

History and rationale behind the ARRL RTTY Roundup off-times

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ARRL's RTTY Roundup was designed by Jay Townsend, WS7I and Hal Blegen, WA7EGA (K7IRA) in the spring of 1988. It was approved by John, W1XX and the Membership Services Committee (MSC) in the summer of 1988. The first running was in January 1989. The 21st running was in January 2009.

Hal and I envisioned the Roundup as a Single Operator Low-Power contest. It was not based as many believe on SS. It is and always was intended to be a unique contest .

Strategy and Hours of Propagation to areas of the US are what makes it a contest that can and has been won in most parts of the country. Part of the strategy and hours is primarily controlled by the off-times.

Summary of Off-times:

1. As envisioned and submitted. A single six hour block of time.
2. Implemented in the 1989 rules by the MSC. "Two rest periods (for a combined total of six hours) must be taken in two single blocks of time, clearly marked in the log."
3. Sometime in the 2002-3 time frame the rule evidently was changed to read something like 2 three hour blocks of time for a total of six hours. This change was due to the ARRL Log checker W6/G0AZT having difficulty in figuring out the off time in the electronic logs
4. Currently the rules reads: 2.2 The six hours of off time must be taken in no more than two blocks.

Hal Blegen wrote in his web article:

<http://www.arrl.org/members-only/contests/results/2002/rtty/k7ira.html>

"Limiting a contest to 24 of 30 hours boosts participation and rewards operator strategy. " Hal also wrote about the 2 three hour blocks. He went on to mention that sleeping is good for old folks (Hal's retired).

"Of all the low-down things, the three-hour minimum rest period was lower than the lipstick on Clinton's boxers. A few whiners who keep making bad choices, blowing two-hours for a multiplier bonanza that turns out to be a couple of JA's and a VK, really don't like this rule. The six-hour rest is there to so the guys with gray hair can trade their years experience for some sleep and still have a chance to balance the scorecard. If you like pain then by all means, stay up and second guess yourself. The top scorers usually plan their rest periods and exercise the

discipline to stick with that plan, although I admit that trying to forecast the optimum time to start day two is a little like guessing the winning lottery number. “

The question about the RTTY Roundup rules got started because the rules are vague about what does and doesn't constitute an off-time at the beginning end of the contest

Don, AA5AU the premier RTTY Roundup contest guru in an article stated this: AA5AU has won 14 straight Single Operator Low Power titles.

<http://www.aa5au.com/arrlru01.html>

"Strategy #3 - Rest periods.

The 3rd and final strategy in this contest is when to take rest periods. The rules state you must take 6 hours of rest for single operators in two periods. The ARRL has allowed single operators to take the entire 6 hours at once (2 - 3 hour rest periods back-to-back). In 1999, I took all 6 hours at once. In 2000, I took 5.75 hours once, then 15 minutes during the day Sunday. I decided in 2001 I would take all 6 hours at one time.

The biggest question is when to take these 6 hours. To answer that I listened to the bands the previous two mornings to find out when 15 and 10 meters opened. I determined that 15 meters opened up at 1315Z the previous 2 days. Since there wasn't much activity, I had to rely on my recent contest experiences in this sunspot cycle to guess that 10 meters opens at approximately the same time or perhaps 15-30 minutes later.

Since the bands seem to open "earlier" when a contest is going on, I decided I would start the 2nd day at 1300Z on 15 and 20 meters. With the 3rd radio on 10, I anticipated listening to this radio until I started hearing signals, then switch from 20 to 10 meters on radio "B".

When to start on Sunday is a critical decision. Probably the most critical of all the strategies. The reason being that this is a rate contest. I have to make sure that 15 meters is open enough to get a good rate going, whether it be supported with contacts on 20 or 10 meters. 15 meters is only going to be open to Europe at that time for me. Running Low Power, I know that I hear Europe on 15 meters a few minutes earlier than they hear me.

Because I heard strong signals from Europe at 1315Z on 15 meters the previous two days, I decided beforehand to restart on Sunday at 1301Z. So at 0700 I went QRT for rest."

Another recent off time rule discussion.

http://www.radio-sport.net/rttyru09_pre.htm

Over the years I have heard that there was some trouble with the off time rules as they are vague about what does and doesn't constitute an off-time at the beginning or end of the contest.

This seems moot as Don indicates as far back as 2001 he took 5.75 and .25 or 15 minutes at the end. I see no problem with this. From a strategy point of view it works fine.

Recently in the RTTY reflector there was discussion about trying to change off time rules to be like SS. The question is why? There is little to be gained in this contest for taking 30 minute off times.

It would completely change the entire strategy of the contest. As currently I suspect 99% of all participants take 6 hours off in a row. This has always been permitted under the rules and if the rule is changed I would think that a change back to the original concept of one single six hour block would be best.

See the article on WPX and its 36 hour limit and strategy.

http://www.radio-sport.net/wpx_strategy1.htm

As I recall the MSC thought that if a person had for example an Amplifier problem then having the ability to have a period of time and then later the rest of the time would be better. That is essentially how the rule has been.

It has also been mentioned that opposition to a bunch of short time off rules was that people would not account for their time properly. Actually this is of course covered in the general rules. Listening time counts as operating time.

The real reason for off time is so that Roundup operators are forced to plan and to execute their plan in order to win. This is true as well in several other areas of the contest. For example WA1PMA (MS) beat out AJ7?? (MS) due to a decision as the beginning of the contest in 2008 to go for European Multipliers and give up on the early first couple of hour rate. This strategy worked as there wasn't another 20 meter European opening during the contest.

This year Don AA5AU is in a neck-to-neck race with WE9V. Don has 1840 contacts and 105 multipliers while WE9V has 1684 and 115. Goes to show you that strategy and skill count. Don had low-band problems which cost him Mults.

As we explained in the RTTY reflector these off times really only come into play when its an operator that is operating the entire 24 out of 30 hours. For example in the 2009 Roundup we took a single six hour break and then later on Sunday afternoon we took a 25 minutes lunch break. You can take extra breaks they just count as operating time of course.