

From the Editor

For Every Season, Turn That Rotor, Turn, Turn...

Here in the Washington, D.C., area, October 1 has long been known as “Fiscal New Year’s Day,” ever since 1974 when the federal budgetary year was changed from starting in July. October is also the unofficial transition of the contest seasons — the California QSO Party and six other states close out the State QSO Party season, and the CQ WW SSB starts the next DX contest season. In the northern hemisphere, the cooler weather indicates the end of the summer doldrums and thunderstorm QRM — with current solar flux indices, the low bands and the 10/15/20 take turns giving us high run rates almost 24 hours a day.

The CQ WW SSB has the highest log count of the major contests, while CQ WW CW has the highest QSO count and highest average log size. Like many — probably most — contests, logs have increased in CQ WW over the years, but CQ WW has grown faster. The placement in NA fall prime time certainly helps, but what can we learn from the features of the CQ WW that could help other contests as sponsors think about changes to attract more entrants?

CQ WW SSB	CQ WW CW
10,094 logs	8,313 logs
5M QSOs	5.4M QSOs
500 QSOs/log	650 QSOs/log

2025 CQ WW Statistics from CQWW.com

Some thoughts:

- “Everyone can work everyone on every band” rules.
- More loud DXpeditions attract casual DXers.
- Simple exchanges (i.e., complete autofill) are preferred over complex/unique (like serial numbers).

- More score result overlays are better than fewer.
- Strong log adjudication may attract DQRM but is overall positive.
- Online line scores and results are acceptable.
- Size matters — “Everyone goes there because it is so crowded.”

All contests are more fun when there are more ops on the air, but that doesn’t mean all contests need to be cookie-cutter copies. Scoring overlays to allow ops to compete against peer subsets of ops can go a long way without rule changes that can impact overall scores and historical records, and they can easily just go away if they don’t work.

With a wide variety of contests to choose from, getting more ops exposed to contesting through various means (like clubs, FD, remote operating access, POTA, etc.) is probably still a bigger factor than rule changes for increasing activity in most contests. There will always be room for a range of skill demands in contests and legacy contests that pay tribute to amateur radio history.

When we talk about change in contesting, it reminds me of the old quote: “There’s no there there.” (Originally about Oakland, CA, I think...) There is no “Contesting Command Center” or global contest elections. There are a few big contest sponsors (like WWROF, ARRL, national contest clubs, etc.) that run multiple contests, but change in one doesn’t mean change in all or even many contests. Change in contesting starts with motivated contest ops spending time to help drive change.

Contesting clubs can play a key role in driving up both the number of contest ops and the number of QSOs

per op in a number of ways, without new contests or rule changes:

- Many contests have overlays for team entries where teams in one club can compete with each other and against teams from other clubs.
- For contests without team overlays, clubs can hold “contests within the contest” and publish the results internally.
- Club meetings, online or in person, are great ways for experienced contesters to help educate and motivate newbies.
- Many contest clubs are “Contest/DX” clubs and can provide incentives for DXers to provide scores to help the club totals.
- Clubs can sponsor youth operators — see this month’s Next Generation Contesters column by W4IPC and K8LG.

Also, through simple polling, clubs can get behind ideas for rule changes and present contest sponsors with a consolidated opinion from dozens or hundreds of ops.

So, for your personal “contesting New Year’s resolution,” let the contest sponsors know your thoughts and ideas (WA7BNM’s Contest Calendar site provides links to the rules for every contest). Better yet: volunteer to help out in your favorite contest processing logs, publicizing the event, etc. Even better: write an article for *NCJ* and send it in!