

# THE BLACK HOLE



ARRL SS Unlimited Team Champs 2000, 2001, 2002

Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

Volume XVI Issue I V

April 2008

## Contesting at the Bottom of the Cycle - Final Results, 2007 Sweeps

By Kevin Kaufhold, W9GKA

**Individual Honors.** Numerous SMC members won awards in this year's Sweeps. The following ops won on CW (there may be more):

K9NS – **Won national title** Multi-op, 216,320 (Central Division winner)

N0NI (AG9A) - 3rd Nation SOHP, 229,120 points (Midwest Division winner).

AJ9C – 9th Nation SOLP, 163,040, (Central Division winner).

WI9WI – 10th Nation QRP, 85,332 (Central Division winner).

*(Continued on page 3)*

## SMC Summer Gathering August 9th, 2008 Bloomington, IL

Please put Saturday, August 9th on your calendars for an SMC late summer gathering at Ralph's, K9ZO, in Bloomington, IL!

The plan will be to have a cookout and spend the day talking radio and contesting. Ralph has already been busy arranging some other entertainment, including a potential presentation on the TI9 operation.

## Preparing for Dayton

By Scot Herrick, K9JY

*reprinted with permission from K9JY.com*

Going to the Hamvention in Dayton, Ohio, is a big deal if you have never been there before. Even if you have.

It's overwhelming.

With 500 inside exhibit spaces, 2500+ flea market slots and numerous forums, Dayton is arguably the largest ham convention in the world.

I've been to Dayton a few times (not making it this year!) and I thought I would pass along a few tips for making it through the long weekend.

Things to do before you go

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# The Black Hole



**The Black Hole** is published monthly, September through June, by The Society of Midwest Contesters. Permission for use of the materials is hereby granted on the sole condition that credit is given to the source of those materials.

## EDITOR

Brian Maves, K9QQ

Material for **The Black Hole** should be forwarded to:

**k9qq@arrl.net**

Membership in **The Society of Midwest Contesters** is open to all persons with a bona-fied interest in amateur radio contesting. The club doesn't collect annual dues, but instead funds everything through member donations. For more information contact one of the following officers:

## BOARD

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Vacant

## AWARDS COORDINATOR

Chuck Schneebeil, KI9A

# SMC Needs Your Financial Support

As one of the top contest clubs in the nation, we continue to sponsor plaques for a number of major contests including Sweepstakes, ARRL DX, CQWW, and CQWPX, as well as make monetary donations in the interest of promoting radio sporting.

A few years ago we decided to eliminate the formal dues of \$10 per year, and instead maintain funds through member donations. We encourage all members to consider making an annual donation to the club. Your generous donations allow us to continue to expand our support of radio sporting.

You can make your donation two ways:

1. Send a check, money order, or cash to:

Zig Markowski - KM9M  
50 E. Eureka Drive  
Lemont, IL 60439-3970

2. Use Paypal and email your donation to [dues@w9smc.com](mailto:dues@w9smc.com).

# W9SMC

Official Callsign  
of  
The Society of Midwest Contesters

SMC Web Page: <http://w9smc.com>

## SMC Stuff

To get your SMC stuff, see the last page of the newsletter or visit the SMC website, <http://w9smc.com/merchandise.htm>



**Badges**

**Order  
Today!**



**Shirts**

# SMC JOINS QRP

By Ralph Bellas, K9ZO

The Society of Midwest Contesters is now a member of the QRP Amateur Radio Club International (ARCI). The membership number is 13193. They have an excellent web site at <http://www.qrparci.org>.

SMC members are welcome to use the W9SMC club call and enter QRP sponsored events. Drop an email to K9ZO {at} hotmail.com to reserve the club call and avoid duplicate operations. Logs are appreciated so they may be included in Logbook of the World (LoTW).



*(Continued from page 1)*

N9UC (WO9S) - 3rd Nation Schools, 111,360 (Central Division winner)

W9RE – SOHP Central Division winner.

N9CO – SO-Unlimited Central Division winner.

On Phone, awards went to:

K9NS – 3rd Nation Multi, 302K (Central Div. Winner).

AJ9C – 4th Nation SOLP, 194K (Central Div. winner)

K9CT – 8th Nation SO-Unlimited, 237K (Central Div.)

N9KT – 2nd Nation QRP, 105K (Central Division)

K9ZO – 7th Nation QRP, 43K (#1 Illinois)

N9UC (WO9S) – 2nd Nation Schools, 124K (Central Div.)

