

ARRL November Sweepstakes

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What is it?

- A domestic contest.
- A great “first” contest
- Two weekends - first full weekend for Morse (CW)
- two weeks later for Phone (SSB)
- Make as many contacts as you can, and with as many ARRL Sections as possible
- HF Bands - 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters
- No WARC bands / 60 meters
- 2100 Sat to 0259 Monday UTC

Why Me?

- Sweepstakes is a **very “little pistol” friendly** contest.
- Doesn't require huge antenna farms or amplifiers
- Domestic contest - favors low, efficient antennas
- There is also a QRP category (5 watts or less).
- If you **work all 83 sections** that's a "Clean Sweep"

FUN!!!



A long time ago (History)...

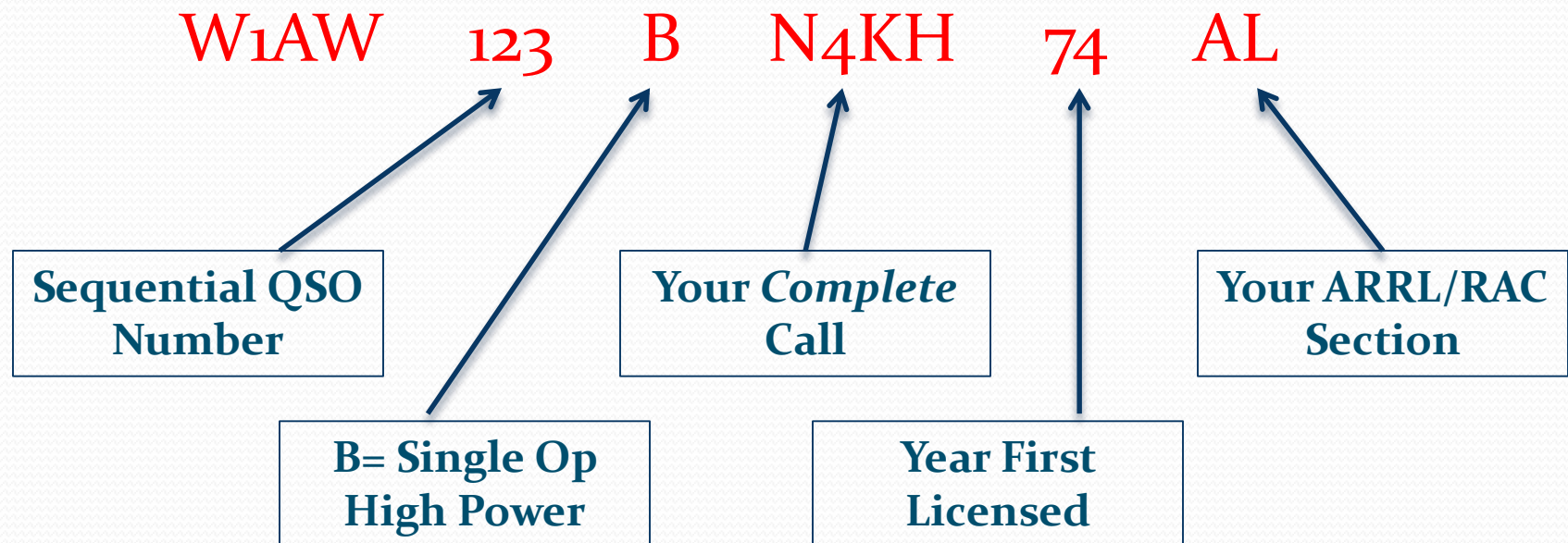
- The SS event has its roots in “The January Contest” announced in December 1929 QST.
- Originally structured as a **message handling** contest for hams in Canada and the US.
- Moved to November in 1932, and a separate phone contest was added in 1941.
- The ARRL November Sweepstakes is the oldest domestic contest

How do I play?

- Operate up to **24 of the 30 hours** contest period
 - Off times at least 30 minutes
- Categories: **Single Op** (QRP, LP, HP, no assistance), **Single Op Unlimited** (LP, HP), Multi-Single (LP, HP), School Club
- Precedence or Class: **Q**-Single Op QRP, **A**-Single Op LP, **B**-Single Op HP, **U**-Single Op Unlimited, M-Multiop, S-School
- Scoring:
 - *QSO points (2 per QSO) * number of Sections*

Oh That Exchange!

- Example: I would respond to W₁AW's call by sending:



You must log the entire exchange correctly!

What's My Strategy? (Do I really need one....?)

- Fulltime, part-time?
- Maximum score, a sweep, or both?
Top score in your section or division?
Test drive, learning the ropes?
- Power? Category? Assistance?
- “Running” versus “Search and Pounce” (S&P)
- On times and Off times/breaks
- Play to your station's strengths
- Survey past contest results – how can I be most competitive?

Going for the “Sweep”

- Work each of the 83 sections at least once
- BIC and ROTA (Butt In Chair, Rig On The Air)
- Spotting (Unlimited) helps!
- Be aware of band propagation
- Snag the rare sections early if you can
- Log a second “insurance contact” if possible
- Tail ending a QSO - “SNJ, up 3 please!”
- Change bands to find fresh contacts



Going for the “Sweep”



- 2012 SSB SS results:
 - 1673 logs submitted → 575,000+ QSOs
 - **329 sweeps**, 104 operators missed just one section
 - Most difficult sections: ONE, **PR**, VI, MB, **NT**, NL, MT, **SB**, SC, SF, Ebay, KS, **AK**
- *Psssst!* Clean sweep mugs are based on *submitted logs*, not on post-processing

Before the Contest

- Check and double-check everything
 - Radio(s), antennas, computer/logger/interface
 - Amplifier, antenna rotor and tuner
 - Keyer, grounding, headphones, microphone etc.
 - On all bands you intend to operate
- Operating position – efficient and comfortable?
- Review contest rules (ARRL website)
- Get plenty of R&R, especially if fulltime
- Prepare for action!!!! The bands will be full of signals!

