

NCJ Club Profile: Contest Club Ontario

Contest Club Ontario came about in 2002 at the intersection of two trains of activity in the summer. One train originated in northern Ontario with Travis, VA3WN (now VE3WO), who proposed a Canada-wide contest club on the contest_canada reflector. It was soon determined that a national contest club would not be in line with the rules set down by various contest sponsors. The second train originated in the Toronto area, the result of irregular coffee meetings since 1999 attended by many of the top testers nearby and including such luminaries as John, VE3EJ, and Yuri, VE3DZ. The idea of a local contest club had been brought up on a couple of occasions. These two concepts from widely separated parts of the province now came together.

I suggested to Travis that the ideal solution was an Ontario club for contest participants. As the contest editor for *TCA*, the Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) journal for Canadian hams, I could see that the numbers being posted by VA3/VE3 stations would stand up well against competition from other clubs. Together we decided to round up the troops and form Contest Club Ontario. Within a few days, we had the nucleus of the club.

An executive was formed with yours truly, VE3KZ, as president, John, VE3EJ, as vice-president, Travis, VA3WN, as secretary and Don, VE3BUC (now VE3XD),



as communications expert and treasurer. This last job was handed off soon to Eric, VE3MQW (now VE3CR). By mid-August the CCO roster contained 42 call signs with more being added daily.

Kickoff

The kick-off event of the summer was the barbecue at the VE3EJ acreage in the Niagara Peninsula. This occurred just a month after the club was formed. John put on a great party, and members came from most of the province. This is now an annual event. During this gathering, we thrashed out a lot of the details of how the club was to operate, including such things as name tags, QSL cards and logos. The dreaded "circle" was discussed — 250 km radius for WAE and 275 km for most others. The province of Ontario is a really big piece of territory, and it was obvious that some members would not always be included in the club total. In practice, however, it was possible to include nearly all in the submissions. I rode herd on the circles, armed

with a spreadsheet and the latitudes and longitudes of members' locations.

One major discussion concerned focused on which contests CCO could or should participate in as a group. We formed a list consisting of major contests that included a club competition. In addition, being a Canadian organization, we felt we should also participate as a club in the two RAC contests and in the Ontario QSO Party. To make it more interesting for individual operators, their individual scores — including partial scores from multi-operations — would be tabulated for the 30 chosen contests. The highest score in each contest was given 1 million points. Thus the lifetime sCCOre Award for accumulating 5 million sCCOre points was initiated, tabulations to begin in the 2003 season. Don, VE3XD, set up the CCO Web page in September. Our communication system now consisted of the old ve3_contest reflector from the 1999 Toronto coffee meeting days and a bright new Web page, <http://cco.ve3xd.com/>. The first sCCOre plaque recipients in the inaugural year were Ron, VE3AT, VE3KZ, VE3EJ, VE3DZ and Chris, VA3NR. It is interesting to note that four of these five still lead in the standings at this time. There are now 39 plaques awarded to the CCO members plus 32 endorsements, including a 50 million endorsement to VE3DZ. *Fantastic!*



Figure 1 — Fifty CCO members attended the VE3EJ annual meeting and barbecue.

First CCO Club Competitions

The first outings for CCO were the summer NAQPs and the WAE Contest, prior to the BBQ. After that, with our primary targets now established, we headed for some major competition in the fall of 2002. Early October gave us a taste for victory when we came in second to the Tennessee Contest Group in the California QSO Party. The next year CCO repeated that placement in the CQP, inching closer to the TCG. In 2004 we hit our stride, setting an all-time record of more than 1 million points and repeated a victory in the non-California club competition for the next four years.

We have endeavored to do the same thing in the Florida QSO Party, climbing from tenth place outside Florida in 2003 to fourth in 2004 to second in 2005, 2006 and 2007, trying to overcome Mad River. We finally surpassed the 1 million mark to take first place in 2008!

These two QSO parties illustrate one of CCO's strengths. We have a lot of active members who show up and succeed in an intra-North American theater where large antennas and high power are not the prime prerequisites. The geographical relationship between Ontario and both of these



Figure 2 — CCO Executive (L-R): Secretary Travis Fitzgerald, VE3WO; President John Sluymmer, VE3EJ; Vice-President Brian Campbell, VE3MGY; Past-President Bob Nash, VE3KZ; Treasurer Eric Ferguson, VE3CR, and Communications Manager Don Cassel, VE3XD.

states is also excellent. The other situation we've been able to take full advantage of is our proximity to the US in contests where we can work each other for extra points, such as the CQ-sponsored contests. CCO has managed to remain consistently in the top 10 clubs outside the US.

Another of our strengths is our diversity of operation. In addition to CW and phone, we include RTTY and the three ARRL VHF contests in our yearly schedule. Our club's active roster now numbers 171; another 42 who have not been active have

expressed interest. Our best outings usually attract around 50 participants. This is always the case for the ARRL International DX Contest, where we have to go up against the really big guns by having too many entrants for the medium club category.

Representing Canada

One other accomplishment we're proud of is showing how much fun it is to represent Canada on the world contest stage. Over the past few years we have been joined by the East Coast Canada Contest Club, the Maritime Contest Club, le Contest Group du Quebec and the Saskatchewan Contest Club. Activity has also increased within the old western clubs as well — the Alberta Clippers and BC DX Club.

Finally, after seven years of participating in other people's contests, we have taken over the reins of the Ontario QSO Party from the Ontario DX Association. This is a unique contest, particularly from the Ontario side. Activity is on the rise, and we are looking for steady growth. We're also learning how much work goes into making such an event happen.

We invite you to visit our Web site, <http://cco.ve3xd.com/> and see what we are up to. Look for us in the next contest. You can count on those VA3/VE3 QSOs. 73 de VA3CCO. **NCJ**