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Contest Club



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NCCC Net  
Thursday 8 PM  
3610+/-

*Guests are always welcome at the NCCC! Please join us.*

**TBD**

**Date: Monday, November 8, 2010**

**Time:** 6:00pm schmooz, 7:00pm dinner, 7:30pm program

**Location:** Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose, CA 95129 (408) 243-0434

Dinner: Purchase your dinner in the cafeteria line and take your tray to the meeting room in the rear.

Take 280 to Saratoga Avenue and go north two blocks. Harry's is on the right just past Keily Blvd.

Website: <http://www.harryshofbrau.com/where.html>

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#### **FB's Message**

By Jack Brindle, W6FB

It's time for Sweepstakes!

The time we have been working, planning, and waiting for is at hand. It's time for Sweepstakes!

This month, as we celebrate our 40th anniversary, the NCCC will compete in its 41st Sweepstakes. We have come a long way since that first Sweepstakes back in 1970. Back then, only seven members submitted their logs, but just those few logs won the club 10th place. This year we expect to do much better.

The goal this year is to achieve a club combined score of 25 million points, and in doing so, win back the gavel. This is a great goal, and very much achievable.

Our main opponent, the PVRC, has not been sitting still, however. They have no intention to turn loose of the gavel, and have put together plans to make sure they are successful. We wish them the best of luck, but we are working hard to make sure they come up short of their goal.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, there are advantages in play for us this year that we have missed the past few years. The higher bands are finally back, and we will be able to make great use of them. For those of us with smaller stations, it will be great to again be able to have a run frequency where we can run up our score. This should not just lead to increased QSO counts, but also to more of us achieving sweeps. All the possibilities for our own scores, as well as the overall club score, are very exciting. With all this in mind, we are very much looking forward to this year's contest. Even more, let's all push a bit extra to get the gavel back in *our* hands!

Be sure to check elsewhere in this issue, and the NCCC reflectors, for more information! And remember, the first and third weekends of the month are the time to get our butts in the chairs and work as many QSOs (and sections) as we possibly can. This year Sweepstakes *will* be fun!

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## **October Meeting Webinar**

The October meeting was a very interesting and fun gathering that was shared by more than those in attendance at the TechShop. The meeting was simulcast using the club's Webinar technology. The interesting story is how this came to pass, and what it holds for the future.

Credit for the idea belongs to Hank Garretson, W6SX, who first broached the idea a few months ago. Hank suggested that should look for ways to extend our meetings to those away from the gathering. This usually means those quite a distance away from the Bay area, such as members north and east of Sacramento, or in Hank's case, out in the beautiful area of Mammoth Lakes. The discussion began with a live video Webcast, and progressed through various methods using internet technology. There are several problems that needed to be overcome with each of the methods, not the least being the lack of Internet connectivity at most of our meeting locations.

Things fell into place for the October meeting. This meeting was held at the TechShop in Menlo Park. The TechShop has very good facilities for those building things, from plasma cutters to all sorts of metal shaping equipment. It also has very good Internet connectivity. With this in mind, we decided right after the September meeting to put things together for the October meeting. Our discussions concluded that using the club's Webinar facilities should provide a very good test.

To do so we would need a good audio and computer system that would allow us to display the presentation slides and presenter's sound. There were many variables in the plans, and our confidence in things going right the first time was not very high. With this

in mind we posted a short notice to the NCCC email list with the provision that technical difficulties might disrupt our plans.

The plans were rather well laid out. Audio expert, Jim, K9YC, volunteered his wireless microphone system and services to provide meeting audio. Our resident Webinar guru, Dean, N6DE, guided us with setting up the computing equipment for the Webinar. The day before the meeting, N6DE, N6NZ and W6FB gathered at the TechShop to test the system.

