

# 2005 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes Results

*Heavy snow Midwest to New England took its toll—most scores are down!*

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From Minnesota, Wisconsin and northern Illinois east through Ohio, Pennsylvania and north to central New England, very heavy snowfall was the order of the day for the 2005 January VHF SS competition. More than a foot of snow fell in the densely populated northeast corridor during most of the contest period, causing problems for rover stations as well as fixed stations, some suffering storm-related antenna damage. Elsewhere, conditions were typically flat with a few exceptions in the Southwest and West Coast regions where occasional long-range tropo coupled with many active mountaintop rover stations kept things interesting.

The cold weather and snow-covered ground extending over a huge amount of real estate in the northeastern quarter of the country combined with typical flat January VHF conditions made for an interesting set of obstacles to communication. But we hams seem to manage to

communicate in spite of whatever Mother Nature throws at us! Weaker than normal signal levels were the order of the day. Rovers had to battle not only the snow and poor road conditions but the poor propagation as well. These are the things that make the January VHF Contest so challenging, and when those elusive “openings” do occur, sometimes quite short in time span, we rise to the challenge and log the QSOs as quickly as possible.

I use the W3CCX beacons in Philadelphia on the bottom four VHF bands as indicators of propagation quality down the east coast at the start of the VHF competitions. Around noon local east coast time on Saturday, I was only able to hear the 144, 222 and 432 MHz beacons over the 283-mile, partial seawater path between my Cape Cod location and downtown Philadelphia. The 50 MHz beacon was inaudible. The signal levels were weaker than normal, indicating minimal enhancement. This contest would be a

difficult one for sure!

Under conditions like these, with no significant propagation enhancement expected, participants relied on their skill and stamina to take advantage of the few minor enhancements that inevitably occur over relatively short time periods.

## 2005 Overall

The number of logs submitted for the 2005 January VHF SS was significantly lower than those submitted in the previous two years. Logs submitted this year totaled 718, compared with 836 in 2004 and 797 in 2003. This result is most likely related to the massive winter snowstorm, which affected the entire northeastern part of the US from Minnesota east to the coast and as far south as southern Ohio and northern Maryland. In spite of the bad weather, many rovers managed to brave the snow and give out needed rare grid squares on Sunday, once the bulk of the storm subsided.



The deluxe 5-star accommodations (left) used by the WC4J multiop team. Just as older equipment gets traded around, this portable operating center was formerly used by the K8GP Grid Pirates.



Bruce, WW1M, started his rover trek with this spectacular view near his home in Boulder, Colorado. Maybe not the best terrain to work stations through, but sure to bring a peaceful, easy feeling when you take a deep breath after a hard contest weekend.

There were 445 single operator, low power (SOLP) entries, down about 5% from last year. More interesting is the single operator, high power (SOHP) category for 2005 with 139 entries, which is down 14% from 2004 and down from 190 in 2003, representing a 27% decrease in logs over a two-year period. As expected, rover entries were down substantially, about 42% from last year with 52 competing vehicles compared to 89 in 2004. Limited multi-operator entries were down from 39 in 2004, representing a 21% decrease. Multi-operator entries were down only by one from last year to 25.

## Propagation

As is generally expected for the month of January, VHF/UHF openings are generally sporadic, rare events. Participants in this year's January VHF Sweepstakes weren't surprised with the typically unenhanced conditions with few exceptions across most of the US and Canada. Some Midwest stations noted partial 6 meter openings to the south, notably Florida. K9UHY experienced an hour opening to Florida on Sunday evening. The same was echoed by KB8UUZ. AF8Z noted some partial 6 meter openings.

Gene, N9TF, who operated a Limited Multi station with his son, Mike, KC9ETU, noted that "Friday night there was a short 'teaser' of a 6 meter band opening to the SE into the EL grids. I knew we were doomed! Six remained closed after that opening faded!" Dan, NØURW, operating from Iowa in grid EN41, echoed the sentiments of most operators. "This is one for the record books as the worst band conditions ever from my QTH."

