PileUP!

Volume 12(2) 2008

C.C.F.

Contest Club Finland

Turkish pepper, TC4X by OH2PM in WAE CW 2008. (Photo OH2BH)

PileUp! is the newsletter of Contest Club Finland. You are welcome to contribute and send articles, short stories, news and photos via oh1wz@sral.fi.

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This issue as a pdf-file: http://www.helsinki.fi/~korpela/PU/PU2_2008.pdf

PileUP! 12(2)

Editorial

Scandinavian Activity Contest, 50 SAC 1959-2008

The solar flux has recently been around 65-68 with planetary A-index showing well predictable patterns. This is how it is during the minimum of solar cycle. Not a single sun spot between July 20 and August 30. Activity and propagation on the low bands is our cold comfort. While the ionosphere is thin, many OH-contesters use less time to operate and concentrate on improving their installations.

It is the turn of the Swedes and the SSA to organize SAC this year. We can credit Ingo, SM5AJV and his group for having promoted the event. The web address is qrq.se/sac/. SAC is a 24-hour contest and the activity takes place on the 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10-meter bands. CW starts on September 20, at 1200 UTC. A week later, on Saturday September 27 begins the SSB part.

|		
🇳🇴	Svalbard and Bear I.	**JW**
🇳🇴	Jan Mayen I.	**JX**
🇳🇴	Norway	**LA - LB - LG - LJ - LN**
🇫🇮	Finland	**OF - OG - OH - OI**
🇦🇽	Aland Is.	**OFØ - OGØ - OHØ**
🇦🇽	Market Reef	**OJØ**
🇬🇱	Greenland	**OX - XP**
🇫🇴	Faeroe Is.	**OW - OY**
🇩🇰	Denmark	**5P - 5Q - OU - OV - OZ**
🇸🇪	Sweden	**7S - 8S - SA - SB - SC** **SD - SE - SF - SG - SH** **SI - SJ - SK - SL - SM**
🇮🇸	Iceland	**TF**

Scandinavian countries and prefixes by SM3CER, sk3bg.se/contest/.

### Scattered thoughts on contesting

Oftentimes I find myself wondering if radio contesting makes any sense at all. Is it a sport, and if it is, what do the scores measure?

Typically, sportsmen invest a lot of time and effort - just think of the winners in Beijing, 2008. "The talented train less", not necessarily holds true anymore. In radio contesting the situation is alike. It is possible to train and prepare "professionally", that is, to take it really seriously – to push the limits. Alternatively, you can just enjoy contests. OH1RX gives some advice in his story in this issue.

I found this funny picture (Michael Phelps) in the web, and since it is about sports and fairness, I thought I'd steal and share it with you. Cheers & 73.
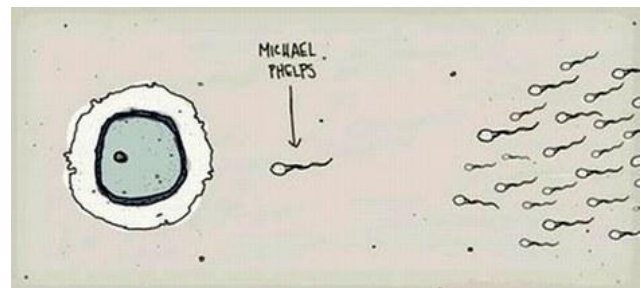
ilkka, OH1WZ, Editor

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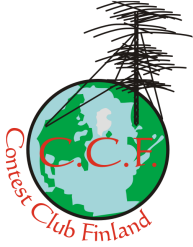
Married to a DXer

Kuudenkympin paremmalla puolella oleva radioamatööri-aviopari oli juhlimassa 40-vuotishääpäiväänsä romanttisessa ravintolassa. Siinä heidän istuessaan, pieni keiju ilmestyi pöydälle ja sanoi: "Koska olette niin esimerkillinen aviopari ja olette olleet toisillenne uskollisia, täytän yhden toivomuksen kummallekin!"

"Oih - haluaisin matkustaa maailman ympäri rakkaan aviomieheni kanssa," sanoi vaimo. "Hän kun on sitä aina tehnyt yksin, kilpailumatkoilla ja DX-peditioilla." Keiju heilautti taikasauvaansa ja poof - kaksi lippua luxusristeilylle maailman ympäri ilmestyi heidän käsiinsä.

Sitten oli aviomiehen vuoro. Hän mietti hetken ja sanoi: "No, olisihan se romanttista, mutta tällainen tilaisuus ei koskaan tule toistumaan, joten sorry rakkaani, mutta haluaisin itseäni 30 vuotta nuoremman vaimon."

Sekä vaimo että keiju olivat hyvin, hyvin pettyneitä, mutta toivomus on toivomus, ja lupaus on lupaus... Joten keiju heilautti taikasauvaansa ja poof - aviomies vanheni 93-vuotiaaksi.

Tarinan opetus: miesten, jotka ovat epäkiitollisia paskiaisia, tulisi muistaa, että keijut ovat aina naisia.

OH5CW mult-chasing @ OH5Z
(Photos OH5XT)

Do I hear a new mult?

Let me tune higher.

Got ya!

Pile Up Net: A Real-time Scoring System for Pile Up Competitions
Chuck, NO5W

Introduction

The CW Pile up Competition sponsored annually at Dayton by the Kansas City DX Club has long been a favorite of those contesters lucky enough to find themselves in the Crowne Plaza hospitality suites on Saturday night. Even while squeezed elbow-to-elbow with contesting greats, newbies and wannabes, sharing contesting tales, imbibing adult beverages, making eyeball QSOs at a high rate, and generally having a great time, they find time – often with some cajoling -- to measure their CW skills against the machine and against each other. And, although the measuring stick is frequently not kind, great fun is had by all as the results are eagerly awaited and eventually posted. It should also be mentioned that, in recent years, top-scoring participants have been the recipients of some very significant prizes. Pile up competitions, bot CW and SSB, are also popular activities at ham fests around the world.

Recently those attending the Dallas Ham Com and the Austin Summerfest in Texas, have had an opportunity to participate in a similar measurement of their CW skills using equipment provided by Rick-N0RB a member of the KCDXC that has recently relocated to Texas. The first computer-based running of this event was organized for Summerfest by Gary-W5ZL following up on a suggestion by Dale-KG5U, with KCDXC support provided by N0RB, and software support by Chuck-NO5W. In that application,

which was put together over the weekend preceding Summerfest, six standalone PCs were used to record each competitor's entries. After each session of six competitors the logs were collected by "thumb drive sneaker net", stored in a scoring machine, scored by a separate application, and the results projected on a large screen for the audience as the next set of participants demonstrated their skills.

