

Maryland-DC QSO Party

Cumberland Amateur Radio Club (CARC) recently recapped its performance in the ARRL 2020 Field Day Operating Event. The short version is that we believe the event will be more enjoyable if we take steps to sharpen our skills.

One way of sharpening skills is to practice regularly. Almost every weekend provides an opportunity to practice those Field Day operating skills by operating in one of the on-air Radio Sport contests.

With that in mind, the purpose of this post is to share a few thoughts about the upcoming Maryland – DC QSO Party. CARC Club Members and other ham radio operators may enjoy spending quality time on-the-air as they develop their skills and share contest points with colleagues.

The folks who sponsor the Maryland-DC QSO Party publish a set of rules. The rules document is 9 pages long. For most of the audience at the CARC website, a lot of those rules deal with situations that probably are not a factor. My primary goal is to zero-in on the rules that are important to the typical operator. It would be good for you to have a copy of the complete rules document available for reference. In case there are conflicts or gaps between what I say in this posting and the actual rules then it will be the actual rules that matter. Here goes....

An official set of rules can be obtained at the Anne Arundel Radio Club website. www.w3vpr.org/mdcqsop
Additional helpful information can be obtained at www.w3vpr.org/mdcqsoplins

The Maryland – DC QSO Party takes place the second Saturday of August. In 2020 this will be August 8. The contest begins at 10:00 a.m. local time and ends at Midnight local time.

Each participating station will have a Station Category. There are eight station categories that cover all the possibilities. The people in this reading audience probably all will be categorized as STANDARD STATION. It will be beneficial for you to have a list of all eight Station Categories. Such a list exists in the rules.

Each participating station will have a Location. The people in this reading audience probably all will be located in PENNSYLVANIA.

The MDC QSO Party permits three transmitting modes to be used: CW, PHONE, DIGITAL. If you intend to operate a digital mode you should read the full set of rules for additional information. There are complicated procedures for FT8 Digital exchanges.

Stations located in Maryland or the District of Columbia are permitted to work stations in any Location – inside Maryland-DC, in any State or any Canadian Province, and in any Country.

Stations located outside of Maryland-DC may work only stations that are located inside Maryland or the District of Columbia. The people in this audience probably are located in Pennsylvania and may work other stations only if the other station is located in Maryland or the District of Columbia.

The purpose of this contest is to make two-way radio contacts with as many other participants as possible. There are specific requirements for the information that is to be exchanged between stations and logged for scoring purposes.

(continued)

The contest exchange consists of the Station Call Sign, the Station Category, and the Station Location.

The MDC stations that you contact may be using any one of the eight supported Station Categories. It will be beneficial for you to have a list of the eight Station Category names at your fingertips during the contest. You don't need to know the definition of a particular Station Category. Just be familiar with the Station Category name so that you can log the name correctly.

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| Club Station | CLB | QRP Station | QRP |
| Roving Station | ROV | Standard | STD |
| Unusual | UNU | Amplified | AMP |
| Mobile | MOB | Unlimited | UNL |

Assistance – the Maryland-DC QSO Party Rules do not mention the use of spotting networks, skimmers, or other forms of assistance other than to say that Self-Spotting is not permitted.

Stations located inside Maryland or the District of Columbia are going to send the name of their COUNTY (or CITY in two cases) as the Station Location. It will be beneficial for you to have a list of the 25 recognized COUNTIES/CITIES at your fingertips during the contest.

| | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| Allegany | ALY | Howard | HWD |
| Anne Arundel | ANA | Kent | KEN |
| Baltimore City | BAL | Montgomery | MON |
| Baltimore County | BCT | Prince George's | PGE |
| Calvert | CLV | Queen Anne | QAN |
| Caroline | CLN | St. Mary's | STM |
| Cecil | CEC | Somerset | SMR |
| Charles | CHS | Talbot | TAL |
| Dorchester | DRC | Washington | WAS |
| Frederick | FRD | Wicomico | WIC |
| Garrett | GAR | Worcester | WRC |
| Harford | HFD | Washington DC | WDC |

Stations may be worked only once per Band and Mode combination with special allowance for stations that may move to new counties during the contest. Any station operating from a new county shall be considered to be a new station.

Suggested Frequencies are listed below as well as in the MDC QSO Party Rules. It will be beneficial for you to have a set of Suggested Frequencies at your fingertips during the contest. Feel free to move up or down from the suggested frequencies in search for contest activity.

