

What will Contesting be 10 Years From Now (2017)??

Opinions collected by ES5TV in February 2007 through CQ-Contest reflector.

Radios

SDRs will obsolete our today's junk radios, just like superhet did to sparkies. (K3BU)

Ten-Tec will release at least one radio that costs over \$10000 USD. (WM5R)

Kenwood will make a come-back by releasing a contest-grade HF transceiver to challenge the Yaesu and Icom lines. (WM5R)

Transceivers will continue to develop more and more software-updatable functionality, but will continue to have user interfaces similar to what operators like today. Almost nobody will be contesting with radios that require a computer keyboard and mouse to operate. (WM5R)

Available receiver performance in HF radios used today for contesting will be much the same 10 years from now. Tools on those radios available to the operator aside from raw receiver performance will continue to evolve – possibly dramatically. There are inklings of this already - but there are also theoretical limits to signal detection - and limits to what the human ear can process. Will someone come up with a weak-signal (sub noise floor) detection system in an HF radio that can then reproduce/translate that signal to what sounds like an uninhibited audible signal to a human? We can see inaudible sub noise floor signals on computer screens now. How about real-time translation in the rig to an audible signal? (W4PA)

SO2R "in a box" is no doubt on the horizon. (N1UR)

There will be more SO2R in one box radios along the lines of the Yaesu FTDX9000, and the cost for them will come down into the \$3000 or \$4000 range. Maybe in the Icom 756PROIV or 756PROV. (W5TD)

There will be several contest quality radios with built in soundcard interfaces for PSK and RTTY, like the 7800 has today. This will make it possible to do RTTY or PSK without a computer. Maybe on the Icom 756PROIV or 756PROV. (W5TD)

As was mentioned before, Kenwood will release the TS970SDX to compete with the top of the line Icom and Yaesu rigs-in the \$10000 price range. They will also release the TS880S to replace the TS870, but it will also do dual receive. (W5TD)

Digital filters will be able to handle RF and the brick wall filters will be just that. Rigs will be like sound blaster cards and fit into the radio and offer true SDR arrangements. (VK4TI)

SDR - Software Defined Radio will make us do new things on the contesting scene. You may have software to automatically populate your bandmap. It will be much better than the old and steamy Dx Cluster. SDR will enable us to record domestic contests and having a post-software that calculates the result. You don't have to send in your log. The result will be ready the next minute after the contest has finished. SDR will make antennas a more active part in your Super Contest Station. Adaptable receiving antennas. Multiple beams from you stack. You can switch pattern instantly. All done by software. SDR will make the radios performance much better. No more key clicks, sharper filter etc. (SM5AJV)

DSP systems will be developed to aid in receiving. These will include CW receiving aids so that some operators will be able to detect noisy CW signals that would not be copy-able by ear alone. (N3BB)

I suspect the biggest changes will be in radios. New "receivers" will be a front-end box with a high-speed digital output. A PC will process that output stream to implement the functions we see perform in IF, DSP and AF stages today. The new companion transmitters will be a direct synthesis of the output RF, fed into amplifiers to get up to the working level. (K3NA)

Some stations may begin to experiment with phase-synchronized receiver cards attached to different antennas, with pattern synthesis done in hardware, as the cost of RX cards declines. (K3NA)

Amplifiers

No-tune and auto-tune amplifiers will be much more popular and affordable than today. (WM5R)

Someone will sell a very expensive HF amplifier with a built-in 15" LCD video display capable of oscilloscope-like and spectrum-analyzer-like displays of the input and output waveforms. (WM5R)

Solid state amplifiers (no more tuning!) (K5ZD)

Antennas

I think some other innovative multi-band antennas will be here. (NIUR)

More use of better antenna systems, the trap tribander will disappear replaced by the DJ2UT and Steppir styles, but monobanders will still rule supreme. (VK4TI)

In the US the issue is going to be land development and tower zoning. If you live in the North East, building a new station might become impossible. (WM3O)