Although it was not clear whether the scores were improved by this computer-based approach it was obvious, even using the low-tech sneaker net approach, that computer grading and presentation of the scores allowed the results to be presented with a lot less effort and in time for the group to vacate the room in a timely manner for the next hamfest activity.This note gives an overview of the networked version of this system that has been developed in the weeks following Summerfest. It should be of interest to anyone planning to sponsor a pile up competition under time constraints like those that may be encountered at local ham fests or at club meetings. A later section gives details on how to obtain additional information and software for implementing the system.

System Overview

The diagram below (Fig. 1) summarizes the overall concept. It's a simple networked configuration of four applications: a Pileup Host application, a Player application, a Manual Logger application, and a Scoreboard application.
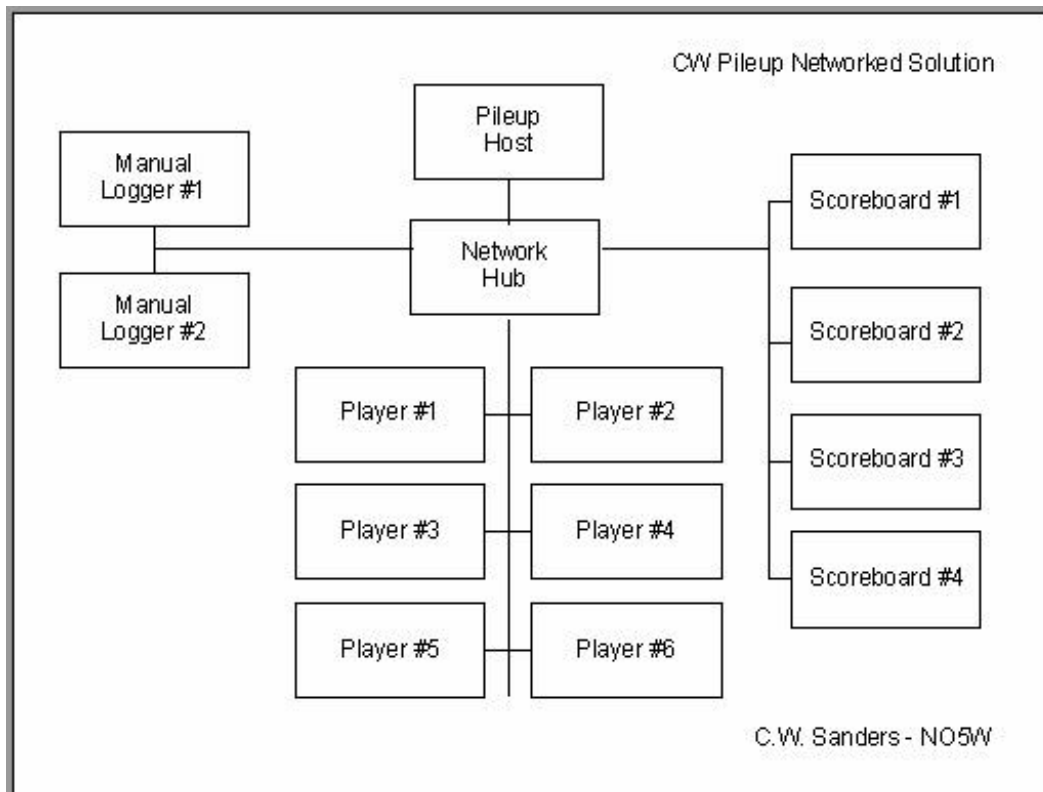
Fig. 1. System diagram.

With the exception of the Host application the number of clients of each type is optional. Since the Host is the central managing agent there must be one and only one Host. The system is currently sized as shown in the diagram but the numbers of each type are configurable. Each of the applications has been implemented and tested. A brief description of each of the applications is provided in the following section.

The Host Application

The Host Application is the central application for the system. It manages the competition, serves as a network hub, and has responsibility for performing the following tasks:

- Scoring each of the participant's logs in real-time from inputs received from the Player Applications

- Receiving and scoring logs submitted from each of the Manual Loggers
- Posting the results via communication with a Scoreboard Application
- Ensuring orderly conduct of the competition including ensuring that a new contestant or manually entered log does not inadvertently zero out the log of a prior contestant.
- Rescoring all entries in case an error is found in the valid callsign checklist

