

THE BLACK HOLE



Official Journal of The Society of Midwest Contesters

Volume XVIII Issue III

May 2010

Prez's notes

By Mike Kasrich, AJ9C

Spring is here and I'm typing this a few days before the Dayton Hamvention. If you are attending be sure to stop by the Thursday night Hooter's gathering. Once again the "coveted" pink jacket is up for grabs. If you have a poor sense of fashion or are just color blind dress up in your most god awful and stop by. We will once again be sponsoring a hospitality suite at the Crowne Plaza. The plan is to open up 9ish and close around 2am.. As announced we are going to have a tour of the hole beer wise. I'd like to have beverages/beer from each state in the hole. I know MO, WI IA are on their way.

Just because the weather is getting warm don't forget we still have contests occurring. A big club event is the June VHF QSO Party. This is one of the contests you can use to get your participation "dues" all in order for next year. All you have to do is be on listening for 5 hours out of the contest and work who you can. Any band mode! As announced there is a Prez's Challenge for this contest too. The ARRL 160 challenge went over well and the cup recipients raved about the "award". Categories in case you missed them are: Most 6m Qsos made 100w or less; Most 6m qsos with a non resonant antenna; Most FM qsos with vertical antenna; Most SMCers worked from outside the circle and of course the ever popular Prez's random selection. Join in for June VHF!

An idea in the works for IARU is activating W9SMC as a multi and having a cookout in conjunction with the contest. It is not de-

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Adventures in SO2R Land - Part 9

By Bill Axelrod ND9E

Ed. I accidentally skipped this one, so this month you get two parts so we can catch up.

Prolog. So there I was, one Tuesday evening, running UA0s on 20 meters when I actually started to feel good about my station and my somewhat successful learning curve.

I had played in the NAQP CW, WAE CW, and CW Sprint contests, dabbled in a few QSOs in SSB and RTTY contests and progressed to the "slightly better than lousy" category as a SO2R contester over the summer.

The antenna work I wanted to complete by summer's end was pretty much complete. Four direction beverages up, basic 160 and 80 meter antennas in the air. I was ready!

Even got the certificate for First Place in the 2008 IARU HF World Championship contest for the West Virginia Section. No, I wasn't the only entrant.

I even picked up a bunch of needed new band entities over the summer breaking the pile-ups with ease.

Yep, I was feeling good. Another real big mistake. After 53 years of hamming I should have know that feeling good about one's

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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.

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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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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.

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June Prez's Challenge

By Mike Kasrich, AJ9C

Make your plans now. June is fast approaching. Again everyone who has some sort of vhf/uhf capability is requested to get a thumb on the PTT!

To that end the following Challenge categories will have "cups for the winners. Announcing your score to the reflector will not get you entered. You must send me an email direct after June VHF with you category declaration and final "score"

Cups will be awarded for the following categories:

1. High Rover score (red rover red rover send us a mega score right over!)
2. Most 6m qsos 100w or less
3. Most 6m qsos with a non resonant antenna (I hear an 80 dipole works just fine on 6!)
4. Most FM qsos with a vertical antenna (fire up your HTs and mobile rigs)
5. Most SMCers worked from outside the circle
6. Random selection based up on the Prez's own signature arbitrary and capricious criteria.

June VHF counts just like SS for your contest participation "dues" Just send a score in with Society of Midwest Contesters on your club participation line. At the end of the year let Zig now you were on listening at least during 5 different hours during ARRL June VHF and work one other contest.

Send me a score big or small and BEEG guns you can be the lucky random mug selected for a random mug! Let's all get on and get our station participation numbers up for a new unlimited club high and get the aggregate score above the number 1 medium club entry this year!



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cided whether this would be in addition to or a replacement for ZOfest for this year.

We are looking for a host for this event. If you might be interested let me or one of the board members know. The club would kick in some dough for burgers and the like. Score would not be a primary focus so much as camaraderie. Everyone showing up would be required to make at least one contact or no burger!!! This could be a multi site event too

so folks would not have to travel so far.

As announced recently there is a dxpedition to VP8O and I have it on good authority that a couple of our members, K9ZO and WB9Z, have been invited as part of the team. Congrats! As usual we as a club are only as good as the members input. If you have ideas or comments on the club and what you think we could do speak up and let us on the board know.

Thats it for now.....over beep!



Upcoming VHF Events

By Kevin Kaufhold, W9GKA

The big news of the upcoming spring and summer season is that the VHF Spring Sprints will be based on distance scoring this year. Please plan on getting in April. I would like a good turnout from everyone along with input from each of you on the new scoring set-up. It is a simple 1 point per km distance rule. Please use your 6 digit locator for the Sprints.

