

By Gene Zimmerman, W3ZZ

2003 January VHF Sweepstakes Results

A typical January weekend...

Each year in the dead of winter there is a stirring amongst the weak signal VHF operators. No matter that the Northern climes are frigidly cold and snow and sleet are falling everywhere. It's time to check out the station. Radios that have not been exercised since last fall are turned on and tested. On goes the rotator box. Do the antennas still turn? Do they still work? The beacons get a big workout here. Are the amplifiers still putting out the power they're supposed to? And what about the microwave gear? A few calls to the locals will test these.

Why all the checking under such inhospitable conditions? The ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes is coming! All the clubs are organizing and imploring their membership to participate. Even the rovers are getting ready. It takes a certain disregard of the physical environment to be a rover—and that goes doubly in the winter. The SS is always marked by a paradox—high activity in the face of lousy conditions. Activity is a combination of club organization and the chance for people like me who operate portable in the warmer months to use their home stations. Propagation is a matter of midwinter conditions.

This year brought the double whammy of extremely cold temperatures and a lot more snow than usual to the eastern two thirds of the nation. On the weekend itself, bitterly cold temperatures and, generally dry, windy conditions conducive to high noise levels even in normally quiet locations were the rule in many places but some places in the Rocky Mountains and on the West Coast were more hospitable. A typical January weekend—but one with some surprises as we will see.

2003 Overall

The number of logs submitted seems to have stabilized to some degree this year. Compared to last year the 797 logs submitted were down marginally but in the last three years the numbers have ranged from 797 to 818. This is still sig-

nificantly more logs than any other ARRL VHF contest. The core categories remained at essentially the same levels with 441 low power stations and 190 high power stations. The main difference compared to 2002 appears to have been a drop in limited multioperator logs from 55 to 32 accompanied by a slight rise in rover entries from 71 to 81 in 2003.

Propagation

Remember September with its absolutely flat, unenhanced band conditions? Well, January started out the same way. Cold windy weather will do that. That is not to say that there wasn't a little bit of east/west tropo reported in the Pacific Northwest but by and large it was brute force, grind them out. Then around 2000Z on Sunday the minor sporadic E (E_s) season smiled on us with a strong opening

extending from 100° longitude eastward to the Atlantic seaboard, north well into Canada and south to the Gulf Coast and Florida (see Figure 1). The major E cloud was over KY and the IN/OH border and originally supported contacts between the Northeast and W0 and W5 excluding essentially all of Texas and New Mexico. As one moved toward western New York and eastern Ohio, the path rotated north/south toward the Gulf and Florida. As the opening matured, this cloud narrowed and moved north first concentrating contacts into Nebraska and then shortening between W2/W3 and western IL. The orthogonal path was also open between Minneapolis and more northern MN and the NC/SC coast. The opening from down the FL peninsula appeared to be very spotty mostly into the upper Midwest and occasionally into New England. Mean-

Top Ten

Single Operator, Low Power		Limited Multioperator	
K2DRH	160,395	K8CC	116,494
WA3GFZ	120,530	N3JFM	94,930
N1DPM	108,288	W1QK	66,780
K1UHF	81,888	W4ZRZ	60,833
W3KJ	67,728	W2DTA	54,032
WA8RJF	55,473	N8ZM	48,488
AF1T	54,439	K2AA	42,976
K4TO	53,992	KB1DFB	35,644
W1PM	53,738	N1LDY	35,594
N3FUJ	53,568	W1XM	24,684

Single Operator, High Power		Multioperator	
K1TEO	444,096	K3EAR	877,041
AA2UK	374,262	W2FU	810,266
WA2FGK	354,860	N2PA	505,827
K2AXX	261,060	N3NGE	326,952
KM0T	259,675	W0RSJ	265,766
K1RZ	240,470	WA3ZKR	78,431
WA3NUF	187,040	W2QK	75,430
WB9Z	182,991	N8KOL	73,580
K1J1	167,808	W2EA	65,436
K2SMN	166,800	K1MUJ	56,316

