WES Contesting Primer

Joe Pontek, V31JP K8JP, SKCC 3171

There are many reasons to participate in the SKCC Week-End-Sprint-a-thon or the Straight-Key-Sprint. The main and common reason is to have fun. No matter what your skill level or experience is, you can and should have FUN! What do you need? The minimum is a radio to receive and transmit with, a key, an antenna, paper and pencil, and a place to use them.

So, let us get started with doing an SKCC WES.

The RULES! Well, these are the guidelines for our participation and having fun. As Bill points out, it is really more than a sprint because of the length; hence a sprint-a-thon is more appropriate. A marathon would be, normally longer. Oh, you don't have 24 hours to dedicate to it, "No problem, Mon!" You can operate all of the specified 24 hours or only enough time to have that one QSO you need for SKCC WAS, your Centurion, Tribune or what ever. Hey, a dedicated contester will take each and every contact he can muster up, so your one contact WILL be gladly received, especially towards the end when things go slow. There is no slot window anymore unless the theme requires one; i.e. work as much of the 24 hours as you can. **ALWAYS READ THE RULES BEFORE A CONTEST!** There could be a last minute change you need to know about. Good contests make changes promptly after the last contest, but circumstances may require last minute changes. Be prepared.

The quick and dirty of it is, you can work a station once on each non-WARC band during the contest duration using a key that meets the SKCC key criteria. That is, QSO's must be made using a straight key or a bug (Side swipers are a cross between a bug and a straight key so are also accepted). Any amount of legal power is allowed, though there is a QRP class.

There are two ways to go about this. You can S&P or CQ. Most beginners prefer S&P; that is search (tuning about) and pounce (calling a station.) You tune about, find a station you have not worked on that band calling CQ or finishing another QSO. When that station is done, you call; "NT9K de V31JP K" and you can leave out the "de" and the "K". Wow! NT9K comes back; "V31JP de NT9K GE OM BILL FL SKCC 1926T BK". Oh, man! I missed his

SKCC number! You send "SKCC NR?" Bill sends "SKCC 1926T 1926T". You got it. You send "GE BILL HR JOE V3 SKCC 3171T BK" and Bill returns with; "TU QRZ SKCC DE NT9K" and moves on for the next caller and QSO. If the operator is not an SKCC member, they will give you their power. There is a recommended order to send your information, NAME, S/P/C and SKCC# (or power for non-members). Send your information in that same order! The other operator is expecting your information in that order and when you send it in another order, it could confuse them, throw them off the pace and, worse yet, may require you to send a fill!

For logging, here is a simple form I use for paper and pencil logging. The items are in the order of properly sent information. Computer logging programs are set up this way, also, and it is more of a pain to jump about.

DATE	BND	TIME	Q#	CALL	NAME	S/P/C	SKCC#	C	T
/ /	M	:	1						
/ /	M	:	2						
/ /	M	:	3						
/ /	M	:	4						
/ /	M	:	5						
/ /	M	:	6						
/ /	M	:	7						
/ /	M	:	8						
/ /	M	:	9						

For the SKCC WES, the date will be the same for the whole event in UTC. Sometimes, I only insert the time every few minutes when things are going hot and furious. I only enter the band at the start and then for the first QSO after a band change. Another logging hint, when the other operator is going a bit fast, you can, with a pencil, write in his information during previous QSOs. When you work him, you just have to confirm he did not change any of the exchange data. It helps if you feel rushed and you will the first few times. In time, you will probably start wishing they would speed up, stop repeating everything, etc. You will fall into a routine. You will remember names, states, etc. and be writing ahead, especially if you worked that station before on another band.

Remember, the other station wants your information and for you to copy his information. It is required for a valid QSO in the Sprint, so they should be willing to help you. Remember, they want to work you as much or more than you want to work them.

Another hint is; just work as many stations in the Sprint-a-Thon as you can. Do not worry about the S/P/C (State/

Province/Country) multipliers at first. As you build experience, you will learn to look for and work the rarer multipliers. Likewise, the bonus points will happen and you will count and add them after the contest. For beginners, I recommend just working as many stations as you can during the contest.