Here's a screen shot of the main display on the host running in demo mode (Fig 2). A number of players, as evidenced by their presence on the real-time scoreboard area of the display have already played and a single player (K5GA) is playing in the current session.
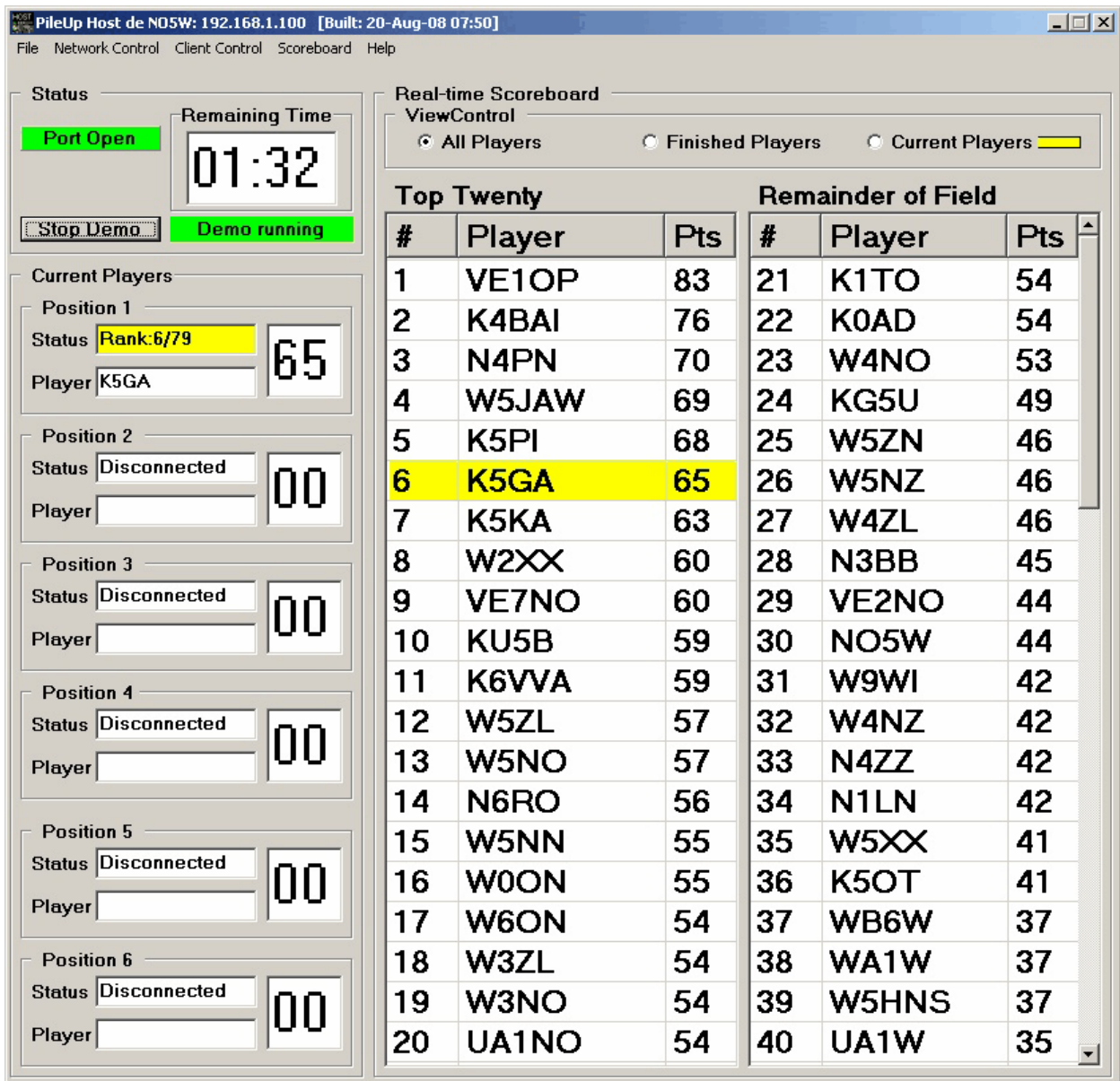
Fig. 2. Host application running demo mode (see text).

The left hand side of the display shows the players participating in the current session. The scoreboard portion of the display shows the information provided as K5GA makes his way through the test session with his score and ranking highlighted. The display shows that, with 1:32 left in the session, K5GA has 65 correct responses and is currently number 6 on the list out of 79 total players. The host screen can be used to present the scoreboard to the audience or a separate Scoreboard application that is limited to score presentation can also be used as described in a later section.

The Player Application

The participants use the following simple application to sign in and then to enter calls as they copy them from the pile up audio (Fig. 3). Players sign in by typing their call sign in the designated box and pressing the Enter key. This sends a request to sign in under a given call to the Host application which checks to verify that the call has not already been used and responds by either accepting or rejecting the call. If the call sign has already been used the host will clear the Player's Call Sign window and request another call sign be used. Once an acceptable call sign has been requested

the cursor will move to the Call Sign Entry window in preparation for the start of the session which is under the control of the Host Application. Once the session is started the player enters call signs in the Call Sign Entry window and presses the Enter key to log the call in a local file and to also send the call to the host application for grading, logging, and posting any change in that player's score on the scoreboard(s).

When the session is over the participants click on the submit button on their player displays, the host is advised that the player has requested his final results, and the player receives immediate feedback from the host regarding their results in terms of score and ranking as shown in the following screen shot of the player entry display.
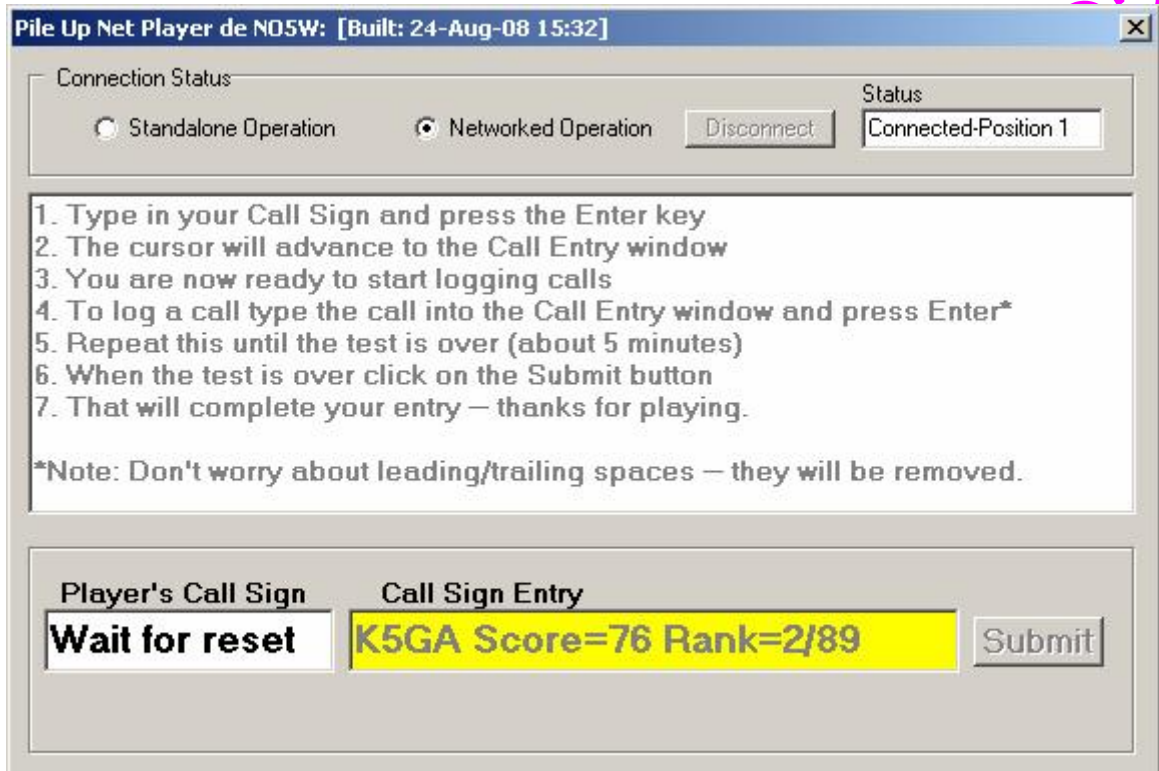

Fig 3. Player application.