GRP Portable		Rover	
KC7RAS	8,646	N2JMH	525,249
W9GKA	7,065	K2TER	473,396
N6A (N6XA,op)		N6TEB/R	282,492
	5,336	N9UM/R	269,712
N6VMO	2,324	KK7GU/R	232,260
KQ6EE	2,240	N6DN/R	226,296
N2IM	1,872	KF9US	211,830
WD5AGO	1,680	N2OPW	210,078
KA1VEC (NM1K,op)	1,071	W7DHC/R	149,124
		WO2P/R	147,708
N0JK	780		
WB2AMU	731		

Affiliated Club Competition

	Score	Entries
Unlimited Category		
Mt Airy VHF Radio Club	3,127,678	61
Medium Category		
Rochester VHF Group	3,353,279	44
North East Weak Signal Group	1,357,754	33
Murgas ARC	1,232,206	4
Northern Lights Radio Society	833,508	26
Society of Midwest Contesters	741,447	12
Potomac Valley Radio Club	681,910	32
Pacific Northwest VHF Society	479,982	30
Badger Contesters	423,551	15
Yankee Clipper Contest Club	174,997	5
Western States Weak Signal	142,974	7
Mad River Radio Club	118,534	3
South Jersey Radio Assn	113,360	6
Crawford County ARC	101,598	18
North Texas Microwave Society	96,806	11
Contest Club Ontario	95,016	10
Bergen ARA	66,944	6
Six Meter Club of Chicago	41,677	13
Northern California Contest	40,974	3
Florida Contest Group	29,645	4
Hampden County Radio Assn	12,619	3
Tennessee Contest Group	10,216	4
Mobile Sixers Radio Club	1,524	6
Lawton Fort Sill ARC	919	4
Rochester (MN) ARC	824	7
Local Category		
Delaware Valley VHF Society	178,208	7
Roadrunners Microwave Group	123,215	3
Eastern Connecticut ARA	95,968	3
Eastern Panhandle ARC	77,507	6
Northern New York Contest	6,734	4
Meriden ARC	4,122	3

while a secondary cloud formed somewhere in the vicinity of the NY/New England border that allowed stations in MI and IN near the main cloud to work into northern New England and Canada. Canadians were also audible here in the mid-Atlantic later in the opening. By 2300 the opening was diminishing rapidly and by 2330Z it was all but over.

The National Scene

How much difference does a good E skip opening make in the placement of the top scores? Not as much as you might think. Once again living in the densely populated Northeast corridor is no guarantee of a winning performance. The low power single operator class (SOLP) remains by far the largest. Bob, K2DRH/9, leads the way for the third straight year, this time by a comfortable margin 40k over Paul, WA3GFZ, with former winner Fred, N1DPM, only 12k points further back. Bob's score of 160,395 is a new overall category mark. In the high power single operator (SOHP) category, Jeff, K1TEO, is the top scorer for the sixth time in a row, 70k points ahead of Bill, AA2UK, who returns to serious competition with Herb, K2LNS, operating WA2FGK a mere 20k points behind him. Twenty-four intrepid souls braved the winter weather in the Single Operator Portable (SOP) class, which gets an almost complete overhaul in 2003. Top honors go to the Northwestern Division and Ric, KC7RAS, closely followed by Kevin, W9GKA, and Ax, N8XA, operating as N8A.

The top spots in the multioperator competition had some new faces this year. Dave's crew at K8CC moves to the top spot in the Limited Multioperator (LM) class 22k points ahead of the quartet at N3JFM. The Murgas ARC longtime operators of K3YTL moved from FN11 down to FM19 to join with the South Mountain Contest Club, K3EAR, to take the Multioperator Class (MO) with a category record setting score of 877,041. Close on their heels less than 10% behind was Jeff, W2FU's group with N2PA moving into third place. Winter is not the most pleasant time to be a rover but the rigors of upstate New York didn't faze N2JMH/R, who had the top rover score for the third year running again closely followed by K2TER/R covering the same territory. N6TEB/R edged past N9UM/R for third place.