WB9Z – Central Division Winner, SOHP, 254K

WN0G – 1st Iowa SOLP, 72K

WX9U – 1st Illinois SOLP, 142K

W9IU – 1st Indiana SO-U, 181K

K0PJ – 1st Wisconsin SOLP, 91K

WW9R – 1st Wisconsin SO-U, 95K

W9YV – 1st Wisconsin, Multi, 112K

I may have missed some awards. Please forgive me if I have done so, as I am working off of the on-line data-base on Phone, typing this before QST results are published. As amazing as the above accomplishments are, what is even more astonishing is the depth of our membership activity. In several of the sections, the next 10 to 15 operators after the winner were all SMC members. We certainly have the Central Division covered, and also are placing well in Iowa. Looking at the data-base, it is quite dazzling to see line after line of top scores coming from the club named “Society of Midwest Contesters”.

Club Aggregate Scores. Moving onto the Club as a whole, the following table lists 2007 activity of clubs that have been able to make the unlimited at any time since 1985.

*(Continued on page 5)*

	2007	2007							
Club	CW Logs	CW Pts	Ph Logs	Ph Pts	TTL Logs	TTL Pts	Chng Lgs	Chng Pts	Ave pt/lg
NCCC	128	9,265,240	145	9,864,904	273	19,130,144	5%	-4%	70,074
PVRC	105	8,263,044	136	9,749,078	241	18,012,122	-17%	-13%	74,739
SMC	83	5,180,420	90	5,267,838	173	10,448,258	-21%	-17%	60,395
MWA	45	3,226,950	50	2,740,540	95	5,967,490	-9%	-13%	62,816
YCCC	53	3,780,874	39	2,117,486	92	5,898,360	11%	8%	64,113
MRCC	24	2,127,330	17	1,446,054	41	3,573,384	-22%	3%	87,156
SCCC	23	1,738,452	17	1,665,108	40	3,403,560	59%	33%	85,089
Fla CG	28	1,905,648	22	1,001,222	50	2,906,870	-11%	-11%	58,137
Frankford	23	1,406,062	13	498,978	36	1,905,040	-22%	3%	52,918

# Dayton Hamvention®

Sponsored by Dayton Amateur Radio Association  
Since 1952

## Contest Forum

Saturday, May 17, 2008, 11:45 AM - 2:15 PM  
Forum Room 1

Moderator: Doug Grant, K1DG

Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, and Alan Dewey, K0AD  
"Passing the NCJ torch"

Doug Zwiebel, KR2Q  
"When giants walked the bands - the early days of multi-multi"

Pete Smith, N4ZR  
"SDR and Contesting—The Future is Now"

Victor Kean, K1LT  
"Beamforming on 160 Meters"

John Battin, K9DX  
"Contesting with 28 Miles of Feedline"

Barry Merrill, W5GN, and Bob Naumann, W5OV  
"The Great 2008 Contest Technology Debate"

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## Antenna Forum

Friday, May 16, 2008 2:30 PM - 5:00 PM  
Forum Room 1

Moderator: Tim Duffy, K3LR

Mike Wetzel, W9RE and Tom Chance, K9XV  
"Real World Antenna Patterns vs. Theoretical Computer Antenna Plots"

Greg Ordy, W8WWV  
"A New Approach for Measuring Complex Antenna Currents in a Vertical Array"

Dr. Ted Rappaport, N9NB and Ray Sokola, K9RS  
"Multi-element Lowband Vertical Arrays - Approaches for Small Lots"

## 16th Annual

# Dayton Contest Dinner

Speaker: Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH

Saturday, May 17, 2008

Crowne Plaza Hotel

Sign up now!

<http://www.contestdinner.com/>

# Contest University

Dayton 2008

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Crowne Plaza Hotel,

Sign up now!

