

THE BLACK HOLE



Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

Volume XVII Issue I

January 2009

Big Gains in 2008 Sweeps

By Kevin, Kaufhold, W9GKA

Our goal this year was a simple one: to have more logs than 2007. To achieve this goal, we concentrated on the operators who had submitted a sweeps log at least once since 2001. Organizational efforts started in late July, when hundreds of e-mails were sent out to past Sweeps participants. New members were also cultivated.

The results were impressive. SMC increased the log count by some 36%, and the club aggregate points surged some 32%. Still, most of the unlimited clubs had significant log and point gains this year, as shown in the table of claimed scores on page 4.

The belief at this point is that the nation-wide surge in club activity is likely the result of the ARRL promotional activities regarding 75th anniversary of the Sweeps. We picked up on the League's announcements, and really pushed the 75th in the last few weeks before the contests. Many members were obviously in the hunt for the special brooms, while others just wanted to get on for this special occasion. I think that is a large reason for the huge jump in club logs this year.

Our increases were very close to that of PVRC. MRRC and YCCC posted even larger percentage gains than us. In fact, NCCC and MWA were the only two clubs that did not have big gains. At one point in the post-mortems, NCCC was down some 50 logs while

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Rock the QSO Parties

In an effort to increase SMC activity, we're encouraging everyone to actively participate in state QSO parties in 2009. A calendar listing the state QSO parties for 2009 has been posted on the SMC website. Let's make a concerted effort to rock the state QSO parties.

Minnesota QP	14Z-24Z, Feb 7, 2009
Delaware QP	17Z, Feb 7 to 05Z, Feb 8, 2009 & 13Z, Feb 8 to 01Z, Feb 9, 2009
Vermont QP	00Z, Feb 7 to 24Z, Feb 8, 2009

Adventures in SO2R Land

By Bill Axelrod ND9E

Preface: I moved to the Black Hole and joined SMC in mid-November, 2008. Previously, I was K3WA out in West Virginia and a member of PVRC. My WV QTH was on the side of a mountain with great RF views to Asia, over the pole, and to Europe. I wrote this series of four articles about the evolution of my station to a full-up SO2R capability for the PVRC newsletter. I thought they might provide some interest for SMC. Here goes.

No, this isn't a story about my DX-pedition to the Western Sahara during a DX contest. I've never even been there. Too wild and wooly for this old guy. No, this is a story about my adventures with building and operating a Single Operator Two Radio (SO2R) contest station.

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.

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Membership in **The Society of Midwest Contesters** is open to all persons with a bona-fied interest in amateur radio contesting. For more information contact one of the following officers:

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SMC Dues

Dues are \$10 a year, but may be waived based on the fulfillment of participation requirements:

In the SMC SS circle: Make 100 total Sweepstakes QSOs over the two weekends and submit your score(s) for "Society of Midwest Contesters." In addition, submit one other score for an SMC club competition in one of the following contests: ARRL VHF, 160m, or 10m, NAQP, CQWW, ARRL DX, etc.

Outside of the SMC SS circle: Submit two scores per year for SMC club or team competition in any of the six NAQPS and four Sprints.

Qualifying scores are those submitted during the calendar year prior to January 1.

Donations are still accepted

You can make your payment two ways:

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

Zig Markowski - KM9M
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2. Use Paypal and email your donation to dues@w9smc.com.

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

SMC Stuff

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



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W9DXCC 2008

By Bill Smith W9VA

The 56th annual W9DXCC Convention happened at the Holiday Inn in Elk Grove Village, IL the weekend of September 19 and 20. We had a good turnout, with 225 total registrations and 170 at the Saturday night banquet. Many SMC'ers were on hand, in the audience, on the podium, and collecting prizes. The first program Saturday morning was our own Craig Thompson, K9CT, with the TI9KK Cocos Island program. Later in the morning came the ARRL Forum, led by our ARRL Central Division Director Dick Isely W9GIG. The Forum included a very humorous presentation by Ward Silver NØAX, who produces the weekly ARRL Contest Rate Sheet for us contesters. Later John Battin K9DX gave a presentation on the Circle 8 160 meter receiving antenna and Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA made his annual update on propagation, including forecasts for upcoming Cycle 24, trying to answer everyone's question – will we ever see another sunspot?