Once all of the participants have submitted their logs the administrator uses the host application to reset the system which enables each of the Player applications and the remote scoreboards for the next session.

The Manual Logger

There will undoubtedly be some players that prefer to log using pen and paper rather than computer keyboard. A manual logging application is included in order to accommodate these players. At the end of each session, any paper logs are collected and made available to

assistants for entry using the Manual Logger form which is similar to the above Player's entry form. After the preparer signs in he enters the Player's Call Sign and then proceeds to enter the calls from the Player's hand-written log, pressing Enter after each call sign. Once completed, the Submit button is used to send the log to the Host Application for grading and for adding the player's results to the Scoreboards. A local log is kept on the Manual Logger's machine as well as on the host machine. The system is currently sized for up to two Manual Logger positions but additional Manual Loggers can be added without difficulty.

Due to the networked setup these manual logging stations can be located remotely from the testing area if desired.

The Remote Scoreboards

The Scoreboard client is simply in charge of presenting the scores on a form similar to the scoreboard portion of the Host Application but without the menu items for controlling the competition (Fig 4). It can be used to drive a projected or large screen display for viewing by the audience in an area separate from the testing area. In addition to the view shown below there is a statistical view showing the scores grouped in percentile ranges. A future enhancement would be to use the remote scoreboard as a gateway for publishing the scores in real-time on the internet.

Fig 4. Scoreboard.

Technical Requirements

Each of the applications is deployed via its own setup file. Installation is a simple matter of running the appropriate setup on each of the machines to be used in the competition. A manual is available that provides detailed procedures for setting up the system and for running the system in both the demonstration and competition modes.

The system is designed to run on WinTel machines preferably on WinXP. With the exception of the Host the applications should run fine on almost any level machine as long as it has Ethernet capability. The Host application has the most to do and should be installed on the most capable machine. Any Pentium 4 class machine with Ethernet capability should work just fine. The other hardware components required are a simple wireless hub, optionally a digital projector for projecting the scoreboard or a flat panel display, and the necessary hardware for playing the pile up audio. Use of a wireless hub and machines with wireless Ethernet capability will, of course, minimize the amount of cabling required with the only cabling being that required to power the machines.

The number of machines required to implement this system will depend on the number of Manual Logger machines, the number of Player machines, and the number of Scoreboards to be used. For example a system consisting of a single Manual Logger, six Player machines, and a single remote scoreboard would require nine machines. Assuming five minute sessions with one minute for changeover and that most players use computer logging, such a system could handle approximately sixty competitors in an hour plus about ten pen and paper competitors assuming manual entry of

each log requires about the same amount of time as a session.

Software Availability

Those interested in using this system to sponsor pile up competitions should contact the author at his email address no5w@consolidated.net for the latest version of the software. Of course it is assumed that the sponsoring group, not NO5W, will provide the necessary hardware as well as the competition tape and checklist file and will perform other administrative duties related to the competition. Depending on the event NO5W can be available to provide support either on-site or remotely, as necessary.

Jari Jokiniemi
oh3bu@sral.fi

Remote fairness

Life is unfair. It most certainly is. By far, the greatest unfairness of them all is that some people live longer than some others. We can then argue about unfairness number two. I can't really say, if someone being rich while someone is poor, ranks as number two or three or whatever, but I am pretty sure that there are many people who feel that we are talking about one of the top issues. If you disagree with these statements, please don't say it to me. Please don't tell me anything about hard work and talent, or equal chances to start own business, or whatever topic is hot in economics at the moment. I have heard pretty much of it and much of it is technically speaking true in certain contexts. It's just not very intresting when the really big things of life are as they are. Go and talk to a Sub-Saharan mother who has lost her child because she can't afford to medication that only costs two euros.

Remote IC706 under construction (OH3BU)

Having said that, to create some perspective, we can now move on to fairness in contesting. Contesting is all about being fair. You set up a fair environment or at least a reasonably fair environment, you compete, and someone then comes out as the best, the one to be celebrated, the winner. There are rules that are to be obeyed, because not obeying the rules creates advantages that people consider unfair. Most of the contests have split participants into different categories, because it is a generally accepted principle that one should compete with the equals rather than just beat the defenseless. Most everyone agrees that it is not very sportsmanlike if a professional heavy-weight boxer hits a nurse who has never raised her hand against anyone. The very same logic has created different power categories as it is evident that there is a huge difference in capabilities between 1,5

kW and 5 W. The art of radio has it's own peculiarities, and these are also shown in contest rules. Propagation is very different in different parts of the world, so most contests split the world into different regions that are listed separately. That is why we have North American winners and European winners and not only the world winner. Due to some historical power games we have Assisted category in many contests while the use of spotting networks is prohibited in most of the classes in most of the contests. And then there is the ever-lasting dispute about single operator running two radios. While it has been statistically proven that this indeed creates a measurable advantage that is exactly why people do it, there has been no consensus if the advantage is fair or unfair and why exactly so.

Now comes the latest dispute: remote operation. First of all, there are people who wonder if it is against the contest rules or not. Ok, that is a reasonable question and an amazingly easy one to answer. Just read the rules. Do they say anything about remote operating? I thought so. Not a word, not in any of the big contests. Yeah, you have all the 500 meter rules and stuff like that. If you think that these in any way forbid remote operating then you must be thinking that an operator is part of a station. Oh, that would be news to me. I have no doubts about this one. According to the current contest rules it is self-evident to me that remote operating is allowed at least in all major contests. It is another matter if remote radios are allowed in every jurisdiction. Where I live, it is allowed. If you have any doubts, please feel free to consult your lawyer.