Bob, K2DRH, from EN41 noted one bright spot with meteor scatter: "I made several WSJT schedules and stayed up later than I'd planned, making several more random QSOs to try to make up for a log that was easily 100 Q's and 50 multipliers behind." Bob also noted that "random QSOs on WSJT seem to have come into their own, and it's not difficult to QSY to other bands. Sunday tropo on the bands started out slow and tapered off from there."

Finally, this comment from K2DRH summarizes the sentiments of almost everyone who contributed comments on propagation to the soapbox: "It's really disheartening to tune 2M during a contest and hear nothing in any direction, then call every 15 degrees while turning the antennas completely 'around the clock' on 144.200 with no takers."

## The National Scene

Scores this year are down from previous years due primarily to insignificant

## Affiliated Club Competition

	Score	Entries
<b>Unlimited Category</b>		
Mt Airy VHF Radio Club	1,412,465	53
<b>Medium Category</b>		
Rochester VHF Group	1,194,898	40
North East Weak Signal Group	668,145	18
Potomac Valley Radio Club	535,887	29
Western States Weak Signal	513,861	17
Society of Midwest Contesters	278,307	19
Pacific Northwest VHF Society	197,757	21
Northern Lights Radio Society	141,377	24
Yankee Clipper Contest Club	106,090	11
Badger Contesters	96,280	13
Northern California Contest	46,333	3
Contest Club Ontario	33,108	14
Mad River Radio Club	27,545	3
Six Meter Club of Chicago	24,414	9
Florida Contest Group	21,441	3
Frankford Radio Club	7,373	3
Bergen ARA	4,430	4
South Jersey Radio Assn	2,350	6
Bears of Manchester	2,315	5
Mobile Sixers Radio Club	1,027	3
<b>Local Category</b>		
Eastern Panhandle ARC	84,087	6
Delaware Valley VHF Society	73,417	7
North Texas Microwave Society	55,685	5
Chippewa Valley VHF Contesters	44,250	9
CT RI Contest Group	40,814	4
Michigan VHF-UHF Society	11,385	8
Dauberville DX Assn	8,328	5
Eastern Connecticut ARA	2,149	3
Raritan Bay Radio Amateurs	1,806	6

## Top Ten

<b>Single Operator, Low Power</b>		<b>Limited Multioperator</b>	
K2DRH	128,872	K3EAR	359,676
WA3GFZ	72,261	W3SO	172,539
AF1T	70,288	W1QK	54,230
K1TR	69,432	KB1DFB	38,148
K8GUN	47,816	N2UIO	25,387
W3KJ	40,392	N9TF	19,768
W4SHG	34,839	W2ZQ	19,071
AA3GN	33,614	N3RN	12,738
WB2SIH	30,240	KG6MDW	7,359
KB3XG	24,960	W3DOG	7,285
<b>Single Operator, High Power</b>		<b>Multioperator</b>	
K1TEO	354,144	W2FU	344,326
K1RZ	185,900	N2PA	284,200
WA3NUF	131,224	N3NGE	266,880
K3TUF	94,944	K5QE	134,183
W3SZ	69,069	K1JT	131,584
K8EB	65,762	K3EOD	57,986
W2IV	60,325	W6TE	44,891
WA3DRC	57,340	N2BJ	35,862
K8MD	54,610	W9RVG	21,800
K2TXB	51,600	N6KN	18,240
<b>QRP Portable</b>		<b>Rover</b>	
KA1LMR	23,058	N6NB	2,202,200
W6DWI	8,208	N6ZZ	2,164,206
N8XA	4,200	N6MU	2,153,800
KG6EE	2,486	N6TEB	313,257
K0NR	864	N6DN	307,648
KA1VEC	585	K2TER	188,160
(NM1K,op)		N2OPW	162,074
NØHJZ	464	K2QO	105,660
WB2AMU	396	N6RMJ	91,462
K17T	198	VE7DXG	68,904
KØSM	16		

propagation enhancement combined with the winter snowstorm throughout most of the north central and eastern part of the country. Under more normal weather conditions, rovers are key to big scores in the January contest. The severe winter weather conditions greatly inhibited the ability of rovers to activate rare grids this time out.

