

MiQP Operating Tips

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The Michigan QSO Party (MiQP) has developed into a very successful operating event. While many MRRCers turn in great scores, as the logchecker each year I see ways that some entrants could improve their scores. The goal of this article is to share this advice, and also some observations from operating the last three MiQPs.

Band Activity – Traditionally, most out-state MiQP activity comes from east of the Mississippi, in addition to in-state activity. In this regard, band selection is somewhat like Sweepstakes, but with even more emphasis on 40M and less activity on the high bands. During the day, 40M will have the most activity, particularly for in-state QSOs. 20M can also provide good rates if the activity is there and is very useful for working western multipliers. On 15M and 10M the usual skip zone is not working in your favor so you're likely to be working mostly casual participants. There are published activity times for 15M and 10M so try these bands at those times. You also might find the more serious out-state stations will ask you to move there.

CW vs. SSB – The balance between CW and SSB QSOs is perhaps the most important factor in a good MiQP score. The scoring rules favor CW with a 2:1 ratio in points per QSO. The mobile stations also seem to favor CW because rates tend to be better with our puny mobile antennas. At the same time, some stations work almost 100% SSB – last year K8AO had only one CW QSO out of almost 300 (and that was when KU8E asked him to move for the Delta county mult!)

Because multipliers are counted on both CW and SSB, some operating on your less-than-favorite mode is going to be necessary to avoid hurting your score. More QSOs on a given mode generally means more multipliers. A 50/50 CW/SSB split is a good objective, but a more uneven split may not hurt particularly if you're a full time entry and will likely make 400-500 QSOs. If you're only operating part time, then balancing mode-QSOs to maximize multipliers and hence, your score is crucial.

Follow the Mobiles – MiQP always has a number of mobile stations running around the state during the contest. You can work these mobiles over again from each county they operate from. While providing additional QSOs, these mobiles often are the only stations on from a number of the sparsely populated counties.

The trick to maximizing the number of mobiles you work is to have some way to monitor the typical frequencies they use throughout the contest while still being able to call CQ. The greatest amount of mobile activity is on 40M, so on CW the mobiles try to hang out around 7045 while on SSB the preferred spot is 7225, although this is becoming more and more difficult due to increasing amounts of fixed station activity near that frequency.

There are a number of ways to monitor the mobile frequencies – using the sub-receiver or VFO-B in your modern transceiver, or perhaps use a spare receiver/transceiver with a random piece of wire for the antenna. Be sure to check for too much power pickup from your transmitter, but even with a KW the receiver should survive as if you can get enough physical separation between the antennas.

One more tip – in years past the routes and schedules for many of the MiQP mobiles are posted on the MRRC reflector. While circumstances may effect these schedules, quite often the times in and out of each county are pretty accurate. If you know when to look for mobiles in a particular county, it increases your chances of working easy multipliers.

Multi-Rigs for Multi-Ops – The MiQP rules have only one category for multi-ops, and multiple transmitters are

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allowed. A huge setup with rigs on each band and mode is not necessary - a simpler setup with even one additional transmitter will pay huge dividends to the score. At many stations, its quite possible to string up a 40M dipole away from the other antennas and run a separate rig on that band, leaving the existing rig to run 80M/20M/15M/10M with the existing station antennas. With a rig dedicated to 40M, following the mobiles is easy while the other radio can be exploring QSO opportunities on the other bands.

Operating Less Than Full Time - Even though the MiQP is only twelve hours long, some members can't (or are not interested in) operate the entire event. While activity seems to be highest after dark, daytime conditions particularly on 40M favor the short skip necessary to reach the major population areas, as well as for making in-state QSOs. If your operating time is limited, spreading it out over the contest period will likely result in a better score. The reason for this is that you will have better exposure to the mobile stations operating from counties that won't be on later.

Club Competition - MiQP has a club competition for Michigan clubs. However, MRRC has chosen to exclude itself from this competition to give the other clubs something to shoot for. Since MRRC scores don't count, you should consider giving your score to another Michigan club you might belong to. In the last two years, the club plaque has been won with only two entries - one serious single op and a big multi op. The winning club score in 2001 was something over 200K points. In the same contest, MRRC entries totaled almost 750K! These points could have been credited to other Michigan clubs and made the club competition much more interesting, with likely a different winner. So consider giving your score to another Michigan club.

So, good luck in MiQP 2003! W8MJ and I will be looking for you from our mobile.