

Oh boy, there's a contest this weekend! Wheeee goes the cry. 48 hours later after much lost sleep, poor food, QRM, QRN and a few visits from Murphy, how many of us still run through the house crying Wheeee? That's what I thought. I had often wondered where the "Wheeee" went and thanks to the Internet and QRP-L, now I know.

Watching the posts after a contest is interesting. I'll only look at CW contesting for this example. There are people who say that the code speeds were too slow, too fast and a few who think they were just right. That's to be expected and has been around for years. Add to that all the griping about the RTTY or SSB QRM right there in the good old CW band, that new dimmer switch the better half just made you put in and so it goes.

The other thing that has been around is talk about making a contest "fair" for everyone. But is that really what we need to do? Lets look at a few things that might be "wrong" and how we can fix them. When we are done, we will have the Perfect Contest!

First thing we need to do is make a class for those of us that don't have monster towers with multiple yagi's hanging all over them. At the other end of the scale are the indoor antennas. So, from this we can see that we will need two broad classes, indoor and outdoor. Within those two classes we need to have something for those with only one tower or one antenna or a short tower or what about a tall tree? Maybe we need to go by the type of antenna that is used. First off there is the yagi's that we all know so well. At least we think we do. But is that a multi band yagi or a single band yagi? Is that a trap design or not? What about the boom? How long is too long? What happens when we stack some yagi's? No, not vertically as in up and down the tower, but like Force 12 does, all along the boom! Oh, yes, you're right! We do need to think about those who can stack yagi's vertically up and down the tower.

Some yagi's get rotated while others are fixed in one direction. Then there are those who put a wire dipole up in some tall (or not so tall) trees. At night, when no one is looking, some of them sneak out and put up more wire behind and in front of that little dipole. No boom, just lots of rope. Is that a yagi?

Gee whiz, this is getting confusing already and we haven't even figured out what to do with all those simple yagi's yet! Let's leave antennas for now and look at the shack. That should be simple. All we need is a radio, right?

Some of us like to use nice big radios with lots of whistles and bells (AKA Good RX) while others like to use home brewed equipment. Some of the home brew box's are very nice and will hold their own with anything on the market. And others are more of a lark than they are competitive, like the Tuna Tin II and a Desert Rat Regen RX! Lots of things here that need to be done to make it all fair. Lets look at that new rig sitting there. It sure has lots of knobs and buttons on it! But what about the guy with the old FT-101-EE? There's no way he should be in the same class as someone with that multi-kilobuck rig! Let's see, we can have analog rigs with analog displays or digital displays. One VFO or two VFO's. And what about memories? No way should a rig with a memory be in the same class as a rig without a memory. And lets not forget about those rigs with the automatic antenna tuners all built in. Of course, there are those fussy individuals who actually tune their antennas so they don't need a tuner. They need to be in a class all by themselves! Some place in here we have to leave room for the one fellow who runs Xtal control!

Wow, even more confusing and we have just started to look into the shack! We will come back to rig later. Lets look at some of the other areas of the shack. After all, this is like the war room. It's where it all happens!

Look at the wall and all those antenna switches! Gee, what about those who can't afford to buy or build antenna switches? OK, I smell another class there! What about all that coax, open wire and hard line? No way can all those different systems be in the same class. Look at those control wires running from the switches to the rigs. Or are they going to the computer? What??? Rigs, as in more than one? Computer? What the heck is the computer doing out there? Special software for contesting? No way can all those programs be equal. We need classes for each brand of software! Look over there in the corner, there is a bathroom! In the other corner is a refrigerator and stove. Even the coffeepot is out here. I can see that we are going to have to classify all the different types of shacks.

We will come back to the equipment in a little bit. Right now I think it's time to do the easy part. After all, the operator is just the operator, right? All the operator does is work other operators, right? Of course we have to realize that some operators can copy CW faster than other operators and that's really not fair, is it? Some operators send their CW with a hand key and call themselves "Pure" while others are just too lazy to do that and let the computer send for them. That sure doesn't sound very fair, does it? What about a keyer? Add some memories and it's almost like using a computer!

Then there are the bugs. Not really "Pure" like a hand key but not as automatic as a computer. Some operators let a computer logging program keep track of the dupes while others do it all by hand. That's sure not fair! But what about those who send with one hand and dupe/log with the other hand? Not really very fair to the less talented operators either, is it? Then there are the operators who are old, young, healthy, sick, skinny, obese (didn't think I could be politically correct, did you?) slow, fast and whatever else you can think of!

This operator category is getting a bit out of hand already. And we still need to revisit some of the other areas! Lets look at what was said over on the Contest email reflector a while ago. This was written by Fred Laun, K3ZO who is one of the top contest operators and has a great station too!

Fred writes:

Hey! This isn't my fight. But since my name has been dragged into it, I feel compelled to make a suggestion.

PROBLEM #1: Judging by persistent comments on this reflector, there is obviously a deep yearning for a Level Playing Field (hereinafter abbreviated LPF) which has obviously not yet been perfected by sponsors of major contests.