Regional Highlights

The regional scores produced some interesting results. Stations in the Northeast, Central and the northern part of the Midwest region were helped by the E_s opening. Detailed Division scores can be found in the Web report.

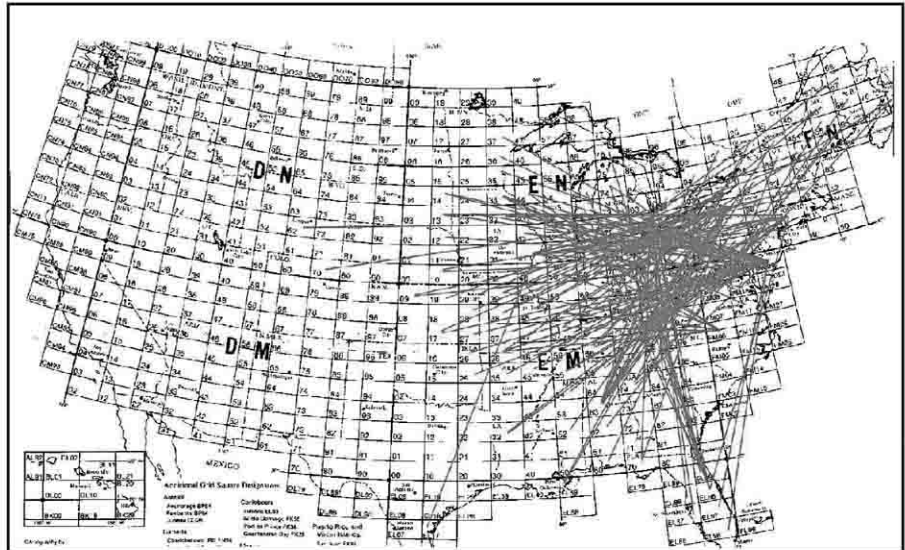


Figure 1—Sporadic E opening between 2000-2330Z in the Eastern and Midwestern US. Line intersections indicate reflection centers from the E cloud.

Northeast

Top performers came from all parts of the Northeast. In addition to the national top ten performers already mentioned, outstanding SOLP performances were turned in by Del, K1UHF, and Joe, W3KJ, and by SOHP operators Mark,

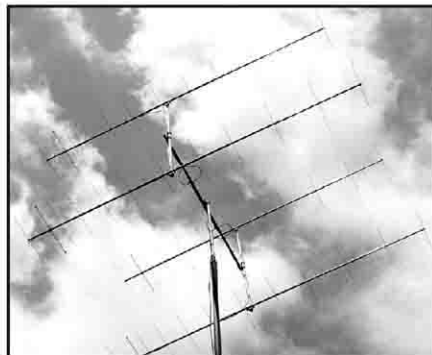
K2AXX, and Dave, K1RZ. Close behind N2IM were well-known QRP operators Rusty, NM1K, at KA1VEC and Ken, WB2AMU. Longtime LM participants W1QK and K2BAR, operators at W2DTA, provided the competition for N3JFM. Many of the K3YTL operators journeyed down to the South Mountain Contest Club station K3EAR at the old K3MQH site and produced their first MO top national score. Close on their heels were Rochester's W2FU and N2PA. All the top rover performers were from western New York: N2JMH/R, K2TER/R, N2OPW/R, WO2P/R and N2KXS/R. So much for cold, icy weather!



K7BV/1 in front of his neat 6 meter station: an ICOM IC-756PROII and an ACOM 1 kW amplifier.

Southeast

Richard, K4RTS, Dan, K8GUN, and Steve, W4SHG, led the way in the SOLP class in the Southeast while Rus, K4QI, transplanted Buckeye Gary, KE8FD, and Tom, K2UOP, were the top SOHP entries. The group at W4ZRZ parlayed a solid E_s opening into the top LM score in the region and no. 4 high nationally. In the MO category AG4V easily outdistanced the abbreviated effort from W4RX. Bill, W3IY/R, was the top rover but with a score much smaller than usual.