A standard presentation environment uses a portable computer (in this case a MacBook Pro) with a video projector. The Webinar adds the audio and network interfaces to allow network viewers to participate. It was a good thing we decided to test the system before going live. The first projector did not work, but a second projector gave us a great projected image of the PowerPoint slides. We then had to find some combination of PowerPoint and the Webinar software that allowed the best view for both those gathered at the TechShop and the Web attendees. After several attempts we finally settled on a setup that was a good compromise for both sides. With all this now set, we went home with more confidence that we may actually be able to make things work.

The day of the meeting was the first time we actually had all the pieces together. K9YC had his equipment assembled and ready for operation. It plugged right into the USB audio processor for the computer. After some testing, we quickly determined the right settings and connected things together. This was actually the first time everything was together and working well. The presenters each had a wireless microphone, and K9YC used a handheld microphone to gather audience sound. Audio was one-way only, with no sound hooks to be able to listen to audio from the Internet audience. Web feedback was intentionally limited to messages using the Webinar chat software.

By all accounts, the Webinar achieved all our goals and then some. The meeting Webinar was a resounding success, with quite a bit of feedback during and after the meeting. For those who wish to view the meeting recording, it is available at the NCCC Website - you can see for yourself our Sweepstakes plans and develop your own opinion as to how well the presentation technology did.

So, can we expect more Webinar simulcasts in the future? We certainly hope so. There are many variables that must be overcome. Unfortunately, most meeting locations do not have good Internet connectivity, which is a must for the Webinar to succeed. We have to have volunteers to help with the presentations, including someone handling the Webinar software, and a second handling audio.

Observation of K9YC during the October meeting showed him constantly adjusting audio levels to provide the best sound. Of course, if we wanted to also provide meeting video, we would need someone to handle the camera and great lighting for the cameras. In short, we need volunteers to put on the production, and the right meeting location that can support the effort. Most of our planned meeting locations do not provide great facilities for this, but we will be looking at this in the future as we plan meetings.

Thanks to W6SX for the excellent suggestions, to N6DE and K9YC who made the production possible, and to the TechShop for the excellent facilities.

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## VP/CC

Greetings KB'ers!

On this, the 40th anniversary of the NCCC, we once again are faced with our "world series" radiosport challenge, the ARRL November Sweepstakes. During the past two years our primary adversary has leveraged the fact that propagation has not been on our side, and they have done so quite successfully. But this year, with consistently open upper bands, and some great build up momentum, and our fantastic team, the NCCC is well positioned to take back the prize our club was founded upon four decades ago.

The key this year is "chair time" and score improvement. Plan to set a goal to improve your Butt in chair time. There are a number of ways to do this, including taking on a mode you have been avoiding, doing a split operation with a fellow operator, or simply putting in more time in the chair. If you have not operated sweepstakes, now is the time to do it.

So...on to the business at hand, mateys!

NOVEMBER SWEEPSTAKES CW STARTS 06 NOV 2010 at 2100 UTC  
NOVEMBER SWEEPSTAKES SSB STARTS 20 NOV 2010 at 2100 UTC

Please do your due dilligence and make yourself and your station ready to be QRV at kickoff!

And this year, we have a special prize for the motivated KB'er...

IF:

You increase your combined total from both modes last year in Sweepstakes by 100 qsos (could be 50-50 or 70-30.. you get the picture)

And:

You turn in at least 200 total qso's total to qualify

You will receive: A free one-time edition, embroidered, special NCCC 2010 Sweepstakes short-sleeve mock turtleneck (black). This is a one-time time deal, and this shirt will not be offered again.

That being said, here are the additional qualifiers,

- First time NCCC Sweepstakes operators must meet the 200 Q minimum
- Multi-operator stations will split QSO's evenly between all operators for the sake of this offer

-You must operate in the NCCC competitive local area to qualify, that is, you must be qualified to submit your score as Northern California Contest Club, and do so accordingly.

\*\*\*\*WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOUR PLANS ARE!!!!\*\*\*\*

The following is a link to let us know your participation level. ALL NCCC MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM!