Even as remote contesting is legal and according to the contest rules in most cases, there is, however one problem. This is in fact a bad one. The current

DXCC rules, for some reason, require the remote operator to be in the same DXCC entity as the station in question. This is a major problem for dxers because the contacts you make so that you are in one DXCC entity while your station is in another one, are ok for the contest but are not ok for DXCC purposes. If dxers and contesters were two totally separate groups this would be a no-brainer, but as we know, quite many people belong to both groups. So, your great PJ4 station may be perfectly fine for remote contesting, but if you operate it from mainland US you create some trouble to your dxer friends. This is not good but that's how it is at the moment. I don't know why exactly the DXCC program has it's limitations. I never got a good reply when I asked, though we did exchange quite a few emails, but I can think of a few issues that are basically related to if a particular operation is legal or not. Some of the more rare places e.g. have limitations not only related to getting a radio license but also related to even stepping ones foot on the soil. If being there is illegal then it is somewhat difficult to build a legal remote station, too. Some jurisdictions don't allow remote stations, and to know all these may be somewhat difficult for the DXCC desk. So perhaps the current limitation is there just for the sake of it's simplicity. Please advice if you know better. Whatever the reasons may be, the unfortunate consequence of this simplistic solution is that the big countries are treated much more favorably than the small ones. A a guy in US east coast can operate his remote station in US west coast and be counted for DXCC. The distance between these is many thousands kilometers, and this covers most of the use cases of the ordinary operators, but it is not at all the same for Europe. For DXCC purposes, I cannot operate my Finnish station even from Sweden despite of the distance being only a few hundred kilometers.

This wouldn't need to be so. If there is a will there is a way. One could for example change the DXCC rules so that remote operation is allowed within an area where a particular license is accepted. As European countries have adopted the common CEPT licensing system this would solve it for the most Europeans. But with the current rules, a contester does wisely if he either conforms to the DXCC rules while operating remotely - or then at least clearly marks to his QSL card that he was operating his remote station from another DXCC entity, so that the other party, the dxer, knows that these contacts do not count for DXCC. I wonder if this is too much to ask. It would be better to change the DXCC rules, though.

Ok, remote contesting is perfectly legal in most cases. What then? Well, when the electronic keyers came, there were people who wanted to ban them. When the tape recorders advanced to record 48 hour straight, there were people who wanted to ban them. When the packet networks were invented, there were people who wanted to ban them. It shouldn't then surprise us that now that, as remote operating is becoming commonplace, there are people who want to ban it. The claim is that remote contesting is an unfair advantage. To have an unfair advantage one should, first of all, have an advantage, and secondly, it should be an unfair one.

I wonder if any of the opposers has actually operated remotely, ever. I have, so I know what I am talking about, and I know that the perceived advantage is in fact a disadvantage. First of all, sound through the internet is usually a bit delayed. That distracts the operator. It's not much of a problem when you are chasing dx, but running a pileup is clearly more difficult than when you are by your radio. Please, don't mumble

anything about a possibility to setup a VHF link. If you are able to make one, then you don't really want to contest remotely, you can so easily just drive to your station. You don't bother to take the effort to build a remote station if your radios are just 15 minutes drive away from your home. Secondly, you can never be sure that everything works as you think. Your internet connection breaks occasionally, so there you are with your fancy computers, the battle is on and you are out of the game. Your hamshack may be in fire and you only see the symptoms when suddenly your station stops working. Not that you could do anything to it, anyway, you are not there with your fire extinguisher, you see. I am not making this up. I know of two occasions when antenna problems have caused sparks that literally would have burned down the whole station and some trees in addition, had the operator not seen through the window that something is wrong. And thirdly, you know what, the user interface of your great remote station is going to be worse than what you are used to. You don't believe me? Just try it out. So where is the advantage, I wonder? There is nothing inherent in operating remotely that gives you an advantage, quite the contrary, you are handicapped by a few bad features of a remote station.

Ok, it is not this simple. Of course there is something superior in remote stations, otherwise people would not build those. The big thing is that a remote location gives you a possibility to build a big station, and operating it remotely gives you freedom to not travel there when you want to be on the air. I haven't seen big stations themselves being criticized too much. Hey, practically all the winning scores come from big stations. These are the ones we see on the covers of ham radio magazines. The proud owners make highly appraised speeches in club meetings. A big station definitely

gives an advantage, so we should ask if it is unfair that someone has a big station and someone else does not. Whenever you make this question, the big guns always begin to talk about how much work and money they have invested to their stations, and how the whiners should just get a job and build big stations themselves, too. Obviously, at least the big guns see no problem in being stronger than the rest. If we accept that it is ok to spend a lot of money and to build big stations, and I haven't seen much discussion against it, then we must recognize that to build a big remote station is all the same work than to build an ordinary big station - plus even some more. Please also note, that many remote stations are, in fact, small ones. Quite many hams especially in the USA are not allowed to have any antennas whatsoever in their home properties. The disease is called Conditions Covenants and Restrictions (CCR) and the symptoms are seen in high legal fees and hams dropping out of our beloved bands. To deny remote stations from these CCR limited people would be really, really unfair.

Now you may, of course, come back to the legal issues and say that if remote operating is not legal everywhere, then it is unfair that someone can do it and someone else cannot. I don't accept this argument. 1,5 kW is not legal in many countries. UK for example has 400 W limit, and there are loads of contesters in UK. Bhutan's limit is 100 W. We cannot do much to harmonize all radio regulations everywhere in the world, but we can get rid of our self-imposed limits that serve no higher purpose.

So it all pretty much boils down to the possibility to avoid traveling when you want to operate your station. I fail to see anything wrong with this. Quite the contrary. The less you drive your car, the better. When you drive or fly to your

big station out in the woods or in a Caribbean island, you are not only spending your hard-earned money. You are spending oil, and it is a bit unfortunate fact that there is a limited supply of it. In addition, you are polluting the air. I can't even spell the names of all the bad things that come out of the exhaust pipe, but remember that some of them cause cancer. Considering this, can anyone claim that reducing unnecessary traveling is a bad idea? I am a great fan of remote work, I have been doing it for years to earn my living. I would love to see the very same good thing happen in contesting, too. But the best part is still to come. While operating remotely, you are not only saving your money, you are not only saving the environment - you are also saving the most important resource you have - you are saving your time. The clock is ticking. Any moment you waste is gone forever. As contester, you very likely want to spend your time wisely. You should allow others to do the same. Anything else is bluntly unfair.

Imagine all the trouble and uncomfort while flying from the west coast, where you work, to the east coast, where your home farm and your great antennas are. You have to start your journey early to make it to the beginning of the contest. You have to actually start your travel even earlier to cover unexpected delays. You arrive at your destination, you are tired and some of your luggage is lost somewhere. You feet ache because of the bad airplane seats and you are getting early symptoms of flu because someone close to you your seat was sick. In addition, your ears are humming already before the contest because the plane was noisy. In comparison, imagine now that instead of the previous scenario, there is no jetlag, you are fresh and calm, there are no disturbing noises anywhere, you just press the buttons of your computer and begin operating the

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contest at your convenience. Sounds like the preferred option, doesn't it. Oh, you are saying that this is not the way the heroes are made. It is too easy. You need to overcome trouble and war, you have to do extraordinary things, you have to show what kind of a man you really are. We want the best of the best of the best, not some appliance operator. Well, I am not impressed. I couldn't possibly care less how much work you have invested in this hobby. I don't care at all how many years you have built your station. I don't even care if you have built your amplifier tubes by your own bare hands. The rules do have any multiplier factor based on hardships you endure. It is the score that counts.