Also, you may work a non-member, so be prepared to copy their power instead of an SKCC number.

The SKCC WES is held on the 4th Sunday UTC of each month; i.e. Saturday evening to Sunday evening in most of the U.S. The suggested frequencies are posted on the web site. Depending on the level of activity, the spread maybe plus or minus 2 or 3 kHz or they maybe up to 25 kHz. Tune about. Also, in the WES, you can and should use the SKCC Schedule Page. I do recommend not to entirely depend on the sked page. Tune and use your ears.

OK. You're feeling confident. You have worked all the CQing stations doing S&P. Let's CQ. It is no different except now the other station will call you. Don't get flustered. Take your time. There are a lot of other stations that were only doing S&P and now they will start calling you. If you miss a call, part of the exchange, ask for a fill. Send "CALL?", "NAME?", "STATE?" AND THEY WILL REPEAT. No need to send "UR STATE?", etc.

Well, you did it. You participated in your first contest. You made screw ups, you lost contacts in the QRM/QRN/QSB, your wife called you in the middle of a QSO, etc, but you worked a bunch of stations, had fun, got a new state, country, etc. Count your valid contacts, S/P/Cs, Cs, Ts and how often you worked the club call. Use Bill's formula and figure your score and submit it on the web page for that. With that, you have become a veteran contester! Every one of us has gone through this. In time, it will all be old hat. I remember, after many years of contesting, I operated the ARRL DX Contest from the Turks and Caicos Islands as VP5JP. I was the DX for once. I can tell you, I was scared of what I would get after that first CQ. Oh, did I have callers! I probably had 30 to 40 callers after that first CQ. After a very few minutes, I was into a routine and I often say, "I would not recognize my mother if she called me when I am in that mode." Yes, they are "Wham, bang, thank you mum QSOs." But, after the contest, you compare notes and stories with other contesters. I have made many deep and dear friendships that continue over these many years.

I, often, make notes during and right after a contest. Some are for myself; things to work on, improve on, etc. before the next contest. Others are used for the "Soap Box comments." It is always great fun to read those submitted by fellow contesters. There are worth well hints to be picked up, funny experiences, etc. that make these worth while reading.

I hope this little article is of some help and encourages you to give it a try. I get into some contests to win, while others, I get in just to give some friends a point, a multiplier, pick up a state or country, check out my station or just to say hi to someone. They are all fun experiences.

Ragchewing

Melinda, KI4CIA, SKCC # 0002

One of the hardest things for me when I first got started on CW was getting past the RST, QTH, name, RIG, WX contacts and actually getting to "chat". I remember my first ragchew, it was also the first time I had a CW contact which lasted more than 30 minutes (1 hr 40 mins). It was with our very own Gordon, N6WK. We talked about his XYL, kids, grandkids, my husband and extended family, and our hobbies. Of course, the speeds were really slow – about 10 wpm, I think? But it was still lots of fun.

Ragchews won't happen with each and every contact, or at least they don't to me. So, many times we just talk about our rigs and give the temp for the day. I did have one op up north ask me about the weather in Alabama, specifically if we got a lot of snow around here, so he got a very short list of the most recent snows that were of any account in my lifespan (one – March 13, 1993). So, even weather can be ragchewing.

One of the best ways to get a ragchew going is to mention your hobbies. Sure, there's maybe a 1 in 10 chance the other guy has the same hobby, but when he does – WOW! For instance, just this week I met a guy from TN on 40 meters CW. I had a hard time hearing him (conditions were awful!). I mentioned that I also enjoy shooting and fishing. Turns out he competes in high power rifle matches. Of course, his signal dropped out about that time too, so we didn't get to chat long. But I'll definitely listen for him and hope to hear him on the air again!

Another thing that gets people talking is to mention any vacations you've taken (or are planning), especially if they are out of the ordinary – visiting civil war / revolutionary war historical sites, driving from coast to coast, going to Alaska J, visiting other countries. Personally, I find these stories very interesting and like to hear other people's experiences with their travels.

Even if your sending is 5 wpm, you can still have a very enjoyable ragchew. Just wait – next time some of you newer ops find yourself in a ragchew, the time will pass and before you know it, and you'll be copying faster and better at the end of the QSO than at the beginning.