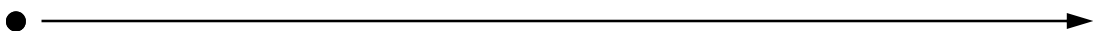
We again intend on making a big push in the June VHF. We have won the unlimited 3 years in a row. Let's make it #4. I need all of your help, especially the HF guys running 6 meters. That has really helped getting over 50 logs. Please let me know what your plans are.

The July CQ VHF has been an interesting show the last several years, 6 and 2 only. There is no lo-power class, so fire up those tubes and really throw some heat outh there. There is a hilltopper class, too, for those wanting portable operations.

Also very importantly, Central States VHF is in St. Louis this year. Please plan on attending in July. We are lining up some interesting presentations and speakers. More details to follow.

August UHF is now a club event, so please plan on this contest, too. Last year, the pack teams in CA teamed up with SCCC to take the 1st medium club competition, beating everyone else by zillions (including SMC). Let's see what we can do about that!

Beyond that, the 10G contest may be gathering some steam in the midwest, with a microwave group in St. Louis now having a 10G beacon and several rigs built and running. Also, September VHF is a club event as well, so do not forget that one.



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self and your station is an invitation for trouble. And it was.

There's an old song with a line that says "Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way". I darn sure wasn't perfect and was about to get a big lesson in humility. And humble pie doesn't taste so good.

Like many of us, I was waiting for the Glorioso Islands DX-pedition with baited breath since it would be an all time new one for me. And as well as my station seemed to be working, it would be a sure shot. Yeah, sure.

And finally the big day came. There they were. And like so many of us, I called and called with no joy. What happened to my big signal? Where did it go? I followed this guy band to band with no joy. Heard him work the big guns bands after band. At least many of them were SMCers.

Turns out my big signal wasn't so big. Harsh reality set in. When chasing the number 4 most wanted DX entity in pile-ups spanning 20 or more KHz the notion of what is a big signal changes. You need a really stand out big signal to make a dent in the crowd. And I didn't have it. How was that hurting my contesting ability?

Like most of us, I finally worked them - on the third day in my case. But the damage was done. My morale crumbled. My station just wasn't THAT good. I wasn't THAT good. What to do? What to do? And I didn't even get any ice cream with my humble pie.

I'd also forgotten that once you get in that mode, you just open the door for Murphy to come in without even the courtesy of knocking first.

Along came the CQ WW RTTY contest in September. Another contest I've been waiting for. The contest started off well, got some good runs established and was feeling pretty loud. And then along came Murphy. So much for the CQ WW contest, SO2R, and anything else fun. I finished the contest with 6 hours of operating and 12 hours of repair time.

In short order, my Alpha amplifier, Orion II radio, one computer, the MK2R+, and one element of my 40 meter phased vertical array all fell victim to Murphy's ministrations. Fortunately I got most everything fixed that weekend. Except the Alpha which is still in the shop but promised back by the CQ WW SSB contest start.

So, with my morale at the bottom of the dumpster and with the contest season looming, I had a lot of thinking and work to do.

Preview... So there I was, middle of a sleepless night, listening to the noise on 160 meters and contemplating requirements creep...

Adventures in SO2R Land - Part 11

By Bill Axelrod ND9E

Prolog. So there I was, lurking on the bands, working DX and just waiting for the November Sweepstakes to start when

20 meters went dead. Completely dead. Not a peep! It didn't take long for even me to determine that the band didn't go dead all of a sudden. My station did. Logical trouble shooting saved time. Problem found. I didn't like the answer but the problem was quickly clear.

In my days as an electronics technical, I got used to being pestered by users who kept asking when will you find and fix the problem? And my wise-guy answer normally was that I could find the problem in 10 minutes - but I can't guess how long will it take to fix it. My big mouth came back to bite me.

My trouble was that the coax came loose from the antenna. How? That's the question for the ages. What mattered was that it would have been an easy fix if only I could reach it. But I needed a bucket truck to do that and I could not get one in time for SS.

So, the major part of my antenna arsenal was gone in a flash. I was limited to a multiple band vertical for 20 thru 10, my two element vertical phased array for 40, and a quarter wave vertical for 80. Probably about the most inappropriate antennas for a domestic contest I can imagine.

I had really been looking forward to this SS since it is one of my favorite contests. This was my first real SS effort from the Black Hole. I've done the SS from the East Coast, West coast, Alaska, and Hawaii. But never before from the mid-west. Very, very different and I still have a lot to learn here. It's a whole different ball game. And the CW SS is a great contest to increase one's SO2R proficiency.

So, appropriate antennas or not, there I was at the starting bell, ready to go. My first QSO in the contest was NWT on 20 meters. Easy as pie. That's never supposed to happen in a Sweepstakes and it threw me for a loop from which I probably never recovered. Got the first 79 sections by about 8 PM Saturday night. Number 79 was MI, Weird. The last was NL which came around Sunday AM around 0900. What a relief to get my sweep early.