K3TV's 2 meter antenna system—four 12-element M² Yagis.

Central

Tony, WA8RJF, and Dave, K4TO, followed K2DRH's nationally winning score in SOLP. HF contester Jerry, WB9Z, racked up the no. 8 SOHP score nationally with fine scores posted by Mark, K8MD, and Ken, W9GA. W9GKA and N8A (N8XA) were dominant players on the SOP scene. The multiops were well represented by LMs K8CC and N8ZM,

Regional Results

Within each Region, scores are listed in descending order by power categories. Scores list call sign, score and power (A = SO Low, B = SO High, Q = SO Portable, L = Limited Multiop, M = Multioperator, R = Rover).

Northeast Region (New England, Hudson and Atlantic Divisions; Maritime and Quebec Sections)			Southeast Region (Delta, Roanoke and Southeastern Divisions)			Central Region (Central and Great Lakes Divisions; Ontario Section)			Midwest Region (Dakota, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and West Gulf Divisions; Manitoba and Saskatchewan Sections)			West Coast Region (Pacific, Northwestern and Southwestern Divisions; Alberta, British Columbia and NWT/Yukon Sections)		
WA3GFZ	120,530	A	K4RTS	31,951	A	K2DRH	160,395	A	K0SHF	52,635	A	KC6TEU	31,430	A
N1DPM	108,288	A	K8GUN	25,560	A	WA8RJF	55,473	A	N0URW	38,533	A	VE7DXG	29,986	A
K1UHF	81,888	A	W4SHG	25,110	A	K4TO	53,992	A	KT8O	36,432	A	KC6ZWT	22,852	A
K1TEO	444,096	B	K4QI	105,260	B	WB9Z	182,991	B	KM0T	259,675	B	N7EPD	52,022	B
AA2UK	374,262	B	KE8FD	38,199	B	K8MD	87,763	B	W0GHZ	125,710	B	N6RMJ	33,698	B
WA2FGK	354,860	B	K2UOP	35,948	B	W9GA	84,095	B	W0ZQ	90,272	B	W6KBX	31,044	B
N2IM	1,872	Q			W9GKA	7,065	Q	WD5AGO	1,680	Q	KC7RAS	8,646	Q	
KA1VEC (NM1K,op)	1,071	Q			N8A (N8XA,op)	5,336	Q	N0JK	780	Q	N6VMO	2,324	Q	
WB2AMU	731	Q					K0NR	608	Q	KQ6EE	2,240	Q		
N3JFM	94,930	L	W4ZRZ	60,833	L	K8CC	116,494	L	W0JH	16,530	L	W7AV	4,480	L
W1QK	66,780	L	KD5HPT	5,152	L	N8ZM	48,488	L	AD5V	2,436	L	K6WAR	3,416	L
W2DTA	54,032	L	A14CW	3,920	L	W9VW	12,474	L	WX5II	1,743	L	W7DK	2,185	L
K3EAR	877,041	M	AG4V	17,640	M	N8KOL	73,580	M	W0EEA	10,948	M	W6TE	49,612	M
W2FU	810,266	M	W4RX	7,584	M	W9RVG	51,282	M	KA0MR	9,548	M	K17EL	3,058	M
N2PA	505,827	M					N5PYK	6,076	M					
N2JMH/R	525,249	R	W3IY/R	12,192	R	N9UM/R	269,712	R	N0DQS/R	94,686	R	N6TEB/R	282,492	R
K2TER/R	473,396	R	KB1EXM/R	3,952	R	KF9US/R	211,830	R	W9FZ/R	80,408	R	KK7GU/R	232,260	R
N2OPW/R	210,078	R	N4FLM/R	3,069	R	K0PG/R	53,805	R	W5DF/R	71,832	R	N6DN/R	226,296	R

numbers 1 and 6 nationally and N8KOL no. 8 nationally in the MO class. Big rover scores were turned in by Mark, N9UM, ex-KG9PF (no. 4 nationally), and by the return of an old rover hand Phil, KF9US.