80m yagis are standard. (OH6LI)

Robot operating

There will be a continued evolution of use of various sources of real-time outside information (spotting), and databases by logging software. Attempts will be made by contest rule-makers to define the acceptable limits of computer assistance to "unassisted" operators, particularly regarding real-time deciphering of CW and voice signals. (N4ZR)

Some real-time hardware support will be available in popular operating systems, marketed primarily for video gamers, and at least one contest logging package will take advantage of it for CW and other sequencing and switching tasks. (WM5R)

Someone is going to come up with an automated superstation that uses some form of voting technology in real-time to select optimal antennas based on signal arrival angle/strength. (W4PA)

Speech recognition might work on limited hamradio contest vocabulary but this is not a profitable application. Many others were implemented. Speech synthesis of whole phrases is feasible now with cheap disk storage. Just takes time. (S56A)

In 10 years, major phone contests will be won by contestants who use 100% recorded voice files. (NS3T)

In my view, amateur radio contesting needs or will soon need a new rule - only the human mind may be used for real-time extraction of intelligence from received signals. The dark future I see is one where robots with enough computing power will, as Mario says, do SO6R without their keeper's intervention (except for paying the bills). (N4ZR)

Robot operators (the computer will tune the band looking for multipliers) (K5ZD)

Remote operating

Virtual DXpeditions. Many rare islands will be inhabited with equipment and antennas tied to the internet that can be rented by the hour or the day or by contest. In fact, contest superstations will be for rent without anyone having to be there to operate them. (K5AF)

Another virtual contest could be an Earth Moon Earth EME contest where some lucky dxpeditioners try to virtually work the contest FROM THE MOON! (K6GEP)

Automation/remotability of computer controlled devices related to contesting will continue to advance forward. This includes transceivers. (W4PA)

Stations will be set up in various countries and operated from home via the internet or a phone line. This could become a new business venture. I can just see this going on eBay as a bid item--"Operate the contest from Spratley Island--bid now." (W7WHY)

While I believe that technically, internet based remote contesting might be achievable (seems like delays are an inhibitor right now), I am predicting that the practice would be regulated out by the Contest Committees. (N1UR)

The use of Kenwood's Sky Command as well as the Yaesu and Icom versions will create a controversy in the contesting community as to whether remote operation should be a separate class or not. (W5TD)

Progress in wideband wireless technology should enhance hamradio curiosity of natural ionosphere behavior. It might be misused for remote receivers or even whole automated stations. If we follow these trends, we might operate simulated contests on more reliable internet media and forget about ionosphere. Remember that PC beats humans in much more demanding chess these days. (S56A)

Remote connectivity will increase in usage and popularity. There will be people operating stations located in DX locations from their homes in the USA and Europe. (N3BB)

People will have remote *receiving* locations in addition to remote transmitters. Rules will be necessary to prevent people from being able to access remote receiving antennas. (N3BB)

Remote controlled stations (operate from DX without leaving your house) (K5ZD)

Many more stations will be remotely operated over high-speed Internet connections. Perhaps one or two sites will experiment with multiple simultaneous operators on the same band. This would require Class A broadband amps of high power to generate multiple clean transmit signals in different parts of the band... bigger coax and higher-power switching systems... etc. A physically separated RX site would also be required. (K3NA)

Even more use of Internet technology (unfortunately) (K5ZD)

Contesting hardware

Someone will develop a wireless (bluetooth, maybe) headset for contesting that will be the next Heil Proset in the marketplace. (WM5R)

Logging programs

TR Log will still be a DOS program. (W6SX)

Someone will develop a phone version of MorseRunner/RUFZ. (WM5R)

At least 10% of all contesters will continue to use DOS-based logging programs. (WM5R)

Contest log programs will have more decision logic in them. The log program will advise what to do next according to your goal and current situation. The log program will interact with Internet in a much more extensive way than today. You will be able to predict openings and changes in band conditions using ionospheric resources on the Internet. (SM5AJV)