When all facts are in favor of change, the last resort of resistance is often found in our beloved traditions. Whatever they might be. Having read all our national ham radio magazines since the first issue of January 1950, I have come to the conclusion that at least the following traditions have changed considerably in about half a century: using war surplus equipment, building capacitors oneself, using straight keys, the readability reporting system, AM modulation, wood towers, tower laws, power limits (can you imagine that the limit has been as low as 50 W here earlier), amateur radio bands (once 15 m was a new band, how would you think about that now), three-minute overs while on phone (these were considered short, yeah), understanding radio propagation, the ball point pen, computers, TVI and BCI (don't say to me that we have any real problems any more), CW versus phone (this particular dispute was going on already 1950, and the power between the camps has been shifting ever since), other services fighting for our bands, the advancement of transistors (could you now believe that this particular component was much overlooked when it appeared), the

internet, the IOTA program, getting women to our hobby, etc. The list continues forever. The point is that whenever the technology or society has changed in the past, so has changed amateur radio, too. And this is going to happen again with remote radios. You can be in favor of it, or you can oppose it. Your opinion may count and it may advance development or it may choke our hobby to it's knees. The choice is yours. And coming back to the theme of this article, how fair is it that those who have been around 40 or 50 years would dictate the future of our hobby? It has always been the young ones who make the future. We need to get more young ones to our hobby.

When all claims about unfair advantages have been ripped to pieces and the dead horse has been beaten again and again, the true reasoning comes clear. It is evident, though not easily admitted, that some people oppose remote contesting simply and only because they just don't like it. Ok, if you don't like remote contesting, don't do it. But to be fair, don't try to deny it from someone else.

WPX CW 2008 - Solo exercise on 10m HP / OHØJ

We have learned to read about looong and thorough preparations prior to any contest. Lengthy simulation of propagation patterns, working strategy, sleep/work time plan and balanced cuisine should be a standard operating procedure in preparation for a serious contesting weekend, too.

Here is my contribution to this hobby close to science.

Well, like Monthy Python says, "And now something totally different". My WPX CW 2008 weekend started after very busy days at work. So, I packed my car on Friday at 0100z after a 4-hour sleep to catch the 0600z ferry from Turku to Mariehamn, capital of Åland Islands. Did I forget something? Noup (I still cannot understand why not). Rig, linear, laptop, USB interface, cables etc.

I was online the whole ferry trip up to the arrival at 1100z to run the never ending email pile up + to have one teleconference. What a relaxing boat trip while my fellow passengers enjoyed lunch and wine.

Turku harbour 23.5.2008 0730z

One pit stop at Godby village. The local supermarket was my source of the luxury contest cuisine: apples, pure juice, soda water, dark bread, cheese and micro ready made fish and chicken soup – and of course six pack of the famous Åland beer, "Stallhagen"!

I arrived ca. 12.30z at Tjudö (OHØZ / JP90XI), unpacked the gear and checked that the installation was a ok. Well it wasn´t – the rotator display could not figure out where North was, so I made "check-turn-check" comparison - chart for true bearing vs. displayed direction.
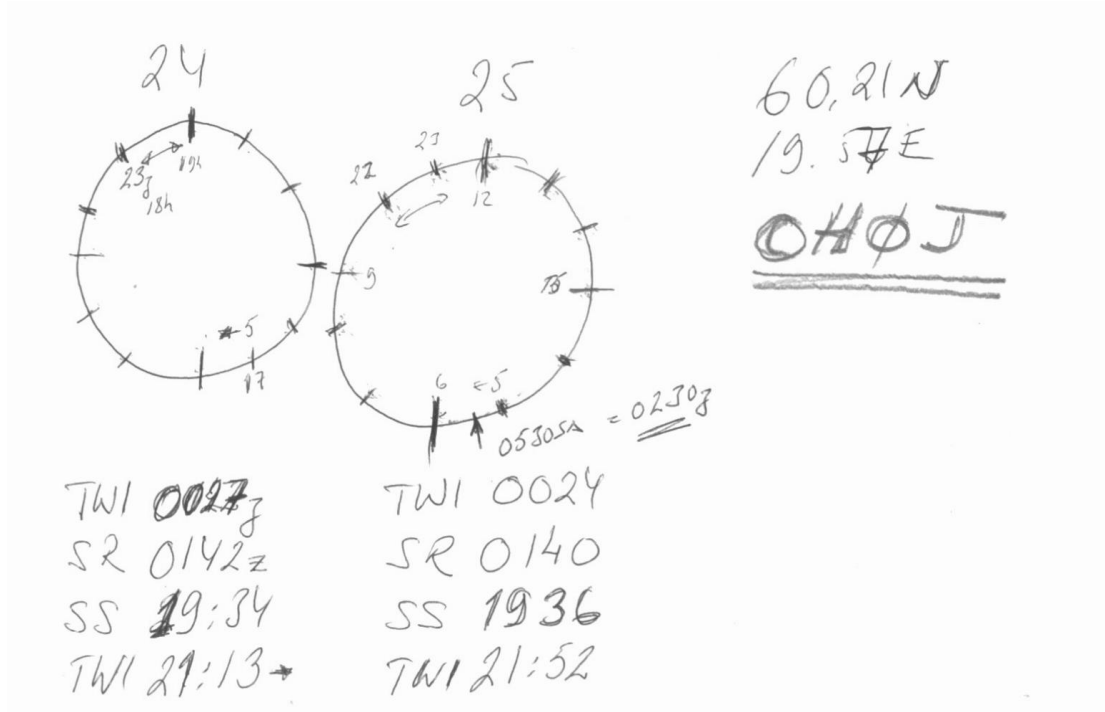
Then new firmware for microHam box without a crash (lucky boy). Latest sw update for Win-Test without problems (lucky boy agn). I started to feel, that this was my day!

