

## Club Station

# The Building Blocks of a Successful Contest Club

Ten years ago, Dick Stein, K2ZR; Mark Adams, K2QO, and Bob O’Neill, AC2FA, developed a vision for the Western New York State contest group, Niagara Frontier Radiosport (NFR), in an effort to create a club whose focus on ham radio competition would result in it becoming a credible force in radiosport. In this month’s column, NFR member Ken Knox, KD2KEH, shares how they keep members engaged year after year.

In 2013, it was common for radio clubs in Western New York to participate in special-interest contests with little planning and no cohesive strategy to post competitive scores. In an effort to change this, K2ZR reached out to the then-President of the Arizona Outlaws Contest Club (AOCC) for help with creating NFR. With AOCC’s help, Jim Ciurczak, K2QB, created a framework of annually selecting 48 domestic and international contests in a variety of modes so that all NFR club members have the chance to operate almost every week and generate excitement and interest.

### NFR Competition Ladder

The AOCC President gave us permission to mimic their ladder competition system, which we refer to as the NFR Competition Ladder (visit <https://tiny.cc/7ymavz> to see NFR’s Competition Ladder Guidelines). Each contest is allotted a certain number of NFR participation points based on its popularity and complexity. The contest list is available to members via a shared drive prior to the beginning of the year, so they can determine which ones they wish to enter.

The NFR point value for each contest allows members to earn points in addition to their individual contest scores. The highest-scoring club member in a given contest will get 100% of NFR’s assigned point value, and all others will get a percentage of that point value, based on what percentage their score is of the highest-scoring member’s score. Each member posts their con-

Callign	Type	Activity	Overall	2023 QSO's	Total QSO's	SSB	CW	Digital	Mixed	Low Power
NS2N	F	27	7513	6235	27598	446	3877	688	995	1900
K2NV	F	16	6806	8882	35445	0	3472	2734	0	2589
WB2WPM	F	25	6566	5244	18963	1600	991	2115	571	2952
N2MF	F	10	6022	8908	23235	1192	3492	0	938	1402
K2QO	F	15	3227	3377	14670	460	1136	96	235	1772
K2ZR	F	12	3219	3775	17714	22	2783	0	0	2819
K2QB	F	11	2813	3610	13218	160	861	1392	0	1263
N2CU	F	9	2383	2607	8421	0	1789	0	390	2183
NN2NN	F	7	1939	1511	25517	56	450	500	733	506

In our shared spreadsheet, we list the radiosport statistics for each NFR member, including their membership type (“F” is for Full Members and “H” is for Honorary Members), the total number of NFR points each member has been awarded, the number of contacts they’ve logged, the number of contacts they’ve logged for the competition ladder since they joined NFR, and the number of contacts they’ve made for various modes. This information is constantly updated throughout the year. [Photo courtesy of Ken Knox, KD2KEH]

test score to [www.3830scores.com](http://www.3830scores.com), and at the end of the contest entry period, our Contest Score Adjudicator, K2QB, retrieves the scores and posts them on our shared drive.

Let’s say that Stephen Wojton, NN2NN, checked NFR’s selected contest list and decided to participate in the ARRL RTTY Roundup, which the club assigned a point value of 500. During the contest, he made 704 contacts, with a number of multipliers, scoring the highest of all NFR club members who posted their scores on [www.3830scores.com](http://www.3830scores.com), and was awarded the full 500 points. NFR member David Borkowski, AA2GF, also participated in the ARRL RTTY Roundup and made 748 contacts with fewer multipliers, putting him in second place for NFR’s Competition Ladder, and was awarded 495 of the 500 available points. Anthony Buscaglia, K2NV, made 625 contacts and was awarded 455 of the 500 available points. And so on.

Our shared drive includes a spreadsheet that contains the overall competition ladder, the list of contests selected for the year, and a tab for each member to keep track of their individual points and scores. It’s arranged by listing the total score of each successive contest with the highest cumulative score at the top of the list. By midyear, many members have already participated in 25 to 30 contests and are ranked quite high on the lad-

der. The lead ladder position changes throughout the year. Scores are listed on each member's tab in the spreadsheet, as well as on the tab that shows the ranking of all NFR members.

Bruce Small, KM2L, said, "Even though my place in the standings and my contributions are modest, the existence of the [competition] ladder drives me to enter more contests than I would otherwise, and stick to them longer."

The competition ladder is the driving force for NFR throughout the year. Members know which ladder rung they're on and can estimate what it will take to move up to the next rung. Previous years' ladders are on the shared drive, so members can compare their previous results to this year's, or even calculate if a contest has few participants and might be one where they could earn a lot of points.

NFR depends on the honor system for claiming scores. Using a shared spreadsheet allows each member to see how their scores ranked amongst other members' efforts and how their score compares to previous years' scores. The member who scores the most NFR Competition Ladder points for the year receives NFR's "Top Rung" Award.

K2QB said, "I can say members do pay attention to their standings and results. If I happen to make an error or omit someone's score, it's not long after the deadline that I receive a polite reminder."

## Many Types of Fun throughout the Year

The strength of the group is really in its array of members. Some members are retired, while others return their contest-weary eyes to work after a long weekend event. Some run only in the high-power category, while others use only low power. Some members have extensive towers, while others have poles, wires, and a tree or two. A majority of NFR members typically participate in two or three contests each month.

NFR keeps its members involved and motivated by following its motto — "we have fun!" In addition to the NFR Competition Ladder, we have a few organizational meetings throughout the year, but the real fun is saved for the summer picnic, hosted by K2NV and his wife, Rose.

There's one contest on which NFR concentrates its efforts as a club — the New York State QSO Party

(NYQP). Each year, we attempt to claim the highest New York club score for this contest. This year was the fourth year in a row that NFR received the High NY Club Score plaque. Every NFR member participated in NYQP this year — that's quite impressive!

We also created an NFR Team Competition, which involves three, eight-man teams operating in a selection of six contests to rally member involvement. This intra-club competition helps boost overall scores and adds to the fun.

NFR members also help each other with restringing a wire antenna, lowering a tower, running new coax, or stringing a new guy wire. Getting together to assist with difficult tasks rounds out the NFR club experience.

## In Summary

Our thriving club came from a clear vision, leadership, and a recruiting program that identified an affable mix of talented, contributing members. NFR's members can contest at the highest levels and compete amongst the best, or just beat their previous scores while still contributing to the club aggregate score. From the start, it was NFR's goal to promote radiosport at all levels, and most of all, to make sure that everyone follows our motto — "we have fun!"

## Write for "Club Station"

QST's "Club Station" column is a designated space for clubs to share specific and practical ideas about what has contributed to their success, in the hope that the information will help other clubs grow and thrive. Visit [www.arrl.org/qst-club-station-guidelines-and-profile-form](http://www.arrl.org/qst-club-station-guidelines-and-profile-form) for more information, including author guidelines and a Club Profile Form (this form is required in order for "Club Station" submissions to be considered complete).

## ARRL Special Service Clubs

ARRL offers the Special Service Club (SSC) program for clubs that demonstrate that they're working to improve the amateur radio community by completing special projects, holding license classes, and working with local groups on events, among other activities. Visit [www.arrl.org/ssc-application](http://www.arrl.org/ssc-application) for more information about this program. Below is a list of new and renewing SSCs as of August 25, 2023.



*Renewing SSCs*  
Nashville ARC, K4CPO  
Tusco ARC, W8ZX

Nashville, TN  
New Philadelphia, OH