Better ergonomics for logging and radio control software will (hopefully!) see the light of day as software authors apply more professional standards to their GUI. (K3NA)

Contesting achievements, operating practices

Although the percentage of Europeans at WRTC will increase, reflecting their overall increase in contesting as a whole, a W/VE team will continue to win the top spot at the next two WRTCs. (WM5R)

A single-operator will break the 7000 QSO mark in the ARRL 10 Meter Contest. (WM5R)

A single-operator will break the 12000 QSO mark in CQWW CW or phone. (WM5R)

The USA will send a team to a High Speed Telegraphy World Championship, but they will not win a medal on the first attempt. (WM5R)

CQWW will still be considered the most-prestigious worldwide DX contest. (WM5R)

The peak all-time scores -- forever -- for some DX contest categories may be reached in this coming sunspot cycle because of the aging of contesters. 10 years from now, we may know who the all-time high scorers in our lifetime -- in the life of the hobby -- will be. (W4PA)

More and more HF contesters will have discovered the joys of 6 meters, and the ARRL and CQ VHF contests will be setting new records for the number of entrants and for scores. (W5TD)

The new influx of "foundation" class licenses will give us many more operators, new records will have been set in the latest sunspot peak, companies like Hamnation will realize they had it right on what people wanted but Chinese companies will be producing the products for a tenth of the price. (VK4TI)

If ham radio exists after 10 years we'll do mainly contesting (not dx-ing, experiments, etc) That is... Contesting is the future of Ham Radio. (SV1DPI)

CW segment of the bands will be reduced to such a small sliver that contesting would become the province of computers with narrow filters sending high speed code - more like PSK31 and the likes, but still CW - 10 qso's at once type of thing. (WM3O)

CW scores start to decline. RTTY/PSK start to glory. SSB is as today. There are a few stronger stations that dominate, the dominating stations are partially same as today. (OH6LI)

Older contesters are fading away. This shows maybe in the most visible way so some world class M/M sites are QRT or have changed owners. They are more likely to go QRT. World politics is a surprise element. (OH6LI)

There will be gambling odds on the top competitors before major contests. (N3BB)

Contest rules

Some contests, at least, will institute an "anything goes" category with respect to computer assistance and external data. (N4ZR)

Most contest sponsors will shorten submission time for logs dramatically, with exceptions for paper logs. (N4ZR)

The two major sponsors of radio contests and awards (if there are still two by then) will integrate contest logging and award credit so that LOTW-like award credit will be available for a fee) immediately after log checking. (N4ZR)

Contests offering enhancements of this sort will institute modest entry fees for serious contenders to help fund capital improvements. (N4ZR)

To address perceived abuses in the HQ competition, the IARU HF contest will be the first to remove credit for "uniques" logged for all stations. This will cause significant controversy. (WM5R)

At least two major contest sponsors will stop accepting paper logs. (WM5R)

More contests will accept corporate awards sponsorship. (WM5R)

At least one major contest sponsor will become far more transparent and public with adjudicated disqualifications for cheating. (WM5R)

A major HF contest will switch to distance-based scoring based on grid locators. (WM5R)

There will be a special "antenna restricted" category added for people who have to use indoor or in the attic antennas due to HOA restrictions. (W5TD)

The popularity of other digital modes will lead CQ magazine to sponsor a non-RTTY digital modes contest where any digital mode besides RTTY and CW may be used. (W5TD)

CQ will drop the "band restricted" category for its contests due to lack of entrants. (W5TD)

Real time scoring

There will be a much broader acceptance and use of real-time scoreboards. (N4ZR)

"real time scoreboards" are already here, the question of whether they are adopted is another issue. (N1UR)

There will be real time scoring available. It won't be mandatory but most entries from the developed countries will use it. (N3BB)

On the operating side, initial experiments in real time log validation will be underway. Real time sharing of scores during the contest will be non-controversial and common. (K3NA)