But, ooops - I forgot to do the operating plan and rough propagation guestimates back home. Quick look to

Sunrise/Sunset tables, solar weather and some polling about recent QSO patterns via DX Summit "custom spots" archive http://www.dxsummit.fi/ helped m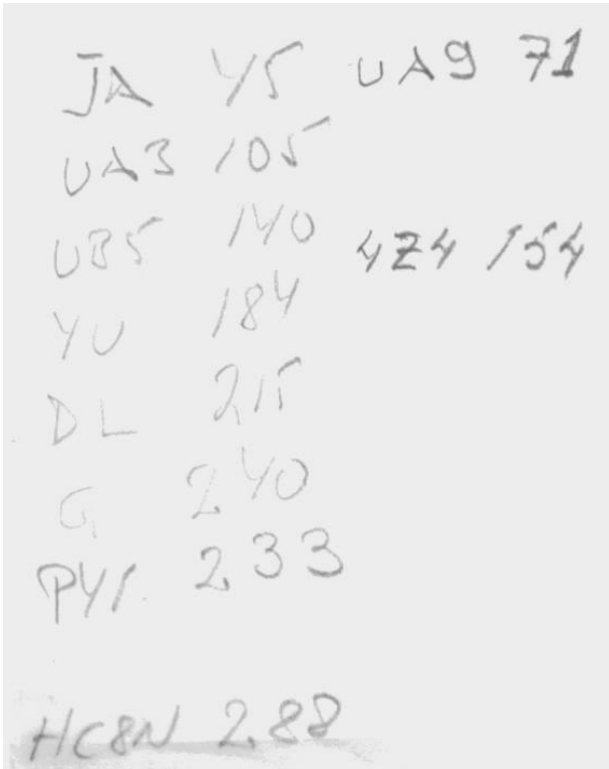e to produce in 10 minutes my highly sophisticated tables (see below) and "the multiplier hunters' direction chart". N.b. both tools have a special "no batteries included" -feature.

"QRV Table"

"Beacon Table"

JA Y5 UA9 71
UA3 105
UB5 140   4Z4 154
YU   184
DL   215
G   240
PY1 233

HC8N 2.88

"Direction Chart for JP90XI" (What is UB5?, Ed.)

Well, at 1400z I considered all done and concentrated to finish a story about renewable energy sources to a local newspaper where I frequently irritate the readers with my columns. Then, to kill time, I checked all the towers and antennas to find out that 80m dipole had taken a hit. The twilight time started when I soldered the dipole connectors out on a cliff and it was time to change from soldering iron to camera. What a beautiful, crystal clear spring sunset! I spent good one hour to collect changing colours of the nature. Unforgettable moments.

The station manager, wild hen capercaillie, was nesting only four meters from the cabin door and gave a real show every time I passed her nest. Hopefully the fledglings survived the prey of local foxes and raccoon dogs during the summer months.

OHØZ at sunset, 23.5.2008, 10m tower on the right.

After a long sleep (beauty of 10m contesting) I went on air at 0100z. First I forgot to open the score, prefix and rate windows in Win-Test and after a while I

found it to be a vice choice. Strategy from the first hour was to work all you can hear and to be patient to pick all prefixes "agn agn".

It really paid off. With the excellent, narrow beam of the 4 over 4 10m "tower C" and fast rotator to assist, I managed to be "all around" with only one tower. At 0630z I figured out, that I could run tower A with tower C through splitter and that helped to sustain a decent rate 60…70 Qs/h. Thanks for reminding Juha/OH1JT!

Some picks from the first day: 0310z JA6WIF 335 – no QSO, 0340z BV2TB 334 – no QSO, RX9SA 0322z loud, NR4M 1215z -1220z we tried hard – no QSO, sorry Steve.

I learned to be attractive and beautiful, since my fellow contesters tend to park +/- 100Hz from my pile up. Do you recognise yourself, dear reader? Never mind, but I keep record of these things for my ham radio biography, hi.

The band dried out ca. 2000z, so I went QRT to learn after the contest that HC8N would have been workable right after that. My apologies Steve & the team.

Second day started 0230z with a UA9/UA0 run and Eu opened already 0500z – promising.

The Eu pile was running nicely and I hit 100+ Qs/h rate 0700z … 0830z. Then the number of stns available just dropped and the rate was gliding very linear down to 30…40 Qs/h. Between 1350z … 1530z the condx went down to "normal OH" – aurora S4-S5 and fast fading. However, I kept my QRV/QRT plan since I would miss anyway the last 2 hours of the contest due to the ferry schedule.

After the aurora, lots of dupes started to poll me. Well, that was a good sign since

for the buys with only GP or dipole I was probably the only signal on the band from the north. I heard you guys well and did not use any pre-amp during the whole contest. After 2000z, band became quiet. I heard OJØB 2040z 559 for 3 seconds – no QSO with Pertti. So, I started gradually to pack and hit "CL" at 2157z to catch the 0030z ferry back to OH1.

Score? 1846 Qs / 22 Dupes / 590 Pfx / 2086 Points / 1.230.740 raw total.

Equipment: Icom ProII, OMF PA, microHAM, Win-Test, 4 over 4 & 4 over 4.

What to take home?

Plus: Focus 100% on operation. No background QRM as in M/S. No extra information visible; running score, QSO rate, multiplier count etc. to develop "mental barriers".

Minus: I pushed my luck for not preparing fundamental things (yes, I was lucky). One hour back home to do proper propagation analysis would have pull couple of extra (and obvious) multipliers to the log.

Big hand to Radio Sporting Team OHØZ http://www.qsl.net/oh0z/ for giving me a chance to try my limits.

CUL in contests!

Jouko / OH1RX

OG8X
CQ WPX CW 2008 M2
Photos OH7EA, OH1WZ.
Text OH1WZ.

The SOAB SO2R –setup in Arkala, constantly under development, was put to a beta test in May to map all possible "teething problems" and weak points at the station. A test crew of eight participated the WPX CW contest in the multi-2 category. This is a short description/travelog of the event as I experienced it.

The station consists of many working and tight parts, hardware and software. Much of the antenna selection / control units were set up the previous week, including the darker hours. This is what we guest operators noted as we arrived on the site late Friday evening from Helsinki, 600 km away. The assembly was still ongoing when the contest started as control unit boxes, towers, relays, cables etc. were diagnosed, bypassed, and/or replaced.

Sunset in Arkala 65°11'N, 26°14'E at 20 UTC or 23 local DST. May 23, 2008. Assemblers were working on the setup.