And I can't talk about ragchewing without mentioning this – for those of you who like to collect "wallpaper", SPAR (Society for the Preservation of Amateur Radio) has a Rag Chewers' Club award available for any QSO which lasts 30 minutes or longer. I currently hold No. 0286 for CW. To apply for this award, go to http://www.spar-hams.org, click on Rag Chewers' Club from the list of Awards and follow the instructions provided. (You can view the list of recipients by clicking on RCC/CRC Members.)

Hope to hear you on the bands, and be forewarned - I'm a long-winded CW op.

New Members

3426, WA0CW, Lou, Webster Groves, MO
3427, WA1WQG, Bruce, Bozrah, CT
3428, N8HAP, Wade, Portsmouth, OH
3429, KE6YX, David, Oakland, CA
3430, YC1UUU, Yon, Tangerang, Indonesia
3431, K6HT, Henry, Vallejo, CA
3432, W9KV, Jim, Durango, CO
3433, WB0RZN, Walter, Topeka, KS
3434, KI6FEN, Douglas, Sacramento, CA
3435, N4UEZ, Brian, Oak Ridge, NC
3436, W6SDW, Steve, San Diego, CA
3437, YC1SAM, Sammy, Tangerang, Indonesia
3438, N2WCY, Donald, Woodstock, NY
3439, NY2FD, George, Punta Gorda, FL
3440, W5CPD, Patrick (Pat), Del Rio, TX
3441, KC8FRP, Thomas, Delaware, OH
3442, W8TAH, Tim, Medina, OH
3443, K3AS, Bill, Wilmington, DE
3444, W4AIW, Mitch, St. Petersburg, FL
3445, AG4FK, George, Knoxville, TN
3446, K1NIT, Bill, Farmingdale, ME
3447, HA8KW, Feco, Szeged, Hungary
3448, WN2T, Gregory, Pitman, NJ
3449, KC0PWA, Ryan, Lawrence, KS
3450, AB9NZ, Thomas, Mount Prospect, IL
3451, N3DPL, Darryl, Baltimore, MD
3452, N1URA, Cory, Sabattus, ME
3453, AE7YD, Yvon, Phoenix, AZ
3454, KG4TKC, Cullen, Louisa, KY
3455, N7IGK, Don, Bonney Lake, WA
3456, KC2BRI, Ken, Princeton, NJ
3457, W7ACX, Alton, Mesa, AZ
3458, KA1ZIA, Mark, Gulfport, MS
3459, NV4B, Christopher, Russellville, AL
3460, K1WK, Walt, Bristol, RI
3461, W4KAZ, Keith, Cary, NC
3462, W6GWJ, Gary, Hesperia, CA
3463, WU8WV, Monte, West Union, WV
3464, KM6BX, Leo, Luxemburg, WI
3465, KO6Z, Herb, Bonita, CA
3466, VE1AA, Arthur, Nova Scotia, Canada
3467, K5HJ, Randy, Duncanville, TX
3468, AC5RD, Tom, Roswell, NM
3469, W7QM, Allen, Olympia, WA
3470, K2DRN, Dave, Titusville, NJ
3471, K3OQ, Jeff, Gainthersburg, MD
3472, GI0GDF, Ernie, Lisburn, Northern Ireland
3473, K9PLX, Chuck, Lombard, IL
3474, VE7DWG, David, Surrey, BC Canada
3475, AD5VB, Martyn, Cypress, TX
3476, WU2D, Mike, Hooksett, NH
3477, WS2WWV, Tony, Sauquoit, NY
3478, W7WAT, Glynn, Charleston, OR
3479, AI8S, Scott, Delaware, OH
3480, KC9KRG, Frank, Elmhurst, IL
3481, WB5MWL, Robert, The Colony, TX
3482, N3VF, Ron, Martinsville, VA