Logging....

- N1MM, N3FJP, WriteLog, many others
 - Duplicate checking, sections worked/needed
 - Provides spotting (list and/or band scope)
 - Tracks score and vital stats
 - Writes file for log submission (Cabrillo)
- Make it play with your radio (interface)
 - Follow rig frequency, band, mode
 - Quick “click and go” to spots
 - CW and voice keying
- Paper log entries are allowed – see ARRL site

N₃FJP Program

[illegible]

Radio settings

- Preamplifier = OFF, **Noise Blanker = OFF**
- The Attenuator = ON (40 and 80 meters)
- RF Gain – turn it down
- Other Receiver Features
 - Narrow filters help a lot
 - IF Shift/passband tuning
 - Variable Bandwidth
 - Notch filter
 - DSP
- Minimize knob twisting

A Few Operating Tips

- Listen to the bands for 30 – 60 minutes before the contest starts
- If you can hold a frequency and “run” with a good rate, do so most of the time
 - Many mults/sections will eventually come to you
 - Run, run, run

More Operating Tips

- S&P can yield good rates too.
 - Sweep band segments top to bottom.
 - Place calls on your band map if they are not there already (N1MM Logger has map)
 - Spotting/skimers really help here.
- **Don't get stuck in pile-ups**
 - Keep your rate up
 - Check back between Q's to work that new multiplier

More Operating Tips

- Again, **be accurate** – try not to bust the call sign or exchange
 - Ask for repeats
 - Get everything correct
 - Watch out for bad spots – errors are not uncommon
- Sharing the Road
 - Be sensitive to the effect of spurious transmitter byproducts (**splatter**).
 - You want to have a **punchy, crisp signal** that is easy to understand on a crowded band. May want to do an on-air audio check with a friend before contest

More Operating Tips

- General rule – start high (10, 15, 20) and go low early (40 and 80)
- 10 & 15 can be good bands, but...
 - 20 and 40 generally provide best rates daytime
 - 40 and 80 will provide amazing rates after sundown
 - Most stations are using wire antennas on 40 and 80
 - Remember you can only log each station once, regardless of band
- The least activity will be around 3:00 – 5:00am Sunday morning

Still More Operating Tips

- Part time? Show up on Sunday for a good time running stations.
- If full time, watch your total op time
- **Don't give up** – this can give you an edge on the competition



ACG Iron Bowl



ACG November Sweepstakes Competition

TEAM TIDE

K₄TD
K_{C4}HW
N₄KH
K₄AB
N₄OX
K₄NO

TEAM EAGLE

AA₄YL
AB₄B (a.k.a KT₄TX, KY₅R,...)
NN₄MM (K₉MUG)
KU₈E
KY₄F
W₄NBS
WN₁G

After the Contest

- Generate and check Cabrillo file
- Be sure to submit your log by the deadline (15 days of the contest ending)
 - Even if you only made a few QSOs. Huh?
- Lessons learned: What did I do right?
What can I do better next time?
- Keep record of your contest results
- Review log-checking report on ARRL website

Sample log checking report

SWEEPSTAKES LOG REPORT FOR N₄KH**

CALLSIGN CHECK RESULTS

K8PA is a busted call. The correct call is K8P**O**.

AF₁P is a busted call. The correct call is AF₁**T**.

WX6Z is a busted call. The correct call is W**E**6Z.

NIoZ is a unique call. Received QSO# = 2.

K8DRK is a busted call. The correct call is K8DR**T**.

W₃BS is a busted call. The correct call is W₃B**C**.

Sample log checking report

SWEEPSTAKES LOG REPORT FOR N4KH EXCHANGE CHECK RESULTS

QSO #29 KE6WC : A 64 Sf should be A 6³ Sf

QSO #34 N6HC : U 81 Org should be U ⁵⁷ Org

QSO #301 WAoN : B 66 Ks should be B 6³ Ks

QSO #371 VO2WL : M 67 Nl should be M ⁷⁰ Nl

QSO #413 AB3GB : Q 87 EPa should be Q ⁰⁷ EPa

QSO #565 KL2R : A 06 Ak should be ^M 06 Ak ← AK!

Sample log checking report

SWEEPSTAKES LOG REPORT FOR N4KH

CROSS CHECK RESULTS

QSO #11: Received QSO# 44 should be 40 NoGF

QSO #195: Received QSO# 50 should be 250 K3MD

QSO #231: QSO not found in log of KO4FV

QSO #282: Received QSO# 641 should be 644 N2BJ

QSO #323: Received QSO# 670 should be 760

KT4TX

Hey Tim what's up!!! ☺

Sample log checking report

SWEEPSTAKES LOG REPORT FOR N4KH

SCORE SUMMARY

Raw QSOs = 833, Dups = 0

Busted QSOs = 19, Penalty QSOs = 6

Time Expired = 0

Final QSOs = 808

Band Breakdown (160-10): 0 302 76 276 139 15

QSO Points = 1616, Multiplier = 83

Final score = 134128 Error rate = 2.3%

So, why not go for it?

- Number one reason.....for the fun of it!!!
- You will improve your operating skills and learn a lot about your station, especially if you at least attempt a fulltime operation
- Its fun to compete with yourself – top last year
- There are numerous certificates and plaques (150+?) to win too.
- If nothing else, get on and give out some Q's! Other testers will really appreciate it.



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/
SS WAR STORIES?