# Tips on Contest Operating

Sterling Park Amateur Radio Club
3 November 2010
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WA2BCK

# A little bit about myself

- Licensed in 1965 as WN2UNX
- Licensed in 1967 as WA2BCK
- Amateur Extra class 18 February 1972
- Founder Buffalo Area DX Club 1969
- Operated DX contests from K2LWR, ZF2GW, VP2A and W2FU (Phone & CW)
- SS from WA2BCK and N4RR
- USA All Band Winner 1979 CQ WPX CW
- Graduate degree Contest University 2007,2008, 2009, 2010

# Contesting should be FUN!

- Objective of this presentation–to generate interest in SS/FD contest participation
- Operate only to the extent you are having FUN!
- Set reasonable goals in terms of time and score
- Running stations is more fun than Search & Pounce (S & P)

# Station Ergonomics

- The radio used to be the main focus
- The computer monitor is now the no. 1 focus
- The keyboard is now the no. 2 focus
- The radio is the no. 3 focus
- Everything else is of lesser importance

# Placement

- Put the monitor in front of your face
- Put the keyboard where you want it
- Radio placement is determined by keyboard
- Work outwards from there for other items
- Minimize distances
- Rake your radio
- -flat is not always best-knob angle, front panel plane

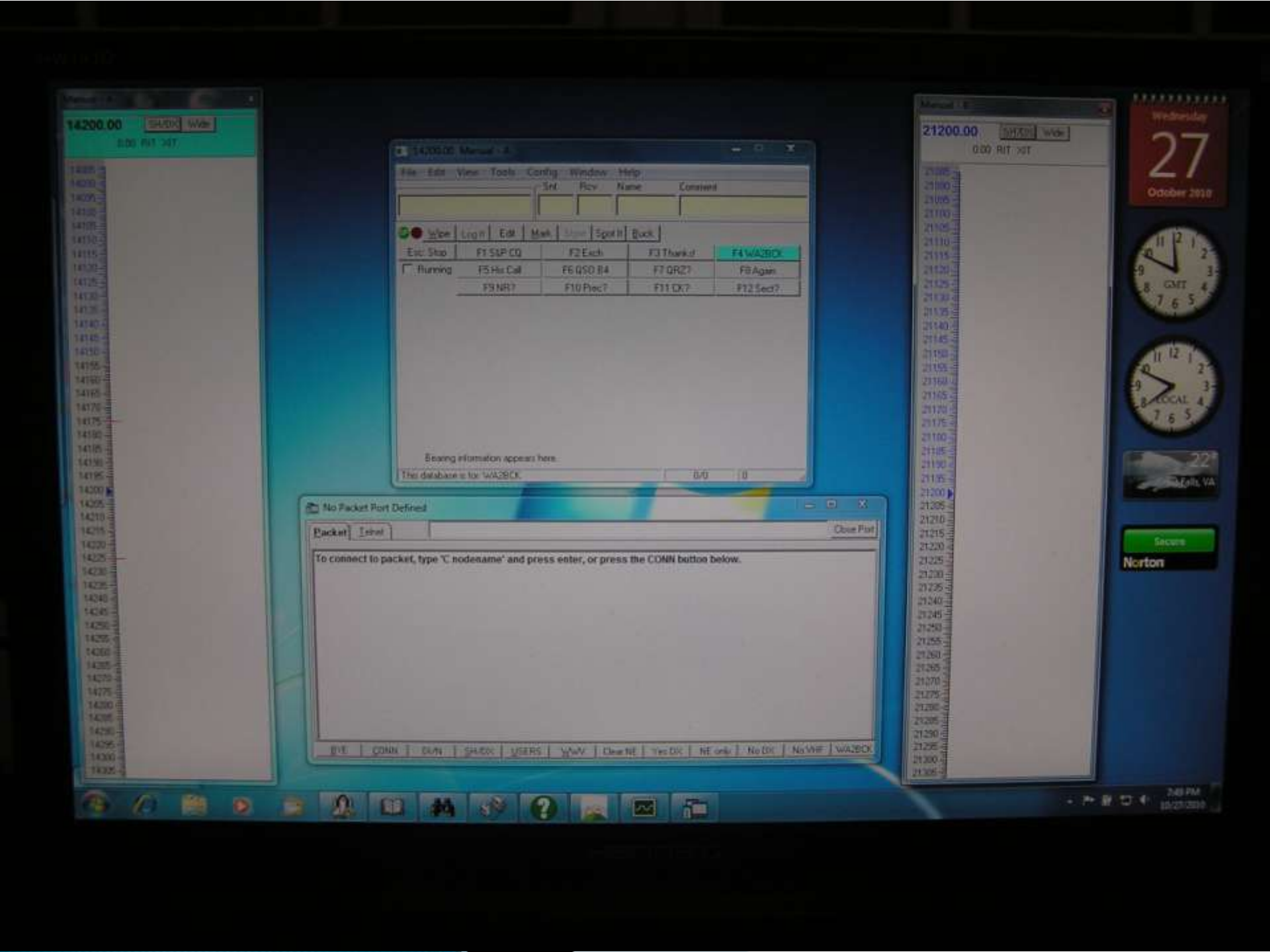
# The Contest Chair

- Is a key piece of your station
- Is also an individual choice
- Buy the best chair you can (comfort and adjustability)
- Adjustable height can be a great feature
- Make sure there is plenty of legroom under your desk

# Headphones/Microphone

- Use a headphone/microphone headset combination
- Allows you to get up and walk around while operating
- Allows you to sit comfortably w/o hunching over a microphone