80 meters was the money band. I would have liked to try 160 but still don't have an antennas there.

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I kept going and ended with 908 QSOs. Only 80 were on my second radio. So why only 80 on the second radio? To improve my SO2R ability I'd have to figure out why. Other than the fact that I'm dumber than a fence post, that is.

The answers broke down to a few categories that I need to work on.

The first is speed. I found I could do SO2R as long as the rate on my run radio was below 60 Qs per minute. Above that and I was lost. I believe that's a practice and experience issue. Like learning CW, I think that my speed will come up the more I do.

The second is timing. I'd tune the second radio, find a station running that I needed, queue him up in the N1MM logger entry window, and then try to time a call between my run radio QSOs, my next auto-CQ, and his run. It seemed it would take me 4 or 5 minutes to get the timing right to even call the guy while keeping my run going and not lose the run frequency. If I could reduce that 5 minutes or so, I could increase my SO2R rate by a bunch.

Again, I believe that's a practice and experience issue.

The third was intra-station interference. My 80 and 40 meter verticals are too close together. Transmitting on 80 caused about a S7 level of hash on the 40 meter radio which made SO2R S&Ping on 40 very difficult. I don't have a good answer on that problem yet.

So I finished my first black hole CW SS fairly happy and with a work list:

- ◆ Get my beam fixed
- ◆ Get a 160 meter antenna up
- ◆ Increase my ability to do SO2R at higher run rates
- ◆ Work on bettering my timing for second radio QSOs.
- ◆ Get rid or minimize my intra-station interference.

We'll see how that goes.

The next week I got the beam fixed. Yee haw! And then, right on schedule, the snow started falling. Winter in Central Illinois – you just gotta love it.

Prolog. So there I was on New Years Eve, drinking and think about the next year's contests. RTTY Round Up the first weekend and the CW NAQP shortly afterwards. Would I get any better at SO2R? Will there be world peace? Well, that one really didn't enter my mind. I gotta get a life.

ARRLDX SSB 6Y9V(WE9V)

By Chad Kurszewski, WE9V

Well, that was certainly fun. My second effort SOAB from non-USA (first was PJ2T in 2008) and a slightly better score.

I wish I could have arrived on the island sooner, but due to an important event for my wife, I couldn't come to the island until around 24 hours before the start of the contest. Fortunately, the station is nearly turn-key, ready to operate upon arrival.

I did have to replace the 80M 4-square phasing box and dummy load (due to water damage) and change the loading coils on the 80M tower verticals, but that was the extent of the antenna work. Most of the work had to do with changing the M/2 station into a SO2R setup. Dragging the heavy IC-7800s closer together, getting all the switchboxes within reach, and getting my USB soundcard voice-keying working and sounding good was much bigger of a challenge than at home.

Actually, the setup was SO2R+1R...I had a third IC-7800 set up just so I could watch the band scope on the 10M stack and with a flick of the switch move the stack back to the other radios/amps. It was nearly a waste of time. Ten meters never happened this far North. I CQ'd for hours on 10M on both days with never an answer. My 8 Qs came from hearing K6NA calling D4C. D4C I guess wasn't hearing him, so I dumped in my call and got Glenn's attention immediately.

I QSYed a few kHz and called CQ and got 7 more answers, only CA, AZ, ID, WA. Evidence that I was too close to the states if I was only getting these far away states.

I knew that going into the contest, the only way I had a shot at winning was if Tom/8P5A, Jerry/PJ2T and I ALL had 10M, or NONE of us had 10M. Neither happened. Both Tom and Jerry got a fair opening, generating a lot of multipliers that I couldn't make up with raw QSOs.

I had set a goal of 8500 QSOs, if 10M would have opened, but I failed on my 10M line as well as 40 and 80M. Not sure why I was short of my goal on 80M, other than too much sleep, but 40M was just a struggle to get a frequency.

I wanted to operate in the general portion above 7175, but below the broadcast at 7200, which doesn't leave much room.

Speaking of sleep, I was very surprised that I was able to take a nap before the start of the contest. I've NEVER been able to do this, EVER. I'm always too nervous or anxious to do so, and usually playing around with the radios.

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This time it was a little easier, as we lost power for an extended period of time before the start of the contest.

The local helpers were great...they pulled out the diesel generator, fired it up, ran the extension cord, and verified that the station could run on the generator. After the power didn't come back for a while, I thought to myself, well, I could enter the contest low power, running off the generator.

The station doesn't have a 240V extension cord, so while the 6500W generator could handle one of the Acom amps, there's no way to power it. With the generator squared away and not much else to worry about, I went off to bed.

