

Editorial

Is My Time More Valuable Than Yours?

One debate that arises after every DX contest is the issue of stations failing to identify frequently enough. The rub is that “frequently enough” is in the ears of the beholder. The issue recently frothed up again on the CQ-Contest reflector after a rule change was announced for the CQ WPX contests. Specifically, CQ WPX rule XIII.A.5 specifies that one of the grounds for disqualification includes, “Running stations making more than 3 contacts without sending their call sign.” There is not a contest operator alive who has not been frustrated by the confounding operator running stations without sending a call sign, and I suspect that this rule is intended to alleviate some of that frustration.

Some strongly believe that this is a purely black-and-white situation, and that there is just one solution — that every operator should ID after every single contact, *period*. There are plenty of strong arguments in favor of this, and, in fact, some of the world’s best operators have won contests using this exact strategy. Any time disadvantage in this case falls primarily on the running operator, who is taking time to identify instead of just uttering “thanks” or sending “TU on CW. On the other hand the S&P station gets all of the time advantage by not having to wait through multiple contacts for the DX station to identify. Speaking of frustration, who hasn’t waited patiently for the infrequent IDer to ID, only to have some lid cover up the runner’s call sign once it is finally sent? This leads to more frustration, bad behavior and chaos, and is another strong argument in support of the runner IDing after every contact.

From the runner’s perspective, there are real advantages to not signing after every contact. The first advantage is the time saving I mentioned. Saying a one-syllable “thanks” is much faster than even a three-letter call sign — with or without phonetics. Likewise, “TU” is shorter than any call sign that I’ve heard on CW. Those “saved” syllables add up to a significant time saving over the course of a 48 hour contest — time that could be used to make additional contacts. The second advantage is that periodically withholding one’s call sign can be an effective pileup management tool. In theory, both the runner and the S&P station can benefit.

The running station benefits by sending

a shorter acknowledgement. The S&P who got there earlier and has already identified the runner potentially benefits from a smaller pileup to call in. This would more likely be the case in a scenario where S&P stations were actually tuning and identifying the station on their own. Unfortunately in today’s click-and-pounce world, too many stations rely on spotting networks to “identify” stations for them. This is probably the top reason why it is possible for some running stations to have a bottomless pit of callers without identifying for very long periods. Sad, but true: Many of the calling stations using spotting networks never actually bother to copy or confirm a call sign.

So, what to do? One solution is to avoid the DX contests altogether and only operate events where the call sign is part of the exchange. Some examples include the *NCJ* Sprint and the ARRL November Sweepstakes. One of the great joys of operating these contests is that there is no waiting around for several QSOs to hear a call sign. However, this is not a satisfactory solution for those of us who like to operate DX contests. A preferable solution would be to educate and enlighten running stations on the advantages of IDing very frequently, if not after every contact.

My personal view is that there are times when it’s okay to make two or three contacts before identifying. Those times are when there are enough loud callers to work very quickly (eg, 5-10 seconds each), so that no more than 20 or 30 seconds goes by before the running station identifies again. If one caller takes more than 30 seconds to complete the contact, then it is important to identify immediately following that QSO. I feel that in almost no circumstance should the running operator go longer than 30 seconds or one QSO (whichever is longer) without identifying.

It all comes down to awareness. The running operator should be aware of the value of both his own time and the time of those stations calling. The runner should be keenly aware of the stations in the pileup, including stations who have just tuned by. The worst offenders are the operators who sit there for very long periods sending “TU” or QRZ for many QSOs in a row. I don’t know how to reach these folks. I suspect that they do not read *National Contest Journal*, and I am probably preaching to

the choir on this point. There is hope on the horizon. More and more operators are becoming aware of the issue, and more running operators are taking steps to improve their running technique. Let’s do what we can to encourage all contesters to value each other’s precious time. After all, our time is equally valuable in our little game of “race against the clock.”

RTTY Contest Dinner Returns to Dayton

WW4LL has announced that the Dayton RTTY Contest Dinner will return after a 12 year absence. The 2014 Dayton RTTY Contest Dinner will take place on Thursday, May 15, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Dayton, Ohio. Order tickets online, www.rttycontestdinner.com.

In This Issue

Thanks to a tremendous effort by the *NCJ* contest managers and log-checking team, we are pleased to provide the results of several *NCJ* contests in record time. We have all three modes of the NAQP plus the CW and RTTY Sprint results from the winter 2014 events. Thanks to the very strong work by ACØW, WØYK, K3TN, K6UFO, N5KO, N6TR, N6WM, WA7BNM, and KL9A. These folks went above and beyond the call of duty, working as a team to give us more timely results. Be sure to thank them for their efforts (but not during a contest, of course!)

NW2K announces the annual CW Open contest sponsored by the CW Operators Club (CWops). This is a fun event and worthy of interest to *NCJ* readers. NJ2R tells his tale of hunting down a troublesome RFI source, and of the importance of diplomacy, and N7WA tells his tale of operating from the Caribbean for the first time.

Our regular columnists have their usual heaping helping of great tips and information. N4ZR and NØJK have graciously allowed us to withhold their columns in this issue to make room for *NCJ* contest results. Their excellent columns will return in future issues of *NCJ*. Included are Sprinting tips, crank-up tower safety recommendations, techniques for little pistols, and some comments on aging and physical stamina. We hope you will enjoy it. The July/August *NCJ* will be a special commemorative edition dedicated to WRTC-2014. Stay tuned!