PROBLEM #2: Attempts to meet the creation of an LPF by increasing the number of participant categories would make contest rules too complicated and unwieldy.

PROPOSAL: That a simple schedule of bonus points be drawn up in order to create an LPF without expanding the number of participant categories. Below you will find an example of how this might be done. Those who each April must calculate their respective contributions to the IRS may note a similarity in methodology.

The above are sample LPF items only. Certainly, other LPF items could easily be added to the list as the need arises. Point multiplier values are suggested values only. Note one advantage of this procedure: No one is penalized for anything. Every participant gets to keep at least his basic score. Scores can only be increased as a result of this exercise. **73, Fred Laun, K3ZO**

Thanks Fred, but I think I can see some weak points in your approach to the "Perfect Contest". Lets look at it from another position. Who really knows what needs to be done to make a contest fair? It's the

Column 1: Situation**Column 2: Bonus**

Schedule LPF-L: Location

Line 1 Right Coast
 Line 2 Left Coast
 Line 3 Black Hole
 Line 4

No bonus points
 Multiply final score by 1.1
 Multiply final score by 1.3
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-L

Schedule LPF-T: Towers

Line 5 Two or more towers
 Line 6 One tower
 Line 7 No tower
 Line 8

No bonus points
 Multiply amount on Line 4 by 1.1
 Multiply amount on Line 4 by 1.2
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-T

Schedule LPF-O: Ownership

Line 9 Owns station in question
 Line 10 Does not own station
 Line 11

Multiply amount on line 8 by 1.2
 No bonus points
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-O

Schedule LPF-W: Work on towers and antennas

Line 12 Works on station's towers and antennas
 Line 13 Does not work on towers and antennas
 Line 14

Mult. amt on Line 11 by 1.2
 No bonus points
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-W

Schedule LPF-E: Equipment

Line 15 Repairs own equipment
 Line 16 Somebody repairs equipment for him
 Line 17

Multiply amount on line 14 by 1.2
 No bonus points
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-E

Schedule LPF-Q: Use of "QRL?"

Line 18 Never sends "QRL?"
 Line 19 Sends "QRL?" once before running
 Line 20 Sends "QRL?" twice or more B4 run
 Line 2

No bonus points
 Multiply amt on line 17 by 1.1
 Multiply amt on line 17 by 1.2
 Subtotal, Schedule LPF-Q

Schedule LPF-C: Complaints

Line 22 Complains to reflector at least twice a year
 Line 23 Complains to reflector once a year
 Line 24 Never complains to reflector
 Line 25:

Multiply amt on line 21 by 1.2
 Multiply amt on line 21 by 1.1
 No bonus points.
FINAL SCORE

people that don't win anything! How do we cut down on the number of complaints? Make more winners! How do you get more winners? You have to make more classes. How many more classes? No set number, just how ever many it takes! To make up for all the work keeping track of the classes lets get rid of some of the other things. Trust me!

Lets start with the post contest report form. This form needs to contain all the important and interesting information. This form will be called the "LOSERS" form for its content, Logs, Observations, Score, Excuses, Rules and the Salutation. *I had first used a form for Second Hand Information Tabulation but dropped that for obvious reasons!*

You must fill this form out prior to the contest. Or after the contest. Or instead of the contest! I'll get back to that last one later.

The name of the contest is, Wining Here Is Never Easy, Rewarding or Satisfying, or WHINERS for short. To win the WHINERS contest, simply complete the LOSERS form. The object of the LOSERS form is to create enough classes to be sure that you will win your class!

As you look over the form, rate each category on a scale from 1 to 100 with the highest value given to the biggest handicap needed.

For example, in the line for your rig if you have something like a FT 1000MP you would put down only a small number but if you don't even have a rig you would put down the whole 100 thus claiming the highest handicap in that category.

Here is a sample of the LOSERS form. You can either copy this one or make one of your own. You can add other category's as you see fit. All LOSERS forms will be checked and no ties will be allowed. The form checker, me, will adjust scores to break any ties. Each total will be a class of it's own and you will win!

W.H.I.N.E.R.S. Contest

	Points
Date of Contest	_____
Mode of Contest	_____
Rules	_____
Operator	_____
Do you have a radio license?	_____
Do any of your friends have a radio license?	_____
Do you know the code?	_____
What is your code speed?	_____
Do you use a code reader?	_____
Do you use a mind reader?	_____
Do you have a mind to read?	_____
Radio #1	_____
Radio #2	_____
Antenna Farm	_____
Did you work any stations?	_____
If yes to the above, why?	_____
<u>Total Handicap Points</u>	_____
<u>Total Score</u>	_____

LOG: (not required)

OBSERVATIONS AND EXCUSES: Limit to 25 words or less. Long soap box style comments are not fair to those who don't have good writing skills.

Sincerely, [your name] [your call if you have one]

Special Notice:

Stations may not be worked on any band for contest credit. That would not be fair to those without radios.

Winners certificate's are available from the author for only \$10. Each Winning WHINERS certificate will be numbered and signed by the author. Have your contest soon to get a low WHINERS number. Impress your friends. Be proud to be an official WHINER, complete with a number! The judge is ready.

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