

Florida QSO Party 2020, Virtual Mobile (High Power, SO2R) at NN7CW

I think everyone agrees that 2020 was a very unusual year. Every aspect in our lives was (and still is) impacted by the ongoing pandemic, including the Florida QSO Party and its traditional mobile operations, which were officially suspended due to Florida's stay-at-home mandate.

Unusual problems require unusual solutions, so to compensate for the loss of the rover stations, the FQP organizers created the concept of so-called Virtual Mobile stations, which non-Floridians could chase, pretty much like regular mobiles. I was asked to host one of those VMs and as luck would have it, I was able to team up with my former neighbor Steve, KT4Q to form a unique Multi-Distributed entrant. Steve took over SSB from his station while I was running CW from mine. By splitting up operations, we were able to make over 6000 QSOs and maximized our on-air presence from Lake County (LAK).

I didn't take any notes right after the event and my memories are a little unspecific, so I decided to write up what I remember and to add some substance, provide a little insight into my log, which due to its unique purpose, was never published anywhere.

I recall wondering how things would pan out: the mobile operations were officially not happening and that had been communicated through the official channels, while the Virtual Mobile substitutes were arranged last minute; how would the non-FL participants react once they ran across us, especially for the second and third time, noticing that we were apparently announcing different locations?

Strategy

Per FQP rules, QSO traffic is limited to 40m, 20m, 15m and 10m, which, during the bottom of the sunspot cycle, means that activities will pretty much be limited to the first two bands, plus some minor activities on 15m. Therefore, I decided to sit in the mobile windows and try Two Band Synchronized Interleaved QSOs (2BSIQ) whenever conditions/the time of the day permitted. Otherwise, I wanted to run on the most-active band and throw in occasional CQs on one of the others to see if I could trigger a second run.

Near the end of each hour, all Virtual Mobiles went inactive to make sure that no call could accidentally be on the air simultaneously from two different locations. At the top of the hour, everyone would start all over, using a predetermined, new call. Lastly, some of us went High Power to allow for the largest-possible footprint.

Figure 1 shows the QSO count at the end of each 1h run before switching to the next callsign. This gives an interesting comparison of the rates accomplished on each day.

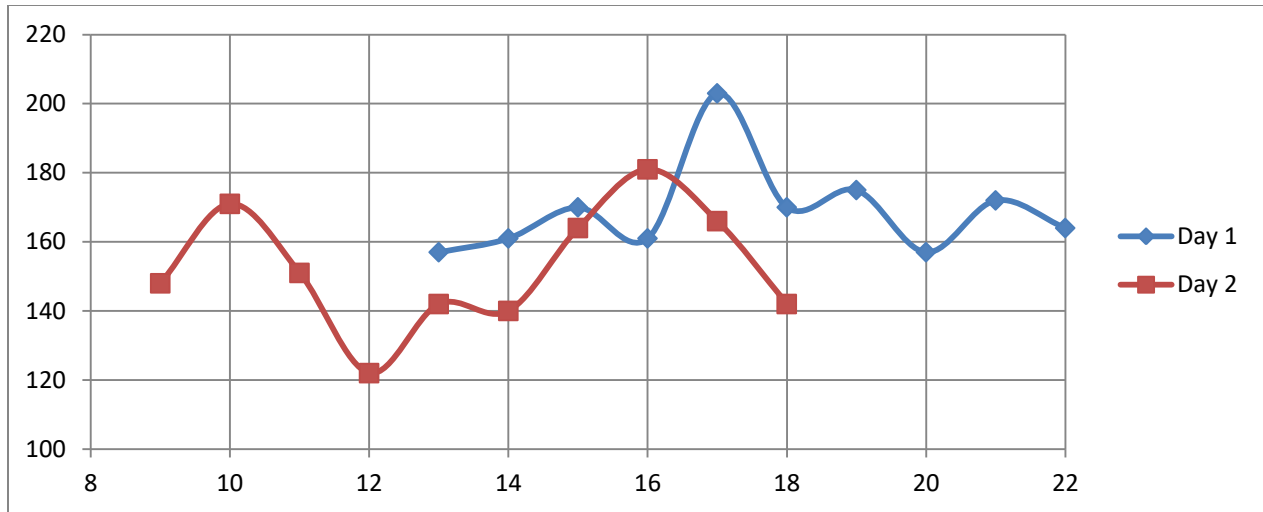


Figure 1: QSO count after each 1h duration over local time

Day 1

NX4N/LAK : The kick-off happened at high noon (16:00Z), so I started running on 20m while occasionally calling CQ and otherwise listening on 15m, which turned out to be a waste of time. Everyone was focused on 20m, so the first hour turned out to be a one radio run situation with no surprises.