CW: 3.557, 7.045, 14.045, 21.045, 28.045, 50.095, 144.095

SSB: 1.895, 3.821, 7.230, 14.271, 21.371, 28.371, 50.131, 144.141, 431.141

FM: 52.525, 146.55, 146.58, 223.40, 446.00

Digital: In accordance with the ARRL Band Plan

Scoring Strategy – On one hand, work as many stations as you can in order to develop your contest skills.

However, if you are feeling competitive, your score consists of QSO points, three types of multipliers, and three types of Bonus Points.

QSO Points – CW = 3 for each QSO, Digital = 2 for each QSO, Phone = 1 for each QSO.

Power Multiplier – 5 watts or less = 3, up to 150 watts = 2, greater than 150 watts = 1

Station Category Multiplier – Standard = 1

Worked Locations Multiplier – For the targeted reading audience most likely located in Pennsylvania, the total number of MDC-DC Counties worked (including Baltimore City and Washington DC), (Maximum 25).

Bonus Points for working W3VPR = one-time 50 points for working the Anne Arundel Radio Club station one or more times.

Bonus Points for Electronic Submission of your entry = one-time 50 points. See Log Submission for additional information.

Worked all 25 MDC Counties/Cities = one-time 500 Bonus Points

Log Submission – www.w3vpr.org/QSO_Party_Submission (Note: There are underscore characters between the words QSO, Party, and Submissions)

You are required to provide a Cabrillo format or equivalent file of your contest QSOs.

Your logging software should be able to produce the required Cabrillo entry document.

You are required to provide a QSO Party Summary Sheet.

The Web Application collects the information needed to fulfill the Summary Sheet requirement.

The entry deadline is 30 days following the end of the contest.

Prizes – You are entering this contest as a way of improving your contest skills. If you achieve your goal then that is the Grand Prize. There are Award Certificates and Participation Certificates as described in the official rules document.

Miscellaneous Items of Interest:

Baltimore County and Baltimore City are two separate locations. Please listen carefully and log accurately.

Washington County and Washington DC (or District of Columbia) are two separate locations. Please listen carefully and log accurately.

The contest rules for 2020 are new and in some cases are different than prior year rules. If you are reading information found on the W3VPR website please pay careful information to the date of publication. On July 22, 2020 I observed information referring to contest conditions in the outdated 2019 rules that no longer exist in the 2020 rules.

General Contest Concepts:

One of the sermons I frequently preach explains that contests work the best when all the parties are familiar with the exchange and sequential flow of information. The sender expects that the receiver has a pretty good idea of what is going to be sent and therefore will be well-prepared to log that information. The receiver expects that the sender is going to send his information in a manner consistent with the rules and general practice among similar contests.

With the exception of sprint type contests, one station in a QSO is designated as being in RUNNING MODE and the other station is designated as being in SEARCH & POUNCE MODE.

The RUNNING MODE station parks his transmitter on a clear frequency, calls CQ and hopes to receive responses from the SEARCH & POUNCE MODE stations.

The SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station tunes up and down the band listening for RUNNING MODE stations who may be calling CQ, or who may be engaged in a soon-to-be-completed QSO. When the SEARCH & POUNCE operator hears a RUNNING MODE station the S&P Station will pay attention to the rhythm of the Running Station and develop a sense of when and how quickly he needs to make his own moves when the RUNNING MODE station stops talking.

Information flows Back and Forth with the RUNNING MODE station taking his turn talking and then handing over to the SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station.

The SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station acknowledges or confirms receipt of the exchange and then immediately sends his own exchange before handing the QSO back to the RUNNING MODE station.

At that point the RUNNING MODE station will acknowledge or confirm receipt of what the SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station sent.

When both stations have sent their exchanges and each station has confirmed the other station's information the QSO should be logged.

The RUNNING MODE station stays on the frequency and calls CQ CONTEST or perhaps QRZ CONTEST.

The SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station tunes up or down the band looking for a new RUNNING MODE station to work. Or, the SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station may choose to find a clear frequency and choose to become a RUNNING MODE station.

When a SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station hears a contest QSO in progress he should listen carefully to the information that is being passed back and forth. One of the two stations is the Running Mode station. The other station is the Search & Pounce station. When this contest QSO has been completed the Running Mode station is going to stay on this frequency and hoping to work another SEARCH & POUNCE MODE station. The S&P Operator will gain an advantage if he can identify who is the Running Mode station in this QSO and be well-prepared to call that station when the QSO has finished. In other words, you don't have to find a station who literally is calling CQ CONTEST. You can listen for contest stations that have good signals, get their call sign, and jump in when it is your turn to transmit.