

Winter 2017 VHF-UHF Field Day results – bingo!

Roger Harrison VK2ZRH

Haiku on turning a corner

The corner sneaks up
Like the hunter in winter
A ghost in the night

Well, well, well. For the first time since the Winter 2014 event, when distance-based scoring was introduced (Division 2), the number of Division 2 entrants exceeded the number of Division 1 entrants (grid-square based) with this event. And the margin between entrants is not a slim one. I'll get back to all that a little further on.

Congratulations to all the section / sub-section winners in each Division, set out in the Results Summary here.

Commiserations go to Barrie VK6ADI, who suffered a tragic loss of his log with a computer hard drive crash at a crucial juncture (not quite as amusing as “the dog ate my log sheets”, but getting there), and also to Geoff VK4KJJ, who submitted a log after the deadline. It was able to serve as a check log.

Three Foundation operators entered logs this event. Two Field Day stalwarts, Christine VK3FCEK and Bob VK5FBAA, were joined by newcomer Pat VK2FAAD, who took out the gong for Top-scoring Foundation station operator in both Divisions. Well done, Patrick!

The VK2s have been stepping-up their game over the past three years, with more stations participating and more operators entering logs. Rising from five entrants for the Winter 2014 event, to seven for Spring 2016, then 14 for this event, newcomers swelled the entrants' ranks from VK2 this time. Notably, Rob VK2ELH, Pat VK2FAAD, Lindsay VK2FD, Graeme VK2QJ, Mark VK2ZB, and Rhod VK2TTL.

In VK3, some 20 to 27 stations have ventured to enter logs over the Winter 2014 to Winter 2017 events, while VK5 entrants swung from a low of four entrants (Spring 2016) to a high of 17 (Winter 2014). For this event, 11 VK5s entered logs. Is this variability influenced by the weather, or competing attractions (cricket, football, tiddlywinks)? Similarly, VK4 entrants have been consistently inconsistent! Only five submitted logs for this event (but VK4KJJ's log could not be included, as noted above), but 13 VK4 entrants were recorded for the Winter 2014 event, 11 for Summer 2015 and only five for the Spring 2016 event. C'est la vie!

There were no digital log entries for this event – “thankfully,” commented log checker Mike VK3AVV. In the meantime, however, Joe Taylor K1JT has released FT8 for WSJT-X, which offers ‘fast completion of reliable, confirmable QSOs’ with 15-second Tx/Rx sequences and robust weak signal detection capabilities. This development may well influence future contest operations.

No rover stations ventured out for this event. As the weather was generally “balmy” (comparatively speaking) over the 24-25 June event dates across VK2-VK3-VK5, where rover enthusiasts generally reside, that couldn't have been an issue, or maybe it was – there are many competing activities to attract one on a balmy midwinter weekend (a few bevies in the sunshine, for a start)!

More multi-operator portable stations had a go this year, with three venturing out – VK3KQ, VK3ND and VK2MB – compared to last year’s event, when only VK3KQ braved it. Each adopted a different strategy, which paid off for them. In the 24-hour ‘top stress’ league, VK3ND solicited the help of some unseasoned operators and the team claimed top-score in the Four-bands sub-section for both Divisions. A trio of well-seasoned field-dayers put VK3KQ into top-scoring in the All-bands sub-section for both Divisions.

Meanwhile, members from the Manly-Warringah Radio Society, VK2MB, realising that the club had not entered a VHF-UHF Field Day for a couple years, mounted a 6m-2m-70cm-23cm multi-operator station near its VK2RWN repeater site in Terrey Hills, on Sydney’s North Shore. They battled it out with Hornsby and District Amateur Radio Club’s station VK2MA on 6m-2m-70cm, to take out top-score in the Division 2 Four-bands sub-section. Unfortunately, VK2MB had no success on 23cm, despite trying, even though the VK2RSY beacon at Dural was a good signal. C’est la guerre!

Also in the ‘top stress’ league, portable single operator 24hr (Section A1), new-hand Graeme VK2QJ concentrated on the Four-bands sub-section to rack up top scores in both Divisions. In the same Section, stalwart Doug VK4OE took out top scores in the All-bands sub-section on both Divisions.

As in past contests, the Single-band category can pay off for entrants; 2m being well-plumbed for contacts in this Winter’s event. Jim VK1AT managed top-score in Division 2 Portable 8-hour, while Peter VK3YE did it for Division 1. Single-band operator is also popular with Home stations, as John VK2YW near Wagga Wagga in south-west NSW, pulled-off top-scores in both Divisions; no competing logs were entered, so John’s strategy paid off.

Mike VK3AVV reported a short 6m opening via Winter Sporadic-E on the Saturday between VK3 and VK4, “although the submitted logs do not show many contacts during that time. VK3 to VK4 contacts do wonders for the score on 6m”, Mike said.

A corner turned

As I have observed over the past few years, collectively, entrants have been having something of an each-way punt between ‘traditional’ grid square-based scoring and distance-based scoring. The difference in log entries from event to event has varied quite a bit, with the weight of entries falling on the side of Division 1 grid-based scoring, but never by a decisive amount. As Table 1 shows, there has been a ‘drift’ in log entries towards Division 2 distance-based scoring over the past three events, culminating in more entries in Division 2 for this event. Hence, bingo! – expressing “satisfaction at a sudden positive event or outcome”, according to the Oxford dictionary.