<http://www.nccc.cc/members/ss-cwform.html>

If you are an available operator LOOKING FOR A STATION to work from, or if you HAVE AN AVAILABLE STATION FOR A TEAM MEMBER IN NEED please fill out the following form so we can match you up

<http://www.nccc.cc/members/stationmatch.html>

Here is a link to the main NCCC sweepstakes page. You will find training tools, information, the NCCC Sweepstakes handbook(mandatory reading) and many other tools and resources that will make you, and us collectively more successful! Check this page often for updated info!

<http://www.nccc.cc/members/sweepstakes-main.html>

This is the greatest Radiosport contest club in the world. Our ability to swarm and be victorious has been written about time and time again. You, as a sweepstakes competitor, are part of the team. The Winning NCCC Team that can make it happen again in 2010!  
See ya' on the air, have fun and of course, KB!

Chris, N6WM

## The Upcoming Sweepstakes

Right on the heels of CQP comes the first major domestic contest of the season – Sweepstakes. At the October meeting, those who attended or participated in the Webinar had a chance to see and hear some solid strategies for doing well in SS 2010 CW and phone.

Behind the “members only” section of the Website are great references, in particular, Bob Wolbert’s (K6XX) SS Primer. You’ll have access to the latest propagation projections from Dean Straw (N6BV) and other sources of good information relating to this and other contests.

Unlike CQ WW at the end of the month, or other international contests, you don’t need a KW and a yagi to do well in SS. You need patience. You need to motivate yourself to stay at it for as long as you can in each 24 out of 30 hour stint. You also don’t need to have great capabilities on six contest bands. You can do extremely well working three bands – 20, 40 and 80. And, when sunspots are promising, as they appear to be this time out, you can do well on 15, 20, 40 and 80.

What makes SS different than nearly any other contest is a limited number of multipliers (80) and a limited number of participants (US and Canadian stations, only). That means, even the most powerful combination station/antenna/operator players will run out of people to work by the end of the contest, if not before. You can work a station once, period. And, it doesn’t matter if you work that station on any of the bands.

As Dean Straw (N6BV) likes to point out, if the propagation gods are smiling at us, starting out on 15 may be a lot better move than kicking off on 20. At 1 PM local, if 15 is productive, it favors west coast stations working the population centers east of the Mississippi. For the right coasters, the skip takes them into far less populated states before hitting California. In fact, it probably makes sense to listen on 10 this time out, too, as it has been open and productive at times this Fall.

Regardless of what kind of station you’re using, be prepared to do both running and S&P. Even the perennial champion ends up S&Pping as he runs out of stations to work. If you are using spotting, keep an eye out for the mults that you need. Don’t rush to a spot to work someone, though, because there will be a huge bulge, at first. And, don’t worry about running and missing some of the loud “runners” you heard up and down the band. They’ll either still be there, later, or they’ll come looking for you.

If you use prefill logs, be careful! Make sure you listen to the exchange and compare the data that pops up with what the other station sends. You’ll be surprised how often prefill data is wrong.

Don’t get discouraged if you are not achieving a huge rate at any time. Keep in mind that at the end of 24 hours of operating, if you have 1,000 Qs you’ve done a creditable job. That’s an average rate that is less than 50 per hour. So, if you have a 60 or 70 rate, and

later you drop down to 40 for a while, that's okay. If you rate starts to sink, early, change something (e.g. your frequency, your band, running-to-S&P or vice versa).

The SS contest is a linear score contest. The longer you operate; the higher your score. So, again, be patient, sit in the chair, and keep up the good work.

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FUTURE MEETINGS - For those of you filling in your calendars many moons in advance, PLEASE note that the February 2011 meeting will be on WEDNESDAY, 9-February-2011. This will be our annual joint meeting with REDXA and held in Petaluma (and YES, it WAS held in January in years past). All other meetings through the current Board's term (through April, 2011, that is) will be on our usual 2nd Monday. Briefly summarizing those plans, the December Holiday meeting will be at Michael's in Mountain View, in January we will return to Cattlemens in Livermore, the February meeting will be in Petaluma per above, March will bring our annual Awards meeting at the Tied House in Mountain View and in April we will have our officer elections at Harry's Hofbrau in San Jose.

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