Midwest

Lenny, K0SHF, was the top SOLP station this year in the Midwest with Dan, N0URW, edging Eric, KT8O, for the runner-up slot. Mike, KM0T, once again cracked the top five nationally in the SOHP class with fellow club members Gary, W0GHZ, and Jon, W0ZQ, running next and Al, W5LUA, leading the pack to the south. Tommy, WD5AGO, piloted his SOP station to a no. 7 finish nationally. The multiops were represented by Limited Multi W0JH and a close MO race won by the crew at W0EEA over KA0MR. Gene, N0DQS, won a spirited rover competition over Bruce, W9FZ, and Dan, W5DF.

West Coast

A number of close races occurred on the West Coast. Ken, KC6TEU, edged out Gabor, VE7DXG, in the SOLP category with Norm, KC6ZWT, close behind. In the SOHP competition Eric, N7EPD, was almost 20k point ahead of a pack of four stations led by Pat, N6RMJ, Don, W6KBX, Jim, AF6O, and Bob, N7AU. KC7RAS was the top national SOP station followed by the no. 4 and 5 ranked scores of John, N6VMO, and Hon, KQ6EE. Among the multiops W7AV narrowly outdistanced K6WAR and W7DK while W6TE finish no. 12 nationally in spite of mediocre conditions and no sporadic E. The West Coast rovers turned in excellent scores. Dave, N6TEB/R took

Expanded Results, Line Score Printouts Available

For complete contest results online, please visit www.arrl.org/contests/results. ARRL members without Internet access may obtain a printout of the complete line scores by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to ARRL Contest Results, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. Please be sure to include the contest name and year.

the category and a third place finish overall. Kenny, KK7GU/R, eked by Paul, N6DN/R, by less than 6k points to earn them the no. 5 and 6 places in the national competition. Also notable was Jim, W7DHC/R's no. 9 finish,

Affiliated Club Competition

January is prime time for the ARRL club competition. The Medium Category had the largest number of entries—24—with 6 entries in the Local Category and only one in the Unlimited Category. The Mt Airy VHF Radio Club—the Pack Rats—has been the top scorer in the Unlimited Category for decades and this year was no exception. Their secret of success is a large number of home stations with multiband capabilities and the ability to get them on the air in the contest. Almost nothing is left to chance and about two-thirds of their members actually submit logs. However, for the second straight year the Rochester VHF Group in the Medium Category had an even higher score by 225k points. The RVHFG combined two huge MO scores

and five big rovers to make 2.8 of their 3.3+ million points to win the Medium Category. On the strength of their strong single operator stations, the Northeast Weak Signal Group moves into second place and the Murgas ARC with the top MO and the no. 3 SOHP entry moves into third. Northern Lights moves from sixth to fourth and YCCC replaces the Downey Contesters. Missing their big MO entry and with minimal participation from their two big rovers, the PVRC falls from second to sixth; and Western States (WSWSS) drops from sixth to tenth. Success depends on organization—helping each member get his/her station ready, convincing them to operate for as long as they can and then actually submitting the log. The VHF oriented clubs do all of these very well. Moving up to the top in the Local Club Competition is the Delaware Valley VHF Society. Runner-up in the category is the Roadrunners Microwave Group from south Texas.

Next Year

The next January VHF Sweepstakes will be held on January 17 and 18, 2004. Will the E-skip return? Will there be more snow, ice and bitterly cold temperatures or will some of the highest hilltops be open? Can K1TEO and K2DRH/9 remain top dogs in the single op fixed station categories? Speaking of dogs, will the tandem duo of ND3F and W3IY return to the fray to challenge N2JMH? Will some Midwestern or Far Western rover rise up and take them all? Will W2FU overcome the boys from South Mountain at K3EAR? Tune in, tune up and help your club fight for the prize. 