

From the Editor

Spring has arrived in North America, but with less solar flux and deteriorating contesting conditions for the DX events. My March ARRL DX SSB score was the lowest in a long time, due largely to challenging propagation. Spring also signals for most of us the chance to address needed station repairs, upgrades, and improvements. Visalia in April, and Dayton in May, have brought — or will bring — new antenna designs, new station peripherals, and a promised new HF rig from Kenwood. That said, the popularity of software-defined radio (SDR) architecture continues to rise with the growing popularity of such radios as the Icom IC-7610 and the FLEX-6600/6600M series. TI7W racked up an impressive score with an SDR during the ARRL International DX CW, so perhaps the era of SDR contesting has arrived, putting this technology on a more or less equal standing with the advanced superheterodyne models that most of us use. We will have more about Nate's use of SDR transceivers at TI7W in our next issue.

Challenging propagation can make contesting hard, as we know, but I was taken aback at times during the recent CQ WPX SSB at the lack of civility I observed on the part of some operators. Contesting, even under poor conditions, should not bring out the worst or most unpleasant behavior among us, even when we are flowing with competitive juices and competing in already crowded band conditions. In terms of their personal behavior on the air, operators have to decide whether the ends should justify the means or the means should justify the ends. All efforts

at imparting contesting ethics and promoting radiosport will fail if we act rudely or disrespectfully toward one another or fail to take time to explain proper etiquette to contest newcomers. In general, we might expect more newbies to take part during the SSB contests, and I hope readers will recognize the opportunities we have to positively influence new contesters and keep contesting a fun and positive experience for all.

I will be at the ARRL booth at Hamvention® in May on Saturday, 9 – 11 AM, for a “Meet the Editor” time. I want to be accessible to you, our readers, and I invite you to stop by to chat and to share your ideas on how we can make *NCJ* better, more relevant, and more widely read. I would welcome your thoughts on any of the topics we have raised so far in *NCJ*.

WRTC 2018

Our current issue focuses on the 2018 World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC 2018) in Germany this July. We surveyed about half of the participating teams and received a significant number of responses. If you're interested in their strategies, their planned equipment, and their hopes/dreams and dreads, it is all there. The cover features two WRTC-19 participants. Xenia Berger, ZL4YL, will represent Oceania with her father Holger, ZL3IO. Xenia will likely be the youngest participant at WRTC, and you can see from our cover that her smile will exude Kiwi charm. Martin, DL4NAC, is also featured. Martin is bringing a Hilberling PT-8000a to the competition, likely a first for WRTC. At this juncture, the teams are set, and the preparations made, so let the games begin!

NACC

Our “Next-Gen Contesting!” editor Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, reports on the first-ever North American Collegiate Championship (NACC). I encourage you to read his column, as the comments from the collegiate participants signal both an embrace of radio contesting and a desire to do it a bit differently than we have been doing. It will be interesting to see how radiosport evolves when the millennial generation is running the major contest programs.

Station Building

We continue our theme of station building in this edition, with Part 2 (of 2) of “What Makes a Good Solid-State Amplifier for the Contester?” by Adam Farson, VA7OJ. We will publish the third part in a series, “How Much Receiver Performance Does a Contester Need?” by Peter Chadwick, G3RZP, in our next. We value Peter's thoughtful advice and analysis. The articles by Peter and Adam should guide you well, if you have plans to purchase a new transceiver or a solid state-amplifier in the near future.

While I'm on the topic, we're always looking for technical articles on antennas and articles on helpful accessories and peripherals.

Personal Appearances

I hope to see everyone at Contest University on Thursday of Dayton week and at the Contest Dinner on Saturday night. Say hello, and let me know how you think *NCJ* is doing. Please continue to submit articles and ideas and spread the word to your contesting friends.