N4TO/LAK: The mode of operation was similar to before. All QSOs were made on 20m, except for a surprise call from NN4X on 15m and one guy on 40m from NC. The rates started rising.

K4KG/LAK: All QSOs on one rig on 20m. By now, people had understood what was going on and started returning.

N4EEB/LAK: The first 30 minutes I exclusively ran on 20m, but conditions worsened a little, which gave me some wiggle room to start an interrupted run on 40m in the second half of the hour.

N4AO/LAK: I was finally able to go 2BSIQ, only seeing a few manageable bursts on 20m. Best 10-minute-rate (276 Q's) accomplished for the whole event and also the best total QSO count per hour (204). By now I could tell that the same group of stations kept showing up at the top of the hour. Many of them were joyfully fast operators, so at times I went up to 50WPM.

N4KM/LAK: Once again, 2BSIQ from the beginning, this time being a very balanced run. Second-best 10 minute-rate (264), but 60 minutes rate decreased.

K4OJ/LAK: The first 20 minutes I kept trying 2BSIQ, but 20m was not as productive anymore and impacted the flow on 40m. So for the last 40 minutes, I solely ran on 40m.

NN4FL/LAK: At this point, the FQP had changed back to a single radio event. 40m only, offering decent peak- and average rates.

W4WF/LAK: Once again, 40m only, showing a steady 60 minute rate (172Q's/h).

W4FCG/LAK: For the last time, 40m only. 164 QSOs were made within the last hour of the first day.

Day 2

NX4N/LAK: I was able to run on two rigs, but the flow was not interleaved, due to uneven distribution between the dominating 40m, and the 20m band.

N4TO/LAK: Similar to before, but 20m started picking up.

K4KG/LAK: After a 15-minute burst on 40m, the emphasis shifted to 20m. From here, 40m produced only occasional QSOs.

N4EEB/LAK: Similar as before, but speed and rate went down a little.

N4AO/LAK: 20m was now clearly dominating.

N4KM/LAK: The first half was a one radio operation on 20m, but the second half gave me some space to work some stations on 40m in parallel.

K4OJ/LAK: Afternoon time in Florida, so the focus was on 20m. My speed was around or below 42WPM, which appeared to be manageable for everyone. Lower maximum 10 minutes rate, but solid 60 minutes value.

NN4FL/LAK: Solely a 20m single radio operation. I increased my speed a little and was able to accomplish the highest rate 180 (Q's/h) of day 2.

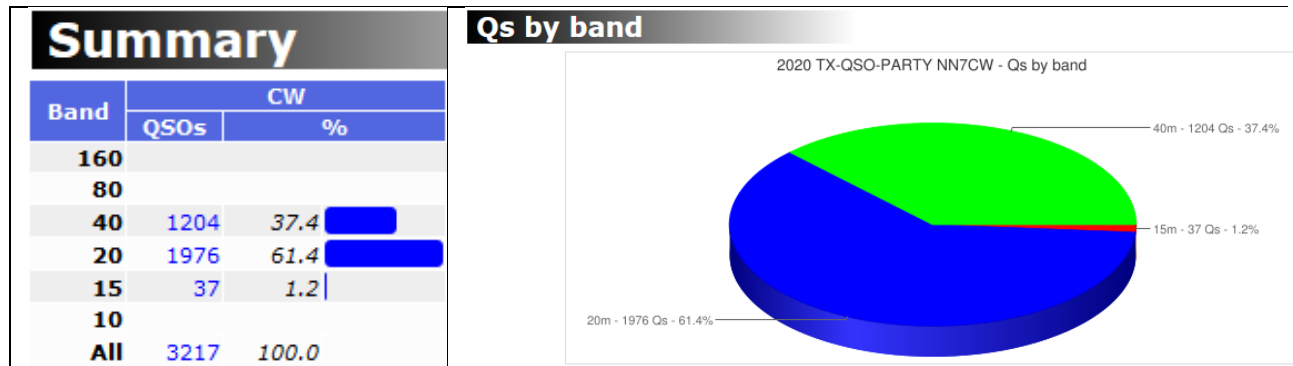
W4WF/LAK: I continued my 20m run for the first 37 minutes, before I started throwing out some CQs on 15m, which yielded a "whopping" number of 18 QSOs. The FQP seemed to have started winding down.