## Single Operator

Bob, K2DRH, operating from EN41 in

northwestern Illinois, took the top spot in the SOLP category for the fifth straight year. Bob's 128k score is down from his winning effort last year by 21%, which attests to the difficult 2005 conditions combined with severe weather issues. Second place again for the third year goes to Paul, WA3GFZ, with 72k points, down from his 2004 score by 42% and no doubt influenced by the extremely poor conditions coupled with the snowstorm in southeastern PA. Third place goes to New Hampshire resident Dale, AF1T, with 70k, who bettered his 2004 score by over 20k points. Not far behind Dale was Ed, K1TR, who took fourth place with 69k, also operating from NH.

A quick analysis of the Top Ten LP entries from last year compared to this year is illustrative of the effects of the extreme weather conditions coupled with little or no propagation enhancement. Six of this year's top ten LP stations were in the 2004 top ten list, and in every case but one, the 2005 scores of these stations are down by a minimum of 21%.

In the SOHP category, Jeff, K1TEO, continues at the top position with 354k, down by 22% from his winning score last year. Jeff continues his national dominance for the eighth time in a row from his excellent western Connecticut location coupled with a commanding signal on 10 bands. Dave, K1RZ, operating from Maryland made second place with 185k, up one position from his third place finish in 2004. Although Dave's score is down by 45% from his 2004 result, his impressive second place finish is a strong challenge from FM19, particularly on the microwave bands. Third place finisher Phil, WA3NUF, made a strong showing at 131k from Pack Rats territory. Fellow Pack Rats member Phil, K3TUF, finished in fourth place with 95k points, with Roger, W3SZ, fifth with 69k points.

## Multioperator

The top multioperator spot goes to the W2FU team from the Rochester, NY area with 344k points. Jeff's team ran 12 bands to take the win in spite of the poor band conditions. Another western NY group, N2PA, took second place with a score of 284k operating from FN12, while Pack Rats group N3NGE, took the third spot at 266k. Marshall, K5QE, led a team in east Texas to fourth place with 134k, followed closely by another Pack Rats team hosted by Joe, K1JT, in New Jersey with 131k.

The limited multioperator section winner was the South Mountain Contest Club station, K3EAR, with 359k points. Second place goes to W3SO, the Wopsononock Mountaintop Operators, in western PA with 172k. Weather conditions were extreme and

the bands were dead for the most part at W3SO, "Flat band conditions and terrible weather made for a long weekend. The daytime weather was just above 0F, and at night it was in the minus teens." Third place went to W1QK with 54k and fourth to KB1DFB with 38k.

### Rover

By moving team pack-roving and grid-circling to a new level, the rover teams of N6NB, N6ZZ and N6MU blew away the all-time rover record (under the present rules) of 1.392M set by N3IQ/R (ND3F and K8ISK operators) in 1999. All three teams broke the 2-million point barrier in this very successful assault on the rover record. Other significant scores in the rover category were turned in by N6TEB and N6DN.

N6NB commented, "Given excellent January weather, we traveled 1,000 miles during the contest and activated 22 grid squares in New Mexico and west Texas. Art Goddard, W6XD, celebrated his retirement from the ARRL Board of Directors by taking part in this adventure. We were joined by two other teams of experienced HF contesters (N6ZZ plus N2IC and N6MU plus K2MM). It was a memorable weekend, although activity was not high and conditions were mediocre." One can only imagine what kinds of scores could be generated using these techniques under excellent propagation conditions!

### Regional Highlights

With the severe winter weather in the central and northeastern parts of the country along with generally poor propagation conditions with only a few minor exceptions, the scores are significantly lower this year than in the recent past. The only scores that set new records were the three rovers (N6NB, N6ZZ and N6MU) as noted above. Detailed division scores can be found on the Web report, as usual at [www.arrl.org/contests/results](http://www.arrl.org/contests/results).