3483, KA5PNE/4, Yisrael, Jacksonville, FL
3484, EW6OO, Victor, Vitebsk, Belarus
3485, EU1EU, Igor, Minsk, Belarus
3486, AH6EZ, Richard, St. Charles, IL
3487, KI4KXO, Danny, Buford, GA
3488, KB3DZ, Sam, Newark, DE
3489, VE6PG, Tim, Hanover, ON, Canada
3490, VE3BRL, Jim, Mississauga, ON, Canada
3491, AG4FK, George, Knoxville, TN
3492, G3ZRJ, Tony, Callow Herefordshire, UK
3493, AD5T, Roger, Smithville, MS
3494, WB8EVI, Mike, Brunswick, OH
3495, KD0BQQ, Ste. Genevieve DX & Contest Club, Ste. Genevieve, MO
3496, W6GA, Gary, Montclair, CA

SKCC Awards

Centurion

118, W6FU, Ken, 536, Arcadia, CA, 5 September 2007
119, KD5RSS, Butch, 1910, Haskell, OK, 5 September 2007
120, KA3LOC, Ric, 660, Lansing, KS, 5 September 2007
121, WB2FXK, Jack, 1258, Horseheads, NY, 16 September 2007
122, WA5FB, Frank, 3213, Biloxi, MS, 16 September 2007
123, WR5U, Michael, 3241, NewIberia, LA, 18 September 2007
124, KK7YJ, Jim, 2728, Missoula, MT, 24 September 2007
125, NQ3D, Mike, 2758, Easton, PA, 24 September 2007
126, KK0I, Jack, 2370, Appleton, WI, 24 September 2007

Tribune

32, K5ENA, John, 3045C, Tulsa, OK, 9 September 2007
33, KA8HFN, Larry, 2046C, Wapakoneta, OH, 9 September 2007
34, W4RMM, Bill, 2471C, Albertville, AL, 9 September 2007
35, N6WK, Gordon, 3C, Santa Ana, CA, 9 September 2007
36, AD5VC, Dana, 1555C, Baton Rouge, LA, 9 September 2007
37, KD8GZ, Tim, 711C, Norton, OH, 9 September 2007
38, N5BO, Justin, 57C, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 9 September 2007
39, K8LJG, John, 336C, Flint, MI, 9 September 2007
40, NE7D, Rocky, 665C, Salem, OR, 9 September 2007
41, N0EK, Ed, 3366C, Bergen, ND, 16 September 2007
42, W0TUP, Arlon "Nels", 31C, Minot, ND, 16 September 2007
43, W3MWR, George, 2829C, West Chester, PA, 16 September 2007
44, AG8A, Randy, 2532C, Greenville, MI, 16 September 2007
45, K4ZGB, Tom, 796C, Northport, AL, 17 September 2007
46, KB4T, Frank, 981C, Holly Hill, FL, 21 September 2007
47, WA9KPI, Robert, 719C, Lockport, IL, 27 Septemver 2007
48, WR5U, Michael, 3241C, New Iberia, LA, 29 September 2007

80 Meter Endorsement

Dennis, W6UT, 2417T, Stockton, CA

40 Meter Endorsement

Tim, KD8GZ, 711C, Norton, OH

Kurt, WU8V, 3044T, Shelby Township, MI
Gene, KL7GLL, 1098T, Reston, VA
Dennis, W6UT, 2417T, Stockton, CA
Joe, V31JP/K8JP, 3171T, Arcadia, IA
30 Meter Endorsement

Dennis, W6UT, 2417T, Stockton, CA
20 Meter Endorsement

Dennis, W6UT, 2417T, Stockton, CA
SKCC WAS

Fred, AC4R, 3307C, Phenix City, AL
Kurt, WU8V, 3044T, Shelby Township, MI
John, K8LJG, 336T, Flint, MI

Member Roundtable

No round table entries submitted this month.

This is your place to sound off about anything. Send your thoughts and comments to kj7bs@cox.net .