There were many other programs, and you can see the full line-up at the convention website www.w9dxcc.com. We again set up Special Event Station W9D, which was operated from the convention site using equipment provided by Yaesu and ZeroFive Antennas. The CW Pile-Up contest, run by Mike McGirr K9AJ, is a very challenging test of contesting skill – Congratulations to this year's winner, SMC'er Jon Rosner, WO9S. The convention featured prizes from almost 40 donors, including the Grand Prize of a Yaesu FT2000, donated by Yaesu and won by SMC'er Gary Stouder K9SG, and the Raffle Prize of an ICOM IC 7000, donated by ICOM and won (again) by Michael Seedman, AA6DY, now living in the Chicago area. The 2008 banquet speaker was Eric Scace, K3NA, who reported on the VP6DX Ducie Island DXpedition.

The W9DXCC convention is an ARRL sanctioned event sponsored by the Northern Illinois DX Association. Mark your calendars now for W9DXCC 2009 – September 18/19, again at the Holiday Inn in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

See pictures on pages 5 and 6



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I'd like to be able to say that I got into SO2R because I wanted to do better for PVRC, that I wanted to get better scores in contests, that I craved intellectual stimulation, or some similar reason. That would be a nice story and even reflect well on me. But I can not tell a lie – at least not one that big. No, that's not even close to how I wound up with a SO2R capable ham station. The reality is that I just blundered and stumbled into it. And I learned a lot in the process and thought I'd share my experiences with you.

Today I have a full-up SO2R ham station. Two quality transceivers, two high powered auto-tune amplifiers, band pass filters, SO2R capable contest and general logging software, automated antenna switching, controls for key lines, audio, RTTY switching, you name it - I got it. I made a lot of mistakes along the way, learned a lot (actually still learning a lot), spent way too much money, and had some fun. But, to understand and learn from my mistakes, it is important to learn how I got here.

Two years or so ago I had no plan, no desire to evolve to SO2R. I was content to sit on my mountain side and work DX and play contests with my quasi basic KW station, tower, beams for 40 through 10 meters, verticals for 160 and 80 meters, and beverages for receive. No neighbors to whine about my tower, no RFI, TVI, just me and the declining sunspots. Oh Happy Day.

Then one day it happened. Mr. Murphy came to visit. With a puff of smoke and not even a high-ho Silver, my Yaesu Quadra amplifier bit the dust. Off it went in a triple boxed package to Yaesu for repair. It would be gone for six to eight weeks. Of course, by then I was totally spoiled. I just absolutely needed an amp for the upcoming DX contest. So I bought a used AL-80B. Sure looked pretty on my desktop. And it worked.

The weeks went by. I made my usual insignificant splash in the next contest or two, worked some more DX, just doing my routine weekend Mr. Ham thing. And, as promised, seven weeks and a thousand dollars later, my now-repaired Quadra amplifier returned home. Back up on the desk it went. Boy-oh-boy - no more band switching, no more tuning, just pure automated DX chasing contest playing enjoyment. But, wow, the AL-80B still sure looked good sitting there on my operating table.

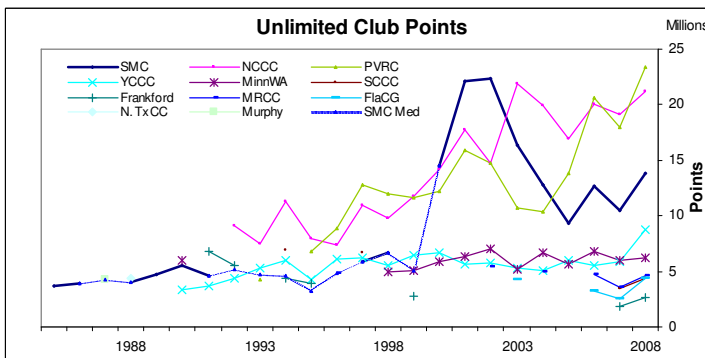
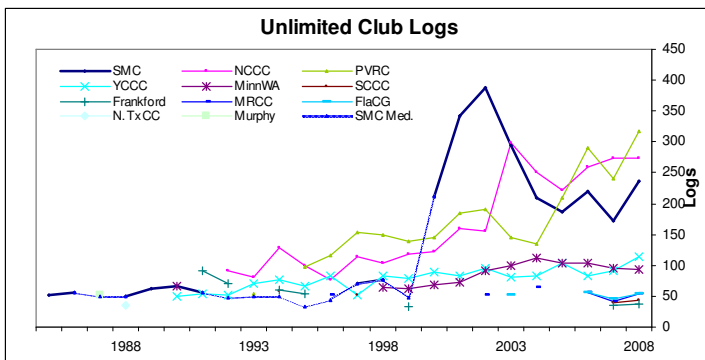
I just couldn't relegate it to my storeroom to just sit there and gather dust on the shelf. It stayed on the desk. And that was the beginning of the end, the start of my downfall, my first steps down the slippery slope to spending more and more money and ending up with a SO2R capable ham station. I rue the day. Or do I? *To be continued....*