W4FCG/LAK: I ran on 20m, but had enough bandwidth to keep calling on 15m and I ended up working another 18 stations, only six of them being the same than in the hour before. The last seven QSOs were made on 40m; I think I could have accomplished a slightly higher final QSO count if I had gone down to 40m, instead of calling CQ on 15m, but I thought it would be nice to reward the brave ones who were not simply sticking to a two-band operation.

The Grand Total

Table 1 shows the final QSO count. Almost 2/3 of all QSOs were made on 20m, which was caused by the majority of all active hours being during FL daytime.

Table 1: Final QSO count



Below is a list of continents worked. The “exotic” stations were

- Brazil: PU2NBI
- Hawaii: KH6LC (4 times), WH7W
- Israel: 4Z4DX
- Japan: JO7WXN

Table 2: Continents worked

Continents		QSOs									
Continent		160	80	40	20	15	10	All	%	CW	
NA	North America			1169	1886	36		3091	96.1	3091	
SA	South America					1		1	0.0	1	
EU	Europe			34	84			118	3.7	118	
AF	Africa								0.0		
AS	Asia			1	1			2	0.1	2	
OC	Oceania				5			5	0.2	5	

Most-Frequent Callers

Over 60 stations were worked ten or more times. The following ones made the Top 3:

US	QSO Count	DX	QSO Count
1. NS2N	18	1. DL3DXX	14
2. K3WJV, KM4EA	17	2. OM2VL	12
		3. LY5W	11

Last but not least, table 3 shows a list of countries worked. It was fun to see how many entities found their way into the log. Thanks to all callers!

Table 3: Countries worked

Countries																
#	Cont.	Country		Distance, km	QSOs											
					CW	DIG	SSB	160	80	40	20	15	10	All	%	
1	AS	4X	Israel	10530	1						1				1	0.0
2	EU	9A	Croatia	8240	2							2			2	0.1
3	EU	DL	Fed. Rep. of Germany	7710	29						11	18			29	0.9
4	EU	EA	Spain	6890	6						5	1			6	0.2
5	EU	ES	Estonia	8160	1							1			1	0.0
6	EU	EU	Belarus	8650	1							1			1	0.0
7	EU	F	France	7330	2							2			2	0.1
8	NA	FG	Guadeloupe	2440	1						1				1	0.0
9	EU	G	England	6890	2							2			2	0.1
10	EU	GM	Scotland	6570	2							2			2	0.1
11	EU	GW	Wales	6760	1							1			1	0.0
12	EU	HB	Switzerland	7770	1							1			1	0.0
13	NA	HI	Dominican Republic	1420	4						3	1			4	0.1
14	EU	I	Italy	8230	5						3	2			5	0.2
15	AS	JA	Japan	11690	1							1			1	0.0
16	NA	K	United States	1360	2753						1060	1659	34		2753	85.6
17	OC	KH6	Hawaii	7580	5							5			5	0.2
18	NA	KL	Alaska	6100	7							7			7	0.2
19	NA	KP2	US Virgin Islands	2040	15						6	8	1		15	0.5
20	NA	KP4	Puerto Rico	1800	4						1	2	1		4	0.1
21	EU	LA	Norway	7260	1							1			1	0.0
22	EU	LY	Lithuania	8260	11						3	8			11	0.3
23	EU	OH	Finland	8040	2							2			2	0.1
24	EU	OK	Czech Republic	8150	3						1	2			3	0.1
25	EU	OM	Slovak Republic	8450	12						4	8			12	0.4
26	EU	ON	Belgium	7350	5						2	3			5	0.2
27	EU	PA	Netherlands	7290	4						1	3			4	0.1
28	SA	PY	Brazil	5170	1								1		1	0.0
29	EU	SM	Sweden	7570	9							9			9	0.3
30	EU	SP	Poland	8180	12						3	9			12	0.4
31	EU	TK	Corsica	7930	1							1			1	0.0
32	EU	UA	European Russia	9350	4							4			4	0.1
33	EU	UR	Ukraine	9010	1							1			1	0.0
34	NA	VE	Canada	1780	306						98	208			306	9.5
35	NA	XE	Mexico	2150	1							1			1	0.0
36	EU	YO	Romania	8930	1						1				1	0.0

Final Thoughts

This was a fun endeavor and I am glad I was able to help making the troubled FQP 2020 a little more interesting. As far as I know, other organizations had applied the Virtual Mobile concept for their 2020 QSO parties afterwards, so it seems that people agreed on the usefulness of this approach.

I personally enjoyed being able to run 2BSIQ and occasionally crank up the speed a little. I was aware that some operators were challenged at times, but the idea was to accommodate as many callers as possible. I think I managed to strike a balance and I hope everyone enjoyed chasing our Virtual Mobiles.