#### Northeast

Although turnout for the event was not up to normal levels, the northeast region was well represented in spite of the unfortunate weather situation. The AFC championship football game also drew some attention from New Englanders! In spite of these distractions, participation was substantial. In addition to the top scores already mentioned, Joe, W3KJ; Joe, AA3GN; Bill, WB2SIH, and John, KB3XG, took the sixth, and eighth through tenth spots nationally in the SOLP category. Perennial high power participants Ron, WZ1V; Ed, WA3DRC, and Russ, K2TXB, finished in the seventh, eighth and tenth positions nationally.

In the limited multioperator section, the top four stations previously mentioned are all in the northeast region. Fifth place nationally was taken by George, N2UIO, with 25k points operating from Western NY, and seventh place went to W2ZQ, the Delaware Valley Radio Assn in New Jersey with 19k points. Multioperator entrant Allen, K3EOD, operating in NJ took sixth place nationally with 58k points.

Rover entrants who successfully tolerated the heavy snow and cold weather include Bill, K2TER, with 188k, and Paul, N2OPW, with 162k placing sixth and seventh nationally, while Mark, K2QO, also a NY entrant, came in eighth with 105k points.

#### Southeast

The SOLP leader was Dan, K8GUN, with a score of 47.8k. Dan took advantage of his 9-band effort from FM09 to prevail under very poor conditions. Second place goes to Steve, W4SHG, with 34.8k points from 9 bands from his FM18 QTH in VA. Charles, K0VXM; Ken, KD4HIK, and Gus, K4FTO, round out the Southeast Region LP top five. The top five Southeast Region HP scores were all bunched together between 22k and 28k points: Dan, K8GUN, at 28,615; Howard, K4QI, at 28,227; Ron, WA8TTM, at 27,056; Gary, KE8FD, at 24,795, and Ken, KE2N, at 22,308. W3PGA, operating from WV in FM09 led the limited multiop category with 4k points. The multiop category leader was AG4V with 17k points, followed by KC4PX with 15k and WC4J with 11k.

#### Central

Bob, K2DRH, not only led the Central region with 128k points, but as noted above, he was the national LP winner. Russ, KB8U, Great Lakes Division leader with 24k points took second place in the Central Region. N9DG with 22k, K8MR with 19k and WA9FIH with 16k round out the top five LP entries. The top HP effort was made by Erwin, K8EF, from Michigan with 65k, followed by Mark, K8MD, with 54k and Jerry, WB9Z, with 44k. The top LM entry was Gene, N9TF with 19k. The top M entry was Barry, N2BJ, with 35k, followed by Marshall, W9RVG, with 21k. Rover activity was minimal, but Jim, VE3OIL/R, topped the list with 3.9k points, followed by Mike, WB8BZK, at 3.2k and Doug, N7NGO, at 2.6k. Understandably, the winter snowstorm played havoc with this region keeping activity levels below normal.

#### Midwest

The SOLP winner in the Midwest Region is Dave, N0KP, with 20k points, his

second win in a row. Vince, N0VZJ, took second place with 16k, followed by Floyd, WQ5S, at 11k. The top SOHP spot was claimed by Gary, W0GHZ, with 32k points, followed closely by Dan, N0URW, at 31k. Jonathan, W0ZQ, finished in third place with 19k. The top LM score was posted by John, K5ETX, with 2k points. In the MU category, Marshall, K5QE, posted an excellent score of 134k, far ahead of the other contenders. The scoring excitement of the entire event took place in West Texas with the three rover teams of N6NB, N6ZZ and N6MU setting new all-time records for this category of 2.2M, 2.164M and 2.153M respectively. These scores are double the scores they achieved last year roving in California. Steve, N5AC, posted a decent rover score of 32k for fourth place.

#### West Coast

The top two SOLP contenders from the west coast region were very close. Jim, K7YO, in OR took the top slot with 17k points, while second place was claimed by Norman, KC6ZWT, at 16.6k points. Ed, W7GLE, took third place with 13k points from WA. In the SOHP category, Ralph, K6TSK, took top honors with 21k, followed by Don, W6KBX, at 18k and Leonard, WA6KLK, at 15k. Robin, W6DWI, took the QRP portable category with a score of 8k points, second place nationally. The LM category top spot was claimed by Trevor, KG6MDW, with 7k points. The multioperator category winner was Dave, W6TE, with 44k points, which also represents the seventh spot nationally. The rover category produced some interesting competition between the two top west coast entrants, Dave, N6TEB, at 313k points and Paul, N6DN, at 307k, placing them at the fourth and fifth spots nationally.

