

From the Editor

I put in a full effort in the January NAQP CW while participating on the Arizona Outlaws Bank Robbers team from my home station. The big question for me at the start of the contest was how much time to spend on 15 meters. I knew there would be good rate on 20 meters from the get-go, but I didn't want to miss those (26) 15-meter multipliers that might not have been available at any other time. If you are adept

at SO2R, you could have had the best of both, but I am stuck in SO1R-land. It was fascinating to see how little activity remained on 15 meters after the first 2 hours of the contest. Unfortunately, 10 meters was useless once again, at least from the southwestern US.

I continue to enjoy operating in the NAQPs. The 100-W power limit makes a big difference in minimizing receiver overload from neighboring stations. The activity level seemed quite good on CW (not sure about phone, but I only put in a few hours for the phone contest).

Our NCJ-sponsored NAQPs strongly encourage unassisted operating. The rules state:

i) One person performs all transmitting, receiving, and logging functions as well as equipment and antenna adjustments. ii) Access to spotting information obtained directly or indirectly from any source other than the station operator, such as from other stations or automated tools, is prohibited.

If you use assistance in the NAQP,



your results are placed in the multi-op category even though you are scored as a single operator.

I have made it a practice to turn off telnet in *N1MM Logger+* before the contest to avoid the temptation to monitor what is happening on other bands or to see where I am being spotted. I do find the term “unassisted” to be a misnomer these days, with so many skimmers monitoring the bands. I think “half-assisted” is the reality since calling “CQ TEST” in a CW or digital contest usually means you are being spotted and stations who are assisted can come looking for you. Nevertheless, being unassisted does require considerably more work and skill tuning the bands to find multipliers and unworked stations.

The rule changes for the CQ World Wide WPX contests in 2021 created a stir by moving away from unassisted operating (except Classic Overlay for limited hours) supported by this logic: *i) Use of QSO alerting systems by single operator participants is allowed in 70% (33 of 47) of the inter-*

national DX contests recently reviewed, including CQ WPX RTTY. ii) It is becoming increasingly more difficult to draw the line between assisted and unassisted operations as SDR technologies become more integrated with contest software/networks. iii) This step further aligns CQ WW WPX SSB/CW with CQ WW WPX RTTY. iv) The use of QSO alerting systems in CQ WW WPX RTTY has been permitted

since the mid-1990s.

Where do you think we are heading on unassisted operating as technology continues to impact and change our contest world? Is the “unassisted” category an anachronism and can it survive? There are no plans to make changes to the unassisted category for NAQP or Sprint.

In this issue of NCJ we have an innovative look by KØAV at using SDR technology to sniff out RFI sources that interfere with our stations; Part 2 of “Price Versus Performance” by K4FMH using his detailed analysis of multiple data sets to rate HF transceivers; an example of how two contest operators (OH1VR and MØCFW) shared a remote station as single-ops in the CQ WW CW; an intriguing profile of K7SV, who has moved and contested from coast to coast; an impressive story about a young contester (KEØWPA) who seems to have been born with a headset and calling CQ; and many valuable tips from our columnists.

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. Keep them coming.