<http://www.contestuniversity.com/>

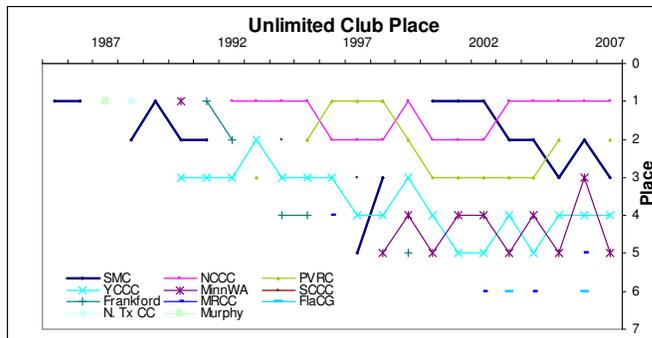
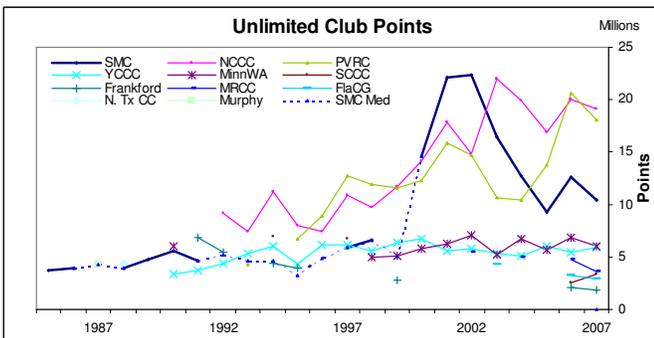
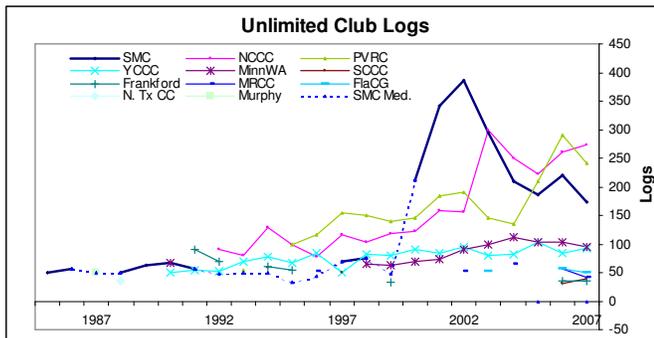
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It looks like 5 clubs for sure made the unlimited this year (maybe a 6th, Florida Contest Group, depending upon whether 50 or 51 logs is needed to go unlimited. I believe it is currently 51 logs, but have seen unlimited clubs listed at 50 in years past). SMC is all alone in 3rd place, with two clubs ways below us, and two clubs way above us.

Looking at the change of logs and points versus 2006, almost all clubs struggled with log entries and points. PVRC, SMC, and MWA were way down, while even NCCC lost ground on points and just barely hung in there on the logs. Only YCCC showed any progress on the log and point counts.

Analysis – How much of an Influence is the Sun? One important observation that is emerging in the post-mortem discussions among club members involves the solar cycle. It is obvious that all clubs were hampered this year by the low tide of the cycle. Being down on points is to be expected in an HF contest at the bottom. But the fact that all clubs have difficulty holding onto prior year's log counts shows that contest operators (even the goods ones) are less inclined to make a serious go of it in poor conditions.

SMC, in particular, may be highly influenced by solar conditions. With our real strength being in a vast army of small stations, our club may be most impacted by the waning and waxing of Sol. This is demonstrated in the following graphs. Notice how our peak years coincided to the latest solar cycle, and how our lows are in synch with the solar bottom.



As is evident in the graphs, there is a direct relationship between logs and points. The more logs, the more points. Simple and direct. This is not to disparage the individual work effort of the major stations, far from it. To mount a serious and credible effort at the unlimited title, our club needs both the quantity and quality of operations; both the big and the little guys. Our club appears to be closely aligned with the last solar cycle, more so than either NCCC or PVRC. We did not see the effect in the prior cycle, as we were really in the development stages at that point. But since so much of strategy since 1999 has hinged on large numbers (and especially on large numbers of small stations), it has proved to be a real challenge for us in the last few years. Paul got everyone enthused at the solar peak, but we are now finding it impossible to motivate people at the solar trough.

On the Positive Side of Things. If this is what is going on with our HF scores of late, then we are not in that bad of shape. When viewed in this light, we may actually be in the midst of a rebuilding program, without realizing it. We are working on activity awards aimed at both the large and small stations. We will be restarting our annual BBQ this summer, with hopes of eventually making it into a real meeting, complete with strategy sessions and the like. Our recent VHF contesting activities have been excellent. Even some of our HF contests have been very good – we have won the 160-meter contest (either medium or unlimited) every year between 1999 and 2005, and placed 2nd last year in 2006. This is an amazing accomplishment, especially since activity in the 160 has been by “osmosis”, with no assigned contest coordinator prodding us along each year. And, our Black Hole on-line magazine and web-site have been superb throughout. That is quite a compliment to Brian, K9QQ, who has managed to run both the BH and the SMC web-site with no great computer programming background.

