, by K5QB, with a score of 5,032 from 115 QSOs and 34 multipliers.

A new Unlimited Multioperator record was set in the Pacific Division by W6TV with a score of 83,880 points from 329 QSOs and 72 multipliers on all bands 50 MHz through 24 GHz. This betters the previous record for the division that had stood since 1985, when the point values per QSO were double what they are now. That is an impressive effort, particularly when the bands are flat.

The Single Operator Low Power record was set in the Southwestern Division by W6IT with a score of 31,196 on 194 QSOs and 44 multipliers on all bands 50 MHz through 10 GHz.

Logs Submitted

There were 742 logs submitted, 14 of which were check logs. This is an increase of 7% from the 679 logs submitted in 2017; and one needs to go back to 2012, a year with good and widespread sporadic E, to find a higher number of entrants to the January contests: 767. The January VHF contest is healthy if not vigorous.

Limited Multioperator	19
Unlimited Multioperator	16
Classic Rover	26
Limited Rover	34
Rover Unlimited	13
Single Operator, 3 Bands	147
Single Operator, FM	32
Single Operator, High Power	162
Single Operator, Low Power	242
Single Operator Portable	37

Total Logs	728
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Thanks to all who submitted logs!

All scores presented in this preliminary report are provisional, pending final review. Watch for the full contest results coming soon to this website. There will be a summary of top scores in the July issue of QST.