

States QSO Party Challenge

[Dick Strassburger](#), N9EEE (CWops #3113)

Last year about this time, I participated in an online session sponsored by the Long Island CW Club and facilitated by Anthony Luscre, K8ZT, whom many of you know. He's a prolific presenter having appeared weekly on LICW forums, QSO Today conference presentations, a regular in the RATPAC weekly presentations, articles in CQ Magazine, and numerous club meetings around the world via Zoom including my local club, the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' Club. This session from Anthony was about a project he was passionate about and rightly so since he is also on the leadership team of the [States QSO Party Challenge](#). What piqued my interest was this would be an interesting way to achieve Worked All States with multiple contacts made in each state while operating QRP CW as he has done.

I don't consider myself a contester and I can't strap myself into a chair for 48 hours searching and pouncing my way to the finish line. I'm good for sprints or anything short that can hold my interest and not be physically confining. I'm a QRPer that likes working POTA (hunting or activating) or the casualness of a ragchew. I've dabbled in a few "contests" but nothing serious. As a QRPer with a wire antenna, I'm not an effective runner but am adept at search and pounce techniques that will land a respectable score among my peers.

So, this idea of spreading my time across multiple events, across multiple geographies, seemed quite interesting to me. What deepened this interest was a subset of the States QSO Party Challenge held by another organization I belong to, the [North American QRP CW Club](#) (NAQCC), which has their own version of this year-long challenge among its members. In other words, like for like: QRP to QRP, CW to CW, the only difference would be location and antenna used. Anthony being a QRPer himself, continued to juice my interest during our hour together and by the time he finished, I was hooked and making my plans for the year ahead in 2023.

My immediate thought was, isn't this like shooting fish in a barrel? When the Alabama QSO Party came along, I would realize how wrong that comment was. And Virginia of all states skunked me as well. Let's delve a little deeper into this event before I reveal my results.

I spoke with Dave Edmonds, WN4AFP, founder and director of the States QSO Party Challenge to get some background of the event. His idea was simple really and almost obvious; it just needed some coordination with the various QSO parties, publicity among the ham-verse, collaboration with Bruce WA7BNM at 3830scores.com to pull scoring data, and some easy-to-follow rules and guidelines for participation.

This radiosport program began in 2020 and has seen tremendous growth in interest and participation. If you're into numbers, they've had over 2,000 entrants amass over one million QSOs generating nearly two million points. In just the second year of the States QSO Party Challenge existence, the NAQCC saw an opportunity and created its own sub-challenge among the QRP CW enthusiasts. They too have seen huge participation from among its members. So, it must be good. "Mikey likes it."

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In a nutshell, there are two award programs: States QSO Party Challenge and Worked All QSO Parties Award. Working one qualifies you for the other, however scoring differs when it comes to issuing awards. There are two State QSO Party Challenge scoring achievements you are working towards: the total number of QSO Parties worked, and the total number of QSOs completed. First, you must qualify by working a minimum of two contacts in each individual QSO party. This sounds simple but when there's only a handful of participants in a state and maybe one of them is a CW operator, it can get nerve-wracking finding that station...if at all. There are 47 designated QSO Parties, including the 7th Call Area QSO Party, New England QSO Party, and Canadian Prairies QSO Party, so the more QSO Parties you qualify for, the closer you move toward attaining a Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze level. Attain one of those levels, and you've earned a certificate. On top of that is the leaderboard for total QSOs made during the QSO Parties. The Top 10 participants will receive a plaque. And if that isn't enough, there is the Worked All State QSO Parties Award that rewards those who work...all QSO Parties. I should note that ICOM has been the sponsor of both programs. Oh, and each state has their own awards programs you shouldn't miss. One of the most noteworthy being maple syrup from Vermont.

So, there's the carrot. But as a CW operator you know the real achievement is self-achievement. There is a fair amount of complexity to consider when participating in this program which I think is the real lure behind this program. The obvious first consideration is propagation which plays a huge role in whether or not you're going to make contacts in a specific geography. I was skunked twice – Alabama and Virginia – due to poor propagation in areas that are regular QSO fodder for me. Then there are pile-ups to negotiate. Sometimes my QRP signal breaks them, other times I need to wait patiently until the throng dwindles. But wait too long and it could be a rover who sees their rate drop and decide to pull the plug and move on before you've worked them. So, you need to learn the dynamics of working QSO Parties. Which dovetails into the thrill of "learning" the rovers...they're the ones who provide their call/CTY during a CQ. They're worth an additional point for each county they operate from, so keep note of their routine and you could build up your points nicely. I've noticed that after I've worked a mobile in a couple of counties, they too keep an ear out for me, a familiar call they can pick out of the din. CW is the mode of winners if winning means more points. I tallied a few QSO Party's points totals from 3830scores.com and clearly CW is the predominant mode in number of stations using CW as well as number of total points.