Initially, I was disappointed with this year's results, after spending so much energy and effort coordinating the contest, with little to show for it. I helped out this year mostly because I wanted to return the favor to those HF ops who helped make the 2007 June VHF a huge success. I figured that if the HF boys came charging in to put us over the top in June, I could help out in “their” contest in November. Given the enthusiasm

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I experienced in June, I was rather astonished at the poor reception I received only a few months later for the premier HF contest of the year.

But what we are beginning to realize is that the solar cycle may be playing a psychological role in our contesting activities as well a physical role in our propagation abilities. Since Sweeps is absolutely brutal for a small, low power station to compete in at any time (and particularly at the bottom of the cycle), many people have just opted out over the past few years. Even some of our bigger stations have scaled back activities in the SS, preferring to work in other contests. In the next few years before the band conditions come roaring back, we have to be on-guard against these solar cycle blues. We simply should not allow ourselves to be psyched out by bad propagation. All other clubs are experiencing the same phenomenon. The club that wins will be the one that is the best at motivating people, year in and year out. Let us remember that as we prepare for the 2008 Sweepstakes.

Most importantly, thanks must go to the 173 small and large efforts expended on behalf of the SMC in this year's contest. These operators form the core of our club right now, and I thank each one of them.



*(Continued from page 1)*

You already have a place to stay, right? If you haven't gotten a room yet...well, you won't. The convention weekend is booked months in advance. You need to be on reflectors asking for a room from those that end up canceling because they can't make the place. This needs to be done now.

Print out you itinerary. Hey, you need to know when you need to be where and not all the places in Dayton have online access from hotel rooms. Plus having all those confirmation numbers for your flights, car rental, and hotel rooms will save you lots of time and frustration if something doesn't go right.

Print out maps. Whether it is from the airport to your hotel, from your hotel to the Hamvention at Hara Arena, or to the other banquet sites you'll attend, print out the driving directions. Having a map already done and in a folder relieves a lot of stress.

Order your Hamvention tickets. You can buy them there, but it is a long line and they cost more. You can order tickets from the Hamvention Online Store.

Decide on forums to attend. It's important to lay out the times and places to be for the forums to attend during the convention. The forums are all killer — and fill up fast. Having a plan before leaving is critical to enjoying the con-

vention. The forums are Friday through Sunday.

Decide on any Additional Activities to attend. Additional Activities are not directly sponsored by the Hamvention, but are a big part of going to the convention. For example, Contest University runs all day Thursday and requires registration — and if you are going to attend Contest University, you've made arrangements to arrive on Wednesday, right?

Decide what banquets to attend and buy tickets. These banquets are usually about some specific segment of the hobby. I've attended the Annual Dayton Contest Dinner every time I've gone and it is always a good meal with a good program. But, you need to order tickets as there is limited seating. By the way, most of the banquets have business casual as the "dress code" and most people change cloths from the day at the Hamvention to go to the banquet. Bring some good stuff along with those blue jeans. No one will kick you out, but the first year there I didn't know that and I felt a little uncomfortable.

Other activities do not require registration, but require your limited time. Whether it is making time to attend the contest or DX suites, or just activities with your club, you need to know when to pencil in the time.

Check the weather forecast. Dayton weather has been more consistent since it has moved to May, but knowing how to dress and what to bring is important. If there is any chance of rain, make sure you bring good, portable rain gear and an umbrella to take in your backpack. When it rains it gets very crowded inside and you might end up being outside in the rain, prepared or not.

Get LOTS of sleep. Dayton is like a 72-hour contest and we're just not prepared for the scope, pace, and intense schedule that goes from 8 AM to Midnight. Sleep is a premium while in Dayton and having lots of good rest before getting there will really help.

Road Construction information: Road Construction information is here — and there appears to be a lot of it.

Once in Dayton

Know where you will park. You can park in the fields by Hara Arena and it can take a little less time from there to the site. But the parking areas are a field with grass and dirt. The kind when it rains that turns your shoes and pants into a soaking mess, with mud to boot.

Much better to park behind the Salem Mall. The parking lot is paved and busses travel the 5-minute trip to Hara Arena all the time.

I've done both and the Salem Mall parking is well worth the

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little extra time it takes to get to the convention center.

Know where to eat lunch. There are restaurants serving food both inside and outside the Hara Arena. Where you eat does make a difference as the quality of the food significantly varies from place to place. Most of the restaurants are run to support organizations (Boy Scouts, high school bands, etc.), so it is a good cause to eat while on the site.

