

The True Blue DXers Club

announces

Bands Alive

The 2021 CW/SSB DX Ultra-Marathon

Introduction. As the new solar cycle is now under way and conditions on the HF bands are expected to gradually improve throughout 2021, this unprecedented initiative is launched to give DXers a further motivation to get on the air and therefore support, improve and promote amateur activity using person-to-person modes of communication such as CW and SSB. This initiative, which we call “ultra-marathon” for a reason, is indeed unprecedented – its aim, reflected in its format, is to get people on the air and make as many unique contacts as possible over the duration of a full year, and not simply to work as many countries as possible.

Duration. 1 January – 31 December 2021.

Modes. CW or SSB. Question: why not a mixed mode? Answer: for simplicity’s sake: the many software packages that can be used to make participation, scoring and results submission a lot easier are contest programs and do not support mixed mode. More details under “software” later on.

Categories. Participants can choose one of three categories based on the power they use regardless of the antenna system. HIGH POWER: using the maximum power allowed by the license. LOW POWER: using 100 watts maximum. QRP: using 5 watts maximum.

Bands. 10, 15, 20, 40, 80 and 160 metres. Question: why not the WARC bands? Answer: for the same reason there is no mixed mode. More details under “software” later on.

Scope of the competition. Anybody who has taken part in a CQ World Wide DX Contest will be familiar with the scope of the competition, which is to score the maximum number of points. Instead of a 48-hour contest, this is a year-long effort, hence the definition of “ultra-marathon”. The total points are calculated as follows:

SCORE

The final score is the result of the total QSO points multiplied by the sum of zone and country multipliers. Example: 1000 QSO points * (30 Zones + 70 Countries) = 100,000 (final score).

QSO POINTS

Stations may be contacted once on each band over the entire duration of the Ultra-Marathon. QSO points are based on the location of the station worked.

- Contacts between stations on different continents count three (3) points.
- Contacts between stations on the same continent but in different countries count one (1) point. Exception: Contacts between stations in different countries within the North American boundaries count two (2) points.
- Contacts between stations in the same country have zero (0) QSO point value, but count for zone and country multiplier credit.

MULTIPLIER

There are two types of multipliers.

- **Zone:** A multiplier of one (1) for each different CQ Zone contacted on each band. The CQ Worked All Zones rules are the standard.
- **Country:** A multiplier of one (1) for each different country contacted on each band. The DXCC entity list, Worked All Europe (WAE) multiplier list plus IG9/IH9, and continental boundaries are the standards for defining country multipliers. Maritime mobile stations count only for a zone multiplier.

Software. Realistically, competitive participation in this initiative is only possible by using one of the many excellent programs available that support the CQ WW DX Contest. These programs will automatically update your score after every individual QSO. They will also tell you if one station has been worked before, what zones or countries you have worked on any of the bands and which ones to look for to increase your multipliers, plus a host of other utilities that will let you concentrate on what matters – *making QSOs!*

Participation. In order to take part in the ultra-marathon, you have to register for it on the dedicated section of the TBDXC website. Participation is open to all amateurs - you *do not* need to sign up for Club membership in order to participate. Upon registering, you will have to choose the class in which you compete, as well as the mode. These cannot be changed afterwards. Once registered, you will be able to submit your results as frequently as you want (QSO points, DXCC countries, WAZ zones and total score, as calculated automatically by the contest software). Your position in the ultra-marathon leaderboard published on the website will be updated every time you submit your results.

Prizes. At the moment we can only guarantee certificates. These will be issued to the top five scorers worldwide for CW and SSB, for HIGH, LOW and QRP power respectively. Certificates will also be issued to the top three scorers in each of the continents for CW and SSB, regardless of power level. However, we are in early negotiations with a number of potential sponsors, and if participation turns out to be at an adequate level (a minimum of a few hundreds) it is completely possible that we will have a few prizes like CW keys, microphones, headphones, or vouchers from major ham radio dealers.

Checks. For the majority of the participants, this year-long contest will have no checks. However, anybody qualifying for a certificate as described above will be required to submit an adif file in January 2022 with all the contacts they made for the ultra-marathon. Failure to do so will entail disqualification. The adif logs will be checked by the Club Contest Committee and any problem – if not properly clarified with the participant – will entail disqualification as well.