	Claimed CW Logs	Claimed CW Pts	Claimed PH Logs	Claimed PH Pts	Claimed TTL Logs	Claimed TTL Pts	Chng TTL Logs	Chng TTL Pts
NCCC	126	10,103,482	147	11,047,946	273	21,151,428	0%	11%
PVRC	148	10,850,370	169	12,505,580	317	23,355,950	32%	30%
SMC	108	6,845,579	128	6,944,153	236	13,789,732	36%	32%
MWA	43	3,116,262	50	3,076,134	93	6,192,396	-2%	4%
YCCC	52	4,459,356	62	4,271,590	114	8,730,946	24%	48%
MRRC	30	2,614,024	24	2,003,722	54	4,617,746	32%	29%
Fla CG	29	2,232,450	25	2,149,250	54	4,381,700	8%	51%
SCCC	26	2,405,688	18	1,914,896	44	4,320,584	10%	27%
Frank	22	1,783,134	16	891,402	38	2,674,536	6%	40%

(Continued from page 1)

SMC and PVRC were both way up. By the end of the reporting period, NCCC posted claimed logs of exactly the same as last year, while SMC increased 63 logs over 2007. PVRC gained over 75 logs.

The log and point graphs in the unlimited competition visually display the huge gains made this year among the clubs.



As can be seen in the next graph, SMC has definitely secured a 3rd place standing in both logs and points. PVRC and NCCC have changed titles every year for the last four years, while SMC has had 3rd place all to ourselves over that same time period. Indeed, the unlimited class has evolved into three separate groups: PVRC and NCCC battling it out for top spot; then SMC cruising along in 3rd place; then everyone else. In spite of our huge gains this year, we are still a long way away from the hunt. It is going to take 22 + million points to have a serious shot at the unlimited title.

The challenge next year will be to maintain the momentum developed in 2008. Without the 75th anniversary to boost our efforts, we should try to keep all the stations on the air. We did manage to increase our log count and aggregate points back to pre-2005 levels. Next year's goal could be to top 2003, at some 16M plus. This would mean 3 Million more points, which would be another huge jump for us. To achieve this, we should focus on the following:

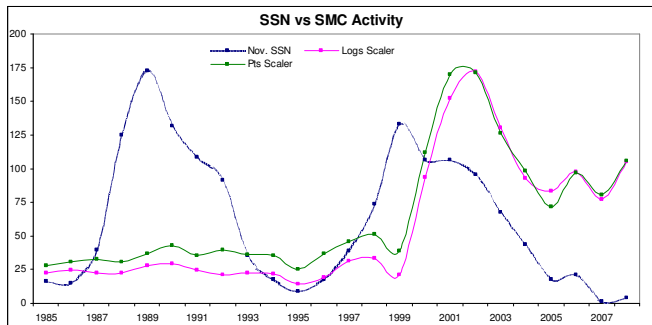
1. Keep all stations on the air from 2008.
2. Expand the current stations to both weekends, at least PT; and for those already on both weekends, expand to one weekend FT and the other one at least PT.
3. Reactivate special event and various club calls, and explore the multi-single strategy.
4. Attract members back into the Sweeps that have not run in a while.

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5. Attract new members, and get the newer members on the contest.