After a bit of a nap, I woke up to find the electricity recently restored, as well as my intention of using the amplifiers.

I quickly made myself a couple of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, sat down on 20M a few minutes before the start and proceeded to go with fellow Sultan Mikey K9NW finding me instantly before the start of the contest and getting Q #1.

Roughly 200 QSOs and 40 minutes later, a QSY to 40M. Pleased with my 275 first hour, I was hopeful for a good contest.

Good rates continued, with >200/hr rates for the first five hours, then a 166, then another 200+ hour. I know it was early, but I was nearly on the pace I set for myself.

It was hard to leave >100/hr rates, but knew I wanted a short (well, short for me) nap before the high bands opened, so I took a 1.5 hour snooze. Weirdest thing ever...I awoke completely shivering, shaking, teeth chattering cold. I had to put my Wisconsin winter coat on and begin operating, with teeth chattering. It took an hour or two to shake it and take off my winter coat. (Slight contrast to a 90 degree shack, huh, Jerry?)

Upon waking, it was to 20M for around an hour, and found I was able to run 15M slightly earlier than expected. I did four 200+ hours, but not high 200s, so I was a little disappointed with the rate. To make matters worse, 15M kinda dried up when it really should have gotten better as the sun set in Europe during the 18z and 19z hours.

It was so bad I went back to 20M waiting to see what was going on with 15. Two hours later, at 20z, 15M picked back up and I did a couple high 200 hours. Sometime in the 23z hour, I decided that, even though 15 was going well, I've still not spent much time on 20M.

Then the flood gates opened. Signals were huge, not much QRM, and I worked the best hour of the contest, a 368 hour.

A little more time on 20 then it was time to timeshare on 40/80/160. Again, finding a spot to CQ seemed even more difficult than the day before. Even 160 was crowded with stations packed between 1820 and 1870. Rates were fair in the low 100's but then i decided to take another planned nap, this one being a doozy of 3 hours. 3 hours came, my alarm went off and just like last time, I overslept. This time by only one hour instead of two. Again upon awaking, I was frozen and teeth chattering. Again the winter coat went on as I sat down at the radios.

Now I know that the rates on Sunday are never as good as Saturday, but I never expected rates to be this bad.

They were worse that Sweepstakes Sunday!!! I had 3 prime 15M hours (13-16z) that were sub-100 rates! My 15z hour was 68!!! This completely dashed a high final QSO total, besides the lack of 10M. Finally 15M picked up, but only to the low 100's.

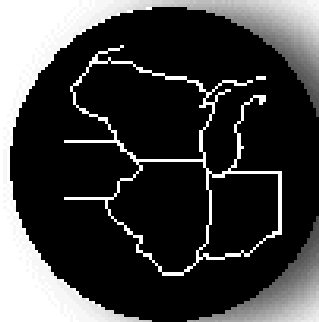
Despite such a terrible day on 15M, I was at my 15M goal and noticing that my 20M line was very, very short of my goal, I QSYed to 20M at 21z and finished the contest with three 200+ hours, boosting my line up to my goal.

Still can't operate anywhere near 48 hours, but still pleased with my 42 hour effort, which was 1 hour more than last time. And, I was so "rested" at the end of the contest, I was running a 30 CW pile 40 minutes after the contest ended followed by some 60M action. But the next day I think I slept until noon.

Thanks for the competition and congrats to Tom 8P5A for another fine show, as well as my SMC brother Jerry at PJ2T.

A MAJOR thank you to my host Krassy K1LZ. What a fine, fine station....just too far North for this year.

Lastly, thanks to all for calling, and to my QSL manager Tim, WD9DZV. Without the callers and my QSL manager, this contesting hobby would be much less enjoyable!



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This pic was taken by W0CG/PJ2DX just minutes after the ARRL DX SSB Contest. Jerry's (WB9Z) fan club includes Doctor Stone & his wife Mary Gay, both long time residents, originally from Decatur, IL. They have the house next to the PJ2T station and have been going to the island since the 1970's. They even knew John Thompson W1BIH/PJ2JT the original owner of the station from his early days on Curacao. They have met countless ham operators over the years and witnessed hundreds of contest. I have known them for years. They are super folks and very good friends. The other lady is Brenda (far right), my friend, who could not believe how HOT it was on Curacao.

When the pic was taken, I was barely able to stand up, with only one hour of sleep in the last 48 hours. The room was 85+ deg. most of the weekend and I fought power line noise a lot of the time. It had not rained to wash the salt water spray off the power line insulators in over 5 weeks. Seven hours after the contest it rained for hours and the noise was gone. Still, making 6,669 QSO's was a lot of fun, but only good for number 3 World in the Single OP, high power, unassisted.

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