Personally, I've never had very good food inside the arena. The best places to eat have always been in the flea market. My suggestion, then, is to check out the eating places outside.

And if you're a coffee aficionado (hey, I live in Starbucksland), get your coffee before you get to the arena. The coffee, unless it really changes this year, is simply black water with caffeine.

Have a game plan for seeing the convention. Listen — the place is huge with the equivalent of maybe five full buildings of exhibits inside (all weirdly interconnected) and rows upon rows upon rows of flea market sites outside.

I was fortunate that my buddy Eric, K9GY, took me under his wing the first time I went to Dayton and he had a pretty good plan. It was buy a program (they were free back then) and then do this:

Spend the first morning completely covering the flea market. You'll most likely see people you know and if you need something from the flea market (and there is everything there under the sunspots), Friday is the day you will have the best selection. Mark off the rows you have visited in the program (really — you'd be surprised when you won't remember what rows you've been down...).

Spend the rest of Friday and all day Saturday inside the convention center itself seeing the exhibits there.

Sunday, if you have energy left, you can attend the convention, but it ends at noon. If you are into deals, visiting the flea market Sunday morning is a must as people do not want to pack up their unsold stuff and take it back home.

Attend the forums. Get there at least 10-minutes early which means leave to get to the forum a good 15-20 minutes before hand. Especially to your first forum as you will most like get lost even if you are an old pro at Dayton. The buildings are just confusing to get around in.

Make sure you hit your high points. If you know that Icom is coming out with a new rig that you want to see, make sure you find Icom on your program and go see the stuff. New stuff from W9XT and Unified Microsystems? Check out the location of his booth on the program and take a look. Want

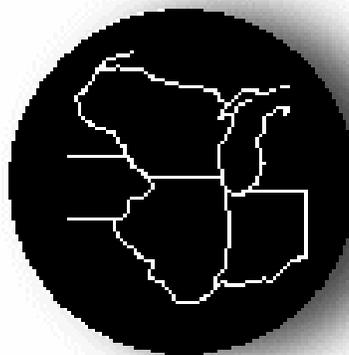
to check out the latest on WriteLog (I was behind that booth one year)? Find their space on the convention floor and go look.

The importance of seeing your stuff first means that you accomplish what you wanted to going in. The rest is just more good stuff. Focusing on what you want to see first means you'll have to traverse the different buildings and find your way around. But seeing what you wanted to first is a great feeling.

Keep your eyes open. You'll see lots of hams that you know on the air, whether it be in contests, DX'ers, DXpeditions, or old friends. I can't tell you how many times people have just walked up to me and asked me how I was doing and giving comments on my site. You will see people you only know by call sign — get to know them as a person too.

Finally, don't stress over logistics. Whenever you are traveling, most everything is new, or different, or not in your control. It is the nature of travel. Getting your blood pressure elevated because the convention center is crowded (it is) or it rains (it does) or things aren't going just right (they won't) isn't good for anyone, especially you.

Focus on your priorities and go with the flow. You'll enjoy the Hamvention a lot more.



# SMC Stuff

## SMC Clip-on Badge

by NVSA

The SMC logo appears at the top-center of the badge in black and white. Your call sign, first name and city & state appear in dark blue. The SMC name badge as shown with the slot & strap with swivel alligator clip, but there are other choices.

Price: \$14.50 (includes s&h).

Order now from **The SignMan**

Visit his full color web page to see other items you can get with the SMC Logo:

[www.thesignman.com/color/](http://www.thesignman.com/color/)



# KC9FD

**SOCIETY OF MIDWEST**

Club badges can be obtained by sending a check for \$5.50 to:

**Midwest Engraving**  
6657 N. Sidney Place  
Glendale, WI 53209

**Ph: 414-228-8654**  
**Fax: 414-228-8655**

Be sure to note that it is for a "Black Hole" badge and please allow a couple weeks for delivery.

## Member/New Member Information/ Update Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send updates to:

**Zig Markowski - KM9M**  
50 E. Eureka Drive  
Lemont, IL 60439-3970

## We need your input for the next 'Hole!!

- ⇒ **Operating stories**
- ⇒ **Station construction**
- ⇒ **Operating accessories**
- ⇒ **Packet and computer hints**
- ⇒ **Product reviews**
- ⇒ **Plug your upcoming DXpedition**
- ⇒ **Your idea here**

**Please consider putting an article  
together today!**



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## The Society of Midwest Contesters

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