

North American QSO Party Winter 2019

NN1C@K1LZ

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Each year in NAQP my score has effectively doubled or grown, as I've gotten better at this game, although I have a feeling it cannot do that next year :). This is only my third running of this contest. The last two years I have operated at K1VR, in 2017, signing 2017, and 2018, signing KR1DX. After getting a new callsign in December (NN1C -- Old was KC1CWF), I figured it would be an excellent chance to get on the air and put up a good score. I am only 17, so I don't have a ton of experience here. Even so, I spent a lot of time asking around for advice, both within the YCCC and sent a lot of emails to the (hopefully former) MA record holder.

Krassy, K1LZ has amenable to the use of his great station, so it sounded like we had a plan. The contest started for me ten days in advance of the 1800z hour on Saturday of NA. The K1LZ station is regularly reconfigured for different contests (M/2, M/S, SO1R, SO2R, Single Band, 2 Stations on a band...), and as such, there is a bit of setup to do to get the station ready for the contest. The station is a 90-minute drive from my school in downtown Boston. After getting two radios setup, a computer, antenna switching, and as much other stuff working as I could, I left the station, leaving some critical setup stuff to be done the day of the contest. This visit also turned up two station problems: the 40m 3/3 stack was acting funny, nor was the 5 element 20m beam at 50ft working at all, which forms a key part of the stack of 20m Yagis I'd use to the South West - 150/50. Alas, I ended up making nearly 1500 of the 1700 QSOs I made in this contest on a single 20m 5 element Yagi at 150ft and a single 3 element 40m Yagi at 120ft.

I arrived at the station early on the day of the contest, with lots of final checkouts to do. My biggest weakness was setting up TX audio on my second radio (A Flex 6600M). I could not get remotely contest-grade audio out of that radio. Nonetheless, I did the best I could and carried on.

About 20 minutes before the start of the contest, I found a frequency on 20m and got prepared for what would turn out to be a few very fun hours of contesting.

At 1800z, we were off to the races. BANG! POW! What followed were three fantastic hours, in which nearly 700 stations went into my 20m log. My first 3 hours were 252, 206, and 189. Never did I ever think that one could open with a 250+ hr in the US in a stateside contest. However, my great rates on 20m kept me from spending time pushing the second radio, that really hurt my multiplier count, and kept me from what could have been a first-place finish. I made quick spins of 15m on the second radio, but

couldn't seem to find any new mults there. KZ1W called in for WA, and I was able to move both W1UE and W1TJL to 15 (and W1UE to 10, thanks Dennis!) to pick up CT and MA. By the time I took my first break, and realized how far behind I was in mults, I knew where I had screwed up, and that a victory wasn't in the cards.

By 2130z I went to 40m, as 20m was slowing down. There is a chance I may have left a tad too early, but the rate was going away, and I was anxious to throw lots of new mults in the log.

I knew that there were probably at least 8-12 multipliers that I left on the table on both 15m and 20m, and probably 2-3 that could have gone in the log with more aggressive passing to 10m. A multiplier count of over 200 would have made for a solid winning performance. This is why there is always next year.

After my 45 minute break, (in which I left the factory-station, drove to a nearby Subwrestaurant, grabbed a sub, and came back), I finally figured out that the best path forward would be to maximize rate on 40m while making sure I picked up every multiplier I could.

When I went back on the air, I hit 40m hard, finding a nice run frequency, and settling down for what would be a ~3-hour run, where nearly 700 stations would into my 40m log. During that time, I tried to make some tunes of 80m and 160m, but struggled to find multipliers.

By 0100z, the contest slowed down, and it was a consistent bounce between 40m, 80m, and 160m. I struggled to find rate, even spending significant time tuning the knob. Still, the multipliers did not come. I could not recover from where I started. However, I did have Qs to sit on. It is clear that everyone beat me out on 160m and 80m, strange even noting that my 160m score was far below my total at K1VR last year. NN3W had 3x more Qs on 160, and 2x more Qs on 80. It is hard to know exactly where I went wrong there. I will have to learn to up my 80m/160m game for next year.

My final score came to +/- 245k. Enough for a new MA record.

A fun contest. I can't wait for January 2020.

Marty (Bob)
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