Shack Of The Month

The tidy shack of Kurt, WU8V
Kenwood TS 570
Old Kenwood 2M (not used too much)
Radio Shack 10ch scanner
Keys include:
Bencher RY1 straight key
Bencher BY2 Chrome dual paddle (not present for this photo)
WW2 British WT8Amp made in Australia 1942
Vibroplex 1946 original has seen better days (lots of them)
Vibroplex Vibrokeyer single paddle key
And of course the nifty AC4R inspired SKCC wall clock (not on the wall yet)
Carolina Windom 160 up at about 70 feet.
Cushcraft R5 currently on life support in the garage

Key Of The Month

I built this cross between an Amplidan and a GHD to prepare for the October Craftsman Special. I spent just under 1 month on this key using mostly hand tools. I had hoped to use it as an incentive to get others to try and build a key for the October event. This key has the same footprint as an Amplidan but uses a micrometer and side mounted bearing blocks like the GHD keys. The feel is fast, springy and tactile. I am very pleased with the way it turned out and hope to improve on the design for my entry in October. **Bill, NT9K**

The SKCC Centurion

13226 N. 62nd Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85304
Phone: 623-606-1976
kj7bs@arrl.net

With SKCC every day is Straight Key Night!

The Straight Key Century Club is the fastest growing CW club focusing on manual generation of Morse code. Founded in January 2006, SKCC has grown to over 2500 members in calendar 2006. Members enjoy a very active email list server, SKCC forums, monthly sprints, and a monthly 24 hour operating event. Information about the Straight Key Century Club can be found at http://www.skccgroup.com .

Operating Frequencies

These are the suggested frequencies (+or - Khz) for SKCC members to congregate and look for other SKCC members. These are suggestions only, nobody owns any frequency. Be courteous and find a clear spot.

1.820 MHz	3.550 MHz	3.530 MHz
7.120 MHz	7.055 MHz	10.120 MHz
14.050 MHz	18.080 MHz	21.050 MHz
24.910 MHz	28.050 MHz	50.090 MHz
	144.070 MHz	

Operating Events

SKCC Sprint: SKCC Sprints take place each month on the second Wednesday of the month from 0100z to 0300z (Tuesday evenings 2000 Eastern Time). Rules for participation can be found at http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/sprint-rules.htm. For more information , contact SKCC Sprint Manager Kevin Kinderen at kkinderen@gmail.com or check the SKCC Yahoo group Calendar.

SKCC Weekend Sprint: Every 4th Sunday of each month beginning at 0000z UTC and ending 2359z UTC. This operating event is open to all licensed amateurs. Operate as much as you can and submit your best contiguous 4-hour window for score. Periodically themes will be announced for upcoming weekend sprints. See http://www.skccgroup.com/activities.htm for more information and rules.

SKCC Member Resources

SKCC website—Everything you need to know about the Straight Key Century Club. Check back frequently as this site changes, http://www.skccgroup.com.

SKCC Yahoo Groups Email List—http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/skcc/. A moderated email list for the exchange of ideas about SKCC.

SKCC QSL Bureau—Dan Rhodes, KA3CTQ manages this free service for SKCC members. Send and receive QSL cards for QSOs between SKCC members via this service. To receive your QSL cards, you need to have SASE (self addresses stamped envelopes) on file with the SKCC QSL Bureau. Dan also says non-members can send you QSL cards through the SKCC Bureau. For more information see http://www.skccgroup.com/qsl.htm.

Award Tracker—Don Kemp, NN8B (SKCC 0036) maintains an SKCC Award Tracker spreadsheet to assist members in keeping track of their current standings with SKCC awards. Don posts updates to this valuable tool in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups http://groups.yahoo.com/group/skcc/files/.

The SKCC Centurion—The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club published monthly. The SKCC Centurion is posted on the SKCC site, in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups site, and distributed via email to your email inbox. To join The SKCC Centurion email list, send an email to The_SKCC_Centurion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com with Subscribe in the subject.

Spotting Cluster—Phil, AI4OF (SKCC # 600) has launched a spotting cluster specifically for SKCC members. Use this spotting cluster to announce your operations or to find other SKCC members to work. Point your Telnet client to skcc.matrixlist.com:7300. Login using your callsign.

SKCC Sked Page—Andy, K3UK (SKCC # 1325) maintains an interactive web page where SKCC members can arrange a meeting with other members to work towards SKCC awards or just to rag chew. Check it out at http://www.obriensweb.com/skccsked/skccsked.php.