Because of the troubles, the station or one of the two transmitters was QRT at times at the start, and the first hour resulted in only 100 QSOs. Veijo, OH6KN and Toni OH2UA were solving technical issues that kept coming at every turn. After 20 minutes, there were 10 QSOs in the log and nearly as many malfunctioning boxes or operations.

A possible spike in the 220 VAC line killed the antenna control unit 10 minutes to the contest.

Myself, I arrived at the station, the front line from the officer headquarters, or "Arkala Hilton", late on Saturday morning. A quick interview revealed that it had been a busy night for those at the front.

Tired, Veijo, OH6KN photographed here Saturday morning, when he had managed to get and keep both stations on the air.

View in front of Veijo. Some of the antenna cables had loose connections, somewhere, and this caused obscurities at the station.

What is called "the upper 80-m 2-el yagi". In WPX CW the sun is only 4

degrees below the horizon, when it is darkest. Thus, 80 meters and even 40 meters were rather marginal. Not to mention 160 m.

On Saturday the operation continued with a "temporary fix". Even the RX-monitoring station was occupied, although listening on the bands wasn't so effective using a 12-m-high 2-el tribander, without BPFs. "OG8X" was everywhere on the bands on this RX. Still some tens of mults and qsos were identified through the noise and interference. In a proper M2 setup, there could be several listening stations, I realized at some point.

ES-propagation on 21 and 28 MHz gave us some comfort on Saturday. Stations as far as in 4X, EX, 4L, 3V8, UP, VP8 (18 Z), PY and HC8 (21 Z) were worked on ten. At 20-22Z, the ES-cloud was in a favourable position and produced a few 15-m qsos to PY, W4, HP, TI, YN, 6Y, FM, and XE. Another ES-cloud at 1 GMT opened a pipeline to YB, BY, HS and VK7. We heard stations from the south log JAs through the same ES-cloud, but up in Arkala, just 3 JAs were worked on 15 m later on Sunday.

In M2 it is possible to try "odd openings". We started to operate on 40 m early both afternoons and continued there in the morning as long as possible. NE4AA at 0415 GMT, nearly 3 hours after our sunrise, was the last W/VE stn. At 1523 UTC, ZL2IFB and JR1CBC were the first DX from the east – 4.5 hours before OH8-sunset.
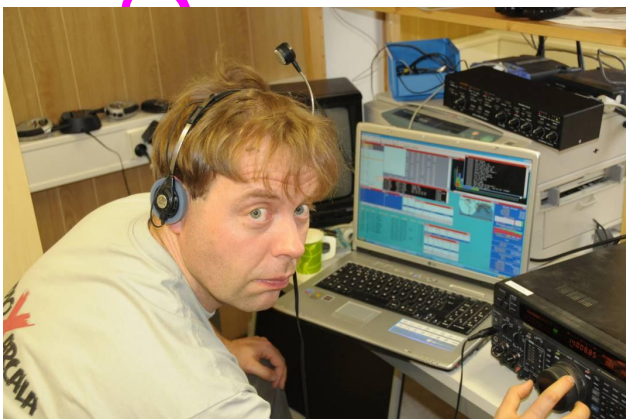
80 meters produced 349 QSOs. PP5EG, YC2MXV, XV9DT and ZS1JX were the best DXs. We did lots of QSO-moves to and from 40 and 80 meters. We aimed at the M2 OH-record and tried even moving QSOs.

Antti, OH7EA & Pasi, OH2IW on the two stations.
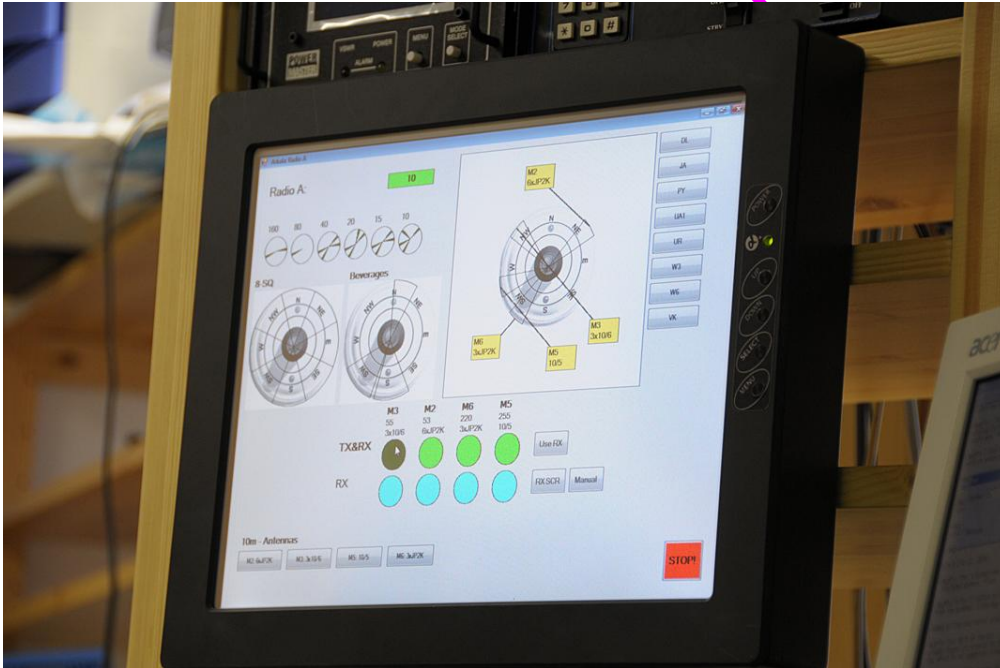
Touch screen for indicating, selecting and turning antennas (towers).

Tired OH1WZ listening for new mults and QSOs through the interference.

At 2359Z Sunday, the totals were 1152 multipliers, 5557 QSOs and 12,112,128 points, and we failed in making a new OH-record (OF6AA). Many lessons were learned, and lots of changes have been made to the systems at OH8X this summer.

73 OH1WZ

OG8X was operated by OH's 1WZ, 2BH, 2IW, 2MM, 2UA, 4JFN, 6KN, 7EA and 8NC.

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NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CQ WPX

If anyone wants their log checking report from the 2007 CQ WPX Contests, they are welcome to request it by email to me at k5zd@cqwpx.com. Please specify the call you used and the mode. The 2008 log check reports will be available after the results are published early next year.

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Post WPX CW cabling at OG8X (c.f. page 15).