2016 Spring		2017 Summer		2017 Winter	
51 logs submitted		71 logs submitted		51 logs submitted	
Division 1	Division 2	Division 1	Division 2	Division 1	Division 2
43	38	54	50	34	41
84.3%	74.5%	75.0%	69.4%	66.7%	80.4%
Submitted both Divs = 30 (58.8%)		Submitted both Divs = 32 (45.1%)		Submitted both Divs = 24 (47.1%)	

Table 1. VHF-UHF Field Day entries compared over the past three events, showing the “turning of the corner” from Division 1 dominance to Division 2.

However, one could not confidently or decisively call this a “win” for moving the contest rules to distance-based scoring in future VHF-UHF Field Days. Doubtless there are some participants who wish it were that simple. But, recall that, for the previous nine events, the weight of entries has been for Division 1. Since the change introduced in 2014, there has been some development in the contest rules and the nature of operators’ participation in these Field Days. The long-foreshadowed formal consultation will now have to be organised and publicised.

Some statistics and comments

Contest log-checker Mike VK3AVV notes that, while 51 stations submitted a log, some 20 fewer than the Summer event’s entries, it is up by 12 on the two previous Winter events. As usual, many more stations participated than submitted logs. Mike comments that there were at least 144 other station participating (so, close to 200 total participants!), many making only one contact, but there were also at least 41 stations that made 10 or more contacts (achieving respectable scores) but did not submit a log. It’s easy to see from the Results Summary that, if you select your sub-section carefully, you may be a winner in that sub-section fewer than 10 contacts, Mike observed. In similar events in other countries, it is also reported that many more stations participate (‘hand out numbers’) than enter logs, so Australia’s not unique in this regard.

In all, 5152 contacts were logged. Of these, 2990 of the logged contacts were checked, making 58%. Mike notes that logging accuracy improved to some extent in this Field Day, “although there is plenty of room for improvement.” Some of the accuracy issues can be put down to operating procedure at either or both ends of a contact, but there is also obvious lack of checking logs before they’re submitted.

As usual, big thank you is due to Mike VK3AVV for a superlative job in his development of the log-checking software and the detailed checking of all log entries, along with preparing the individual and consolidated results. Thanks for assistance are also owed to Colin VK5DK and Michael VK3ALZ.

Graeme VK2QJ and Pat VK2FAAD operated from Vista Point, in Mount Hyland Nature Reserve, not far from the NSW-Qld border.



2017 Winter VHF-UHF Field Day Results Summary

Division 1

Section A1. Portable station, single operator 24 hrs
Four-bands: Graeme Battistuzzi VK2QJ 1391 points
All-bands: Doug Friend VK4OE 2820 points

Section A2. Portable station, single operator 8 hrs
Single-band: Peter Parker VK3YE 165 points
Four-bands: Bob Jeisman VK5FBAA 314 points
All-bands: Iain Crawford VK5ZD 2009 points

Section B1. Portable station, multi-operator 24 hrs
Four-bands: Greg Smith VK3ND 466 points
All-bands: Damian Ayers VK3KQ 5074 points

Section B2. Portable station, multi-operator 8 hrs
No logs submitted.

Section C1. Home station 24 hrs
Single-band: John Eyles VK2YW 132 points
Four-bands: Robert Black VK2BBR 1180 points
All-bands: Ross Keogh VK3MY 3444 points

Section C2. Home station 8 hrs
Four-bands: David Rolf VK3JL 364 points
All-bands: Doug Hunter VK4ADC 1016 points

Section D1. Rover station 24 hrs
No logs submitted.

Section D2. Rover station. 8 hrs
No logs submitted.

Top-scoring Foundation station operator:
Patrick Doolan VK2FAAD. Division 1. Section A1, Portable,
single operator 24 hrs, *Four-bands:* 718 points.

Division 2

Section A1. Portable station, single operator 24 hrs
Four-bands: Graeme Battistuzzi VK2QJ 59,533 points
All-bands: Doug Friend VK4OE 28,480 points

Section A2. Portable station, single operator 8 hrs
Single-band: Jim Henderson VK1AT 371 points
Four-bands: Mark Regan VK2ZB 3862 points
All-bands: Peter Westgarth VK3APW 10,348 points

Section B1. Portable station, multi-operator 24 hrs
Four-bands: Greg Smith VK3ND 9769 points
All-bands: Damian Ayers VK3KQ 130,082 points

Section B2. Portable station, multi-operator 8 hrs
Four-bands: Manly Warringah ARS VK2MB 1885 points

Section C1. Home station 24 hrs
Single-band: John Eyles VK2YW 604 points
Four-bands: Robert Black VK2BBR 28,957 points
All-bands: Ross Keogh VK3MY 42,174 points

Section C2. Home station 8 hrs
Single-band: Jim Wilson VK3ZAP 458 points
Four-bands: Rhod Rowe VK2TTL 2406 points
All-bands: Doug Hunter VK4ADC 10,616 points

Section D1. Rover station 24 hrs
Single-band: Charles (Bill) Field VK3CWF 1966 points

Section D2. Rover station. 8 hrs
No logs submitted.

Top-scoring Foundation station operator:
Patrick Doolan VK2FAAD. Division 2. Section A1, Portable,
single operator 24 hrs, *Four-bands:* 23,985 points.

Multi-operator stations' listed operators

VK2MA: VK2DAY, VK2PX, VK2ZOO, VK2AAV, VK2KAZ

VK2MB: Nick VK2FS, Greg VK2XE

VK3KQ: Damian VK3KQ, Andrew VK3BQ, Ralph VK3LL

VK3ND: Greg VK3ND, Michael VK3MHY, Emma VK3MUM,
Jacklin Grace de Mamiel SWL

E&OE