This past year, my strategy was to simply qualify for each QSO Party and work towards QRP Worked All States. So, while my point level was low, my QP qualification was high. I mostly operated from home, however there were a couple of local POTA outings in Wisconsin that I piggy-backed onto my QSO Party chase which made the dual purpose fun. I was in Florida last year for a couple of weeks of winter sunshine and operated from a nearby state park to become one of Florida's two only entrants as an Expeditioner. Being on the receiving end of a pile-up under a live oak tree in the Florida sunshine made my day. Just to make sure this visiting 9-lander was operating within the correct parameters, I consulted with the FLQP leadership posted on their website; the nicest and most welcoming group of hams you'll ever meet.

I'd like to throw in another anecdote. Dave Edmonds, WN4AFP, the founder and creator of State QSO Party Challenge cut his teeth by working QSO parties with low power and an antenna 15

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feet off the ground earning him 30 plaques over 10 years. He says anyone can do it. "It's operator skill, not an equipment list."

The States QSO Party Challenge website is chock full of useful information and data to get you started with the program and the companion Worked All QSO Parties award, including videos and logging tools. You'll find the official 2023 results freshly posted there and some interesting tidbits of information:

- We again topped a million (1,189,221) QSOs that were reported to 3830Scores. This is a slight increase over last years QSOs (1,169,648).
- 2,095 operators submitted reports to 3830, also up slightly from 2022 (2,078). 883 of them qualified for the SQP Challenge with a minimum of two contacts in at least two QSO parties.
- There were 130 Canadian entries this year
- There were entries from 14 other countries
- The tremendous growth in the number of operators who are now operating in contests from remote sites continues. This year there were 363 remote entries from 125 qualifying operators
- Almost two-thirds of the operators used low power

So who won top honors? #1 in the Top 10 States QSO Party Challenge (QPs, total points, total QSOs) and Worked All QSO Parties is Connie Marshall K5CM (CWops #1662)



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The NAQCC also published their 2023 results with some noted CWops members at the top of the list. Derive whatever conjecture you like, but it's clear that CWops members do well with QSO Parties.

Looking at my placement on the [States QSO Party Leaderboard](#) you'll notice that I earned Gold level and broke the top 200 of over 2,000 entries. I'm good with that.

And my placement in the middle of the NAQCC Leaderboard feels pretty good for a first-timer.

I see who I passed, who's at the top, and my targets to beat, like Alan, KR4AE (CWops #1460) and Lee, AA4GA (CWops #973).

Sheesh! Those sound like the words of a contester. Me? Nah, I just do it for fun. You guys are safe. But I admit I look at the leaderboards each month.

And no, I did not work all states. That's why I'm in it again for 2024.

Member	Mult	QSOs	Score	Award
Alan KR4AE, #5847	47	2,472	116,184	Diamond
Lee AA4GA, #5415	45	2,245	101,025	Diamond
Ben AC2YD, #10378	43	1,705	73,315	Platinum
Steve NI8W, #11335	44	1,184	52,096	Platinum
Chris KU4A, #1960	44	1,067	46,948	Platinum
Mike W7LG, #10391	36	972	34,992	Platinum
Don VE3DQN, #5846	42	761	31,962	Platinum
Will NQ2W, #4839	26	1,187	30,862	Platinum
Kevin NN3E, #9851	36	751	27,036	Platinum
Brent WT4U, #9019	41	645	26,445	Platinum
Rick KY0Q, #9647	25	542	13,550	Gold
Dave AB9BZ, #9309	37	340	12,580	Gold
Dick N9EEE, #11389	32	366	11,712	Gold
Sean KK9U, #10869	13	880	11,440	Gold
Bob N2EIM, #10373	24	459	11,016	Gold
Ernie N2DGQ, #11090	21	435	9,135	Silver
Don KI4MZC, #10922	13	405	5,265	Silver
Dan W9SAU, #10073	21	243	5,103	Silver
Anthony K8ZT, #412	19	206	3,914	Bronze
Dave N3CKI, #8478	6	424	2,544	Bronze
Kevin KI4DEF, #247	20	86	1,720	Bronze
Marie NG8S, #3261	14	114	1,596	Bronze
David N6AN, #10749	2	562	1,124	Bronze
Mark WA2NYY, #6388	4	269	1,076	Bronze
Dale WC7S, #272	2	400	800	Bronze
John KE6K, #6655	4	162	648	Bronze
Brock W6GMT, #2390	5	101	505	Bronze



CWops at Hamvention

Look for details in the February issue of *Solid Copy*

