

**For Immediate Release**



September 4-5, 2021  
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## Portable Operations Challenge

**A Challenge for Contesters and Portable Operators**  
*Portable Ops Challenge Pits Fixed and Portable Ops*

**Ridgeland, Mississippi— May 21, 2021** — The second year of the Fox Mike Hotel Portable Operations Challenge will be September 4-5, 2021 as announced by the Steering Committee. The Portable Ops Challenge levels the competitive playing field between the Big Guns and the Little Pistols who operate a portable station. Unlike many contests, said Steering Committee Chair Frank Howell K4FMH, the POC has a formal theory guiding the way competition is scored.

Bill Lippert ACoW, who revised this year's Rules document added: "We are using *kilometers-per-watt* as the basic score for a contact. But to additionally level things, we based multipliers on the difficulty of transmission mode to make a contact such as phone getting a higher weight than those using the less difficult modes of CW and digital. Being a portable station will receive an additional multiplier, especially when contacting another portable station." The scoring system is based upon the golf metaphor of the handicap index used to equalize the opportunity for all players to win when they have unequal ability and play on courses with varying levels of difficulty.

The POC is organized by an international team of noted contest and portable operators. Dr. Scott Wright KOMD, said, "The POC started as a response to the call I issued as ARRL National Contest Journal editor to offer events that allowed urban operators and those without antennas at home to enjoy the thrill of a contest like experience". Don Field G3XTT, Editor of *Practical Wireless* magazine and highly experienced DX contester who is also President of the UK DX Foundation, added "Events like this stimulate more interest in contesting and it has an international scope to give chances to snare some new DXCC entities. This year's three time periods should open up Europe, Asia, North and South America to participants." Dr. Wright added to this sentiment, "The International advisory steering committee for the POC has made it a truly global partnership designed to bring a contest-like experience to those without big antennas at home."

Paula Uscian K9IR is both an avid contester and portable operator. Her take on the second POC is that, "We had a fight to the finish last year by a team in Ohio and a single operator in Sweden. Only a blown grid square made the difference. This year will be a tough one to win the Grand Championship Plaque." A highly competitive contest operator from Australia who is preparing for his next DXpedition, Tommy Horozakis VK2IR, added that "Contest operators will be pushed to best the effective portable operator who uses much lower power." Tommy VK2IR added that the Hellenic Amateur Radio Association of Australia was pleased to be an award plaque sponsor for the event, the Distance Champion.

Portable operators on the Steering Committee see a real challenge awaiting all participants. Well-known Parks-on-the-Air (POTA) activator and blogger, Thomas Witherspoon K4SWL encouraged both POTA and Summits-on-the-Air (SOTA) enthusiasts to activate and participate in the POC. “You are getting a two-for-one multiplier, so to speak, by working a lot of stations from your Park or Summit through the Portable Ops Challenge.” Ed Durrant DD5LP, another veteran SOTA aficionado, echoed this sentiment. “The skills required by a good SOTA activator and an individual portable contest operator overlap in that self-sufficiency in equipment set-up is required as are short contacts during a pile-up in both the contest environment and the SOTA (and other) portable operation award schemes.” Last year, both Championships were claimed by single portable operators operating with very little power.

The *Portable Ops Challenge* is the brainchild of Frank Howell’s Fox Mike Hotel Portable Ops Team and is named for them. Mike McKay N5DU of that team and the Steering Committee, said “I hear many operators who get outdoors and try to dip their hands in a conventional contest say two things. They enjoyed the competition. And it’s a shame that the Big Guns dominate the realistic chances of winning.” Thomas Gandy N5WDG complemented this notion: “Last year, my rig’s finals went soft and I was only using 50 watts for most of the contest. But I had great success using this scoring system. A lot of last year’s participants wrote us saying it was a real blast in this format!” Mike Duke K5XU, team and Steering Committee member now in his 50<sup>th</sup> year of amateur radio contesting, echoed both of his team members. “I handle most of the CW operation on our team. It’s been a terrific way for me to get engaged in a contest that emphasizes power efficiency and skills over equipment.”

Bill Barnes WC3B said that this format gives both traditional contest stations and portable operators a very level playing field. “I think the Steering Committee of both veteran DX contest participants and some of the best portable operators in the world has come up with something worth giving a go, especially after the revisions made for this year,” Bill stated.

Steering Committee Chair Frank K4FMH concluded, “I’d say the question is whether the Big Guns can win using the handicap system that the Steering Committee has produced. With this scoring metric, it’s more about radio sport than radio gear.” He added that the Committee is using a playful rhetoric this year to let ardent contest stations be aware that this is a “challenge” for them as well as portable stations to engage in friendly but competitive radio sport through the POC:

***Contesters: you’ve been Challenged!***

Scheduled for September 4 and 5, 2021, the rules and other relevant documents for the Fox Mike Hotel Portable Operations Challenge are located at [foxmikehotel.com/challenge](http://foxmikehotel.com/challenge).

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For more information on the Portable Operations Challenge:

<https://foxmikehotel.com/challenge>

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