ALPHA 8100
Virginia
A2BCK


14200.00
SH/DX
Wide
0.00 RIT XIT
14200.00 Manual - A
File Edit View Tools Config Window Help
Snt Rcv Name Comment
Wipe Log It Edit Mark Store Spot It Buck
Esc: Stop
F1 S&P CQ
F2 Exch
F3 Thanks!
F4 WA2BCK
Running
F5 His Call
F6 QSO B4
F7 QRZ?
F8 Again
F9 NR?
F10 Prec?
F11 CK?
F12 Sect?
Bearing information appears here.
This database is for WA2BCK
0/0
0
No Packet Port Defined
Packet
Telnet
Close Port
To connect to packet, type 'C nodename' and press enter, or press the CONN button below.
BYE
CONN
DI/N
SH/DX
USERS
WWV
Clear NE
Yes DX
NE only
No DX
No VHF
WA2BCK
21200.00
SH/DX
Wide
0.00 RIT XIT
Wednesday
27
October 2010
GMT
LOCAL
22
Falls, VA
Secure
Norton

100K

ALPHA 8100
HF LINEAR AMPLIFIER
TUNE
LOAD
BAND MHz
RF OUTPUT kW
REFLECTED POWER W
STBY
WAIT
ON
OFF

# My 7 Keys to Successful Contesting

- 1. Be aggressive-Call CQ!
- 2. Download N1MM Logger-It's free
- 3. Improve your typing skills
- 4. Map the key strokes to enter a QSO in the logging program (example follows)
- 5. Make 1 QSO and enter it in the logging program. Then do it over and over and over again!
- 6. Slog thru any initial feelings of confusion or of being overwhelmed

# 7 Keys to successful Contesting (con't)

- 7. Keep your bottom in the chair!

# N1MM Button Sequence-SS

- Running
- 1. Type in callsign
- 2. F4
- 3. F2
- 4. Enter exchange info
- 5. Enter

# N1MM Button Sequence-SS

- Search & Pounce
- 1. F6-until he responds (sends your call)
- 2. Type in his call
- 3. Space Bar
- 4. Enter exchange info
- 5. Enter

# SS and Field Day Individual Operating Strategies

- Get started at the beginning of the contest- Saturday afternoon
- Listen to the bands before the contest to get an idea of propagation on each band
- Operate as long as you can first day
- Save off times for later in the contest
- Limited time? Low power? Show up on Sunday for a good time running stations

# Operating Strategies (con't)

- Make sure all your equipment works BEFORE the contest
- Double check DVK, antennas, computers
- Don't chase multipliers—they will come to you
- Be accurate-do not bust the exchange.  Don't be afraid to ask for repeats to get everything correct
- Get food and drink ready in advance-don't forget aspirin and cough drops(for phone operators only!)

# Operating Strategies (con't)

- Don't answer weak stations when rates are good
- Get to the next HOT (lower) band FAST.  Mark your spot for 75m SSB.
- Play to your station's strengths. If you have a good 75m antenna-spend lots of time on 75m
- Don't get psyched out by other stations with high numbers.  They will seek you out by the end of the contest

# Operating Strategies (con't)

- Work the shortest skip band that supports high rate.  This is normally the lowest band and it keeps the QSO potential in densely populated areas.
- If you use Telnet, don't waste time in pileups. Call later if you can't get right through
- Be efficient with your words-extra words waste time
- Finally-don't say "please copy"-it's already understood that you want the other station to copy

# Autumn 2010 Propagation for SS

- Don't waste time on 10/15 meters-no density of callers
- 20m and 40m will be your daylight money bands
- 40m and 75m will be your evening/late night money bands. Remember 40m has new life with no broadcast stations below 7.200.
- 75m may "go long" this year but will shorten up after midnight.  Spend lots of time on 75m!

# Station Strategies for SS

- Use low, efficient antennas
- -40m dipole up 30 to 50 feet
- -80m dipole up 50 to 100 feet
- Hot bands are 20/40/80-don't spend a lot of time on 10/15-low density
- Use a Beverage antenna if you can.  West is most important.
- Most important-figure out a way to get on 75m. A majority of your QSOs could be on this band

# Operating Plan Full Time

- Start on 20m, move to 40m, then to 75m
- Stay on 75m until your rate drops.  This should be 2.0-3.0am.
- Sleep from 3.0 to 6.0am, then resume
- Sunday morning check 15m but be prepared to immediately go to 20m
- Spend Sunday back and forth on 20m/40m
- Go to 75m as soon as it yields a high rate usually around sundown

# Operating Plan Part time

- Use the same operating plan for full timers depending on when you enter the contest
- Sunday will be your most interesting day. People will come to YOU for QSOs!
- 40m and 75m are great bands!
- Any time you can spend in the contest is better than none!
- Remember, low dipoles and 500 watts will get you a big score!

# Low Power/Limited Antenna Tips

- Late Saturday and all day Sunday are your most productive times
- The second hottest band may be easier to make QSOs on
- Make sure your SSB audio is optimized-have a local listen to you
- Avoid large pileups-move on if you can't get right through
- For S & P, listen to the exchange and pre-fill before you call

# 2010 Sweepstakes Dates

- CW: 6-7 November 2010
- Phone: 20-21 November 2010
- Contest Period: 2100 GMT Saturday to 0300 GMT Monday
- Operate no more than 24 of the 30 hour contest period
- Off periods may not be less than 30 minutes in length
- Listening time counts as operating time

# Send in your Log

- Don’t forget!
- Make sure your log is marked Sterling Park Amateur Radio Club for CQ contests or Sterling Park ARC for ARRL contests
- Logs must be submitted within 2 weeks of contest end
- Your effort only counts if you SUBMIT your log on time
- Make sure your log was received correctly- robot will tell you if there is a problem
- Save a copy of the ARRL robot receipt

- If you would like a copy of this presentation, send e-mail to WA2BCK@cox.net