### Affiliated Club Competition

The January VHF Sweepstakes is the primary event for club competition in the ARRL VHF/UHF competitions. Because of the severe weather conditions this year, both participation level and scores were down from recent years. In spite of the weather and poor conditions, the club competition was intense. Once again, the only club in the unlimited category this year is no surprise. The Mt Airy VHF Radio Club, as it has so many times in recent years, ended up with both the highest score and the largest number of participants. Their score of 1.4M with 53 entries is only half the winning score they produced last year with 56 entries, a clear indication that weather conditions were a huge factor in the Philadelphia area.

In the medium category, once again, the Rochester VHF Group produced the lead-

## Regional Scores

### Northeast Region (New England, Hudson and Atlantic Divisions; Maritime and Quebec Sections)

WA3GFZ 72,261 A  
AF1T 70,288 A  
K1TR 69,432 A  
W3KJ 40,392 A  
AA3GN 33,614 A

K1TEO 354,144 B  
K1RZ 185,900 B  
WA3NUF 131,224 B  
K3TUF 94,944 B  
W3SZ 69,069 B

KA1LMR 23,058 Q  
KA1VEC 585 Q  
(NM1K,op)  
WB2AMU 396 Q  
K0SM 16 Q  
N1ZGY 15 Q

K3EAR 359,676 L  
W3SO 172,539 L  
W1QK 54,230 L  
KB1DFB 38,148 L  
N2UIO 25,387 L

W2FU 344,326 M  
N2PA 284,200 M  
N3NGE 266,880 M  
K1JT 131,584 M  
K3EOD 57,986 M

K2TER 188,160 R  
N2OPW 162,074 R  
K2QO 105,660 R  
K1DS 28,231 R  
N1XKT 24,531 R

### Southeast Region (Delta, Roanoke and Southeastern Divisions)

K8GUN 47,816 A  
W4SHG 34,839 A  
K0VXM 12,040 A  
KD4HIK 6,517 A  
K4FTO 5,610 A

W4WA 28,615 B  
K4QI 28,227 B  
WA8TTM 27,056 B  
KE8FD 24,795 B  
KE2N 22,308 B

N3AWS 4 Q

W3PGA 4,017 L  
K14GZD 3,267 L  
KU4JZ 2,700 L  
AD4F 1,280 L  
N4DXY 861 L

AG4V 17,748 M  
KC4PX 15,624 M  
WC4J 11,664 M  
N4JQQ 7,720 M  
K1KC 1,771 M

N4FLM 8,910 R  
W5TV 8,760 R  
KD4NOQ 4,584 R  
KB1EXM 3,080 R  
W4OZK 1,040 R

### Central Region (Central and Great Lakes Divisions; Ontario Section)

K2DRH 128,872 A  
KB8U 24,273 A  
N9DG 22,560 A  
K8MR 19,840 A  
WA9FIH 16,014 A

K8EB 65,762 B  
K8MD 54,610 B  
WB9Z 44,200 B  
WA8RJJ 37,206 B  
WB9SNR 23,947 B

N8XA 4,200 Q

N9TF 19,768 L

N2BJ 35,862 M  
W9RVG 21,800 M

VE3OIL 3,942 R  
WB8BZK 3,213 R  
N7NGO 2,640 R

### Midwest Region (Dakota, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and West Gulf Divisions; Manitoba and Saskatchewan Sections)