One of the concerns that we had this year was the apparent tie between our scores and the solar cycle. With solar conditions still close to a minimum, we were afraid that people would once again stay away from the fray. That fear did not materialize, as shown in the following graph:



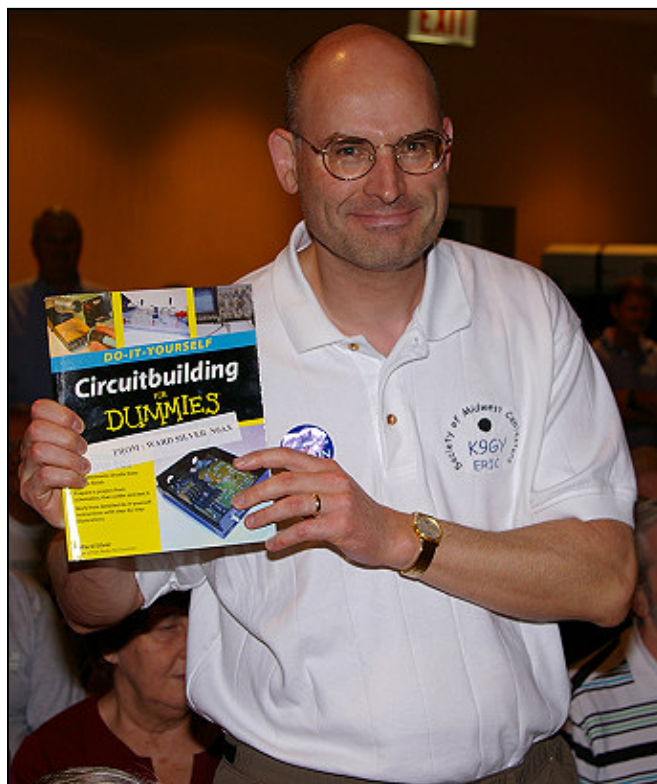
This year, we weakened the possible linkage between log activity and solar activity, since we measurably increased log counts while solar conditions experienced a second year of the doldrums.

It does appear that the last solar peak influenced the SMC club aggregate, possibly with a two year lag. I have statistical details in the Excel file that is located in the SMC members area, in case anyone wants further information. A two year lag has the greatest correlation between SSN and club aggregate points. Curiously, our log and points bottomed in 2005, some two years ahead of the solar minimum. So, we have gone from peaking two years after the solar max to bottoming some two years before the solar minimum. We may be anticipating the solar cycle more, and taking steps to counteract it. Considering that we have only recently become aware of a possible relationship to the solar cycle however, it seems more likely that we have merely found our core number of operators.

As a working thesis then, large and small stations alike may have been encouraged to enter logs in last solar peak. In that regard, K9PG's efforts at building a vast army of stations at the solar max seems to be prescient. But then more recently at or around the solar minimum, we may have simply fallen back on our core operators. These core members have generated around 175 to 200 log entries for the club. The fact that we have now gone beyond that small group this year and have again been adding to our log count is an encouraging sign.

Whatever the relationship to solar conditions, we did well this year. We far exceeded our 2008 goal. I thank everyone on the huge effort that was made this year.

SMC at W9DXCC 08



Eric, K9GY, with his prize



Jon, WO9S, collects his prize for the CW pile-up contest



Gary K9SG (left) happily receiving Grand Prize Yaesu FT2000 from Yaesu VP Dennis K7BV (right) with W9DXCC Master of Ceremonies Jim W9WU in the middle.



In the Hospitality Suite Friday night - left to right K9AJ, W4NKI, K9RHY, K9PPY

SMC at W9DXCC 08 ... Continued



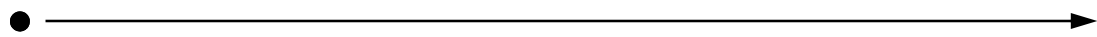
Gary, W9XT, collecting a prize.



ARRL Central Division Director and SMC'er Dick Isely, W9GIG.



Carl, K9LA, predicting when the sun-spots will return in Cycle 24.



ARRL 160 Contest at WB9Z



The WB9Z ARRL 160 contest crew.
L to R: K9FO, KE9I operating, AK9F, K9CS, WB9Z, K9NR



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SMC Clip-on Badge *by NV5A*

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