N0KP 20,820 A  
N0VZJ 16,896 A  
WQ5S 11,128 A  
W6OAL 7,449 A  
N0LL 6,820 A

W0GHZ 32,472 B  
N0URW 31,240 B  
W0ZQ 19,093 B  
K9MK 13,910 B  
W3XO 13,176 B

K0NR 864 Q  
N0HJZ 464 Q  
WA5WJY 6 Q  
N0JK 1 Q

K5ETX 2,080 L  
K5USS 1,638 L  
N0UNL 1,281 L  
KE5BAV 931 L  
WB0RMK 342 L

K5QE 134,183 M  
W0EEA 9,000 M

N6NB 2,202,200 R  
N6ZZ 2,164,206 R  
N6MU 2,153,800 R  
N5AC 32,568 R  
W5LL 14,080 R

### West Coast Region (Pacific, Northwestern and Southwestern Divisions; Alberta, British Columbia and NWT Sections)

K7YO 17,000 A  
KC6ZW 16,677 A  
W7GLF 13,800 A  
KC6SEH 10,080 A  
KF6KDA 9,534 A

K6TSK 21,465 B  
W6KBX 18,780 B  
WA6KLK 15,736 B  
KG6IYN 11,890 B  
WA7TZY 7,770 B  
WB7BST 7,770 B

W6DWI 8,208 Q  
KG6EE 2,486 Q  
K17T 198 Q  
N2YM 1 Q

KG6MDW 7,359 L  
W6QE 4,392 L  
K6YR 2,220 L  
W7MRG 1,280 L  
K7XC 1,036 L

W6TE 44,891 M  
N6KN 18,240 M  
WW2CQ 1,869 M

N6TEB 313,257 R  
N6DN 307,648 R  
N6RMJ 91,462 R  
VE7DXG 68,904 R  
K3UHF 64,227 R

ing score of 1.19M with 40 entries. This score is 34% lower than that which they produced last year with only 25 entries. RVHFG's focus on encouraging rover and microwave activity separates them from their competition. RVHFG hosted 8 stations running 9 bands or more, 3 of whom were rovers plus 3 large multiop efforts. It's difficult to compete with a club hosting the top MU station (W2FU) in any contest. Second place was again taken by the North East Weak Signal Group with 666k points from 18 participants, down from 28 last year. Third place goes to the Potomac Valley Radio Club with 535k points from 29 participants. The fourth place finisher was Western States Weak Signal with 513k points and 17 participants.

The Eastern Panhandle ARC took first place in the local club category with 84k points and 6 participating stations. Second place was claimed by the Delaware Valley VHF Society with 73k from 7 entrants. These two groups switched places from last year! The North Texas Microwave Society took third place with 55k from 5 entrants.

Given the extremely unfavorable weather conditions in the north and eastern part of the country as well as parts of southeastern Canada, it's great to see such a good turnout for this year's VHF SS. The scores were generally down, but the en-

thusiasm was high. Club activity in particular helps to motivate members to get on the air regardless of the conditions and scores. Getting on the air and making QSOs is the key to success, and the clubs did a fine job this year motivating their members under adverse conditions.

## On to Next Year

Given the weather extremes for the 2005 running of the VHF SS, it is reasonably safe to say that nearly any conditions, weather or propagation, will be better than what contestants had to endure this year.

## Expanded Reports Available

For complete results, participant soapbox and the complete scores in a user-searchable database, please visit [www.arrrl.org/contests/results](http://www.arrrl.org/contests/results). ARRL members without Internet access may obtain a print-out 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.

Scores next year are likely to be better than 2005, as the Northeast snowstorm of January 2005 is not likely to be repeated in exactly 12 months! The January VHF SS offers a unique challenge to those who enjoy battling against the twin adversities of generally unenhanced propagation and the possibilities of inclement weather. Clubs in particular motivate their members to get on the air in any way they can to contribute to club success.

If you are not presently a member of your local VHF oriented radio club, find a member and get yourself signed up. Clubs play a key role in generating activity for the January competition. Club members have the expertise to answer questions and provide help for new VHF/UHF enthusiasts to get set up with effective stations on the bands above 50 MHz. Obtaining help from local experts is the key to success, and you will enjoy being part of a team effort to produce a winning score. **QST**

## Strays

### I would like to get in touch with...

♦ amateurs who are employees of the United Nations.—*Charlie Trice, K8IJ, k8ij@arrrl.net*