

RSGB Cricket World Cup Radio Marathon 2019 – Draw Stumps

End of the Innings – what was it about?

The RSGB CWC Radio Marathon was organised on the HF bands, to coincide with the ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC) tournament, held in England and Wales between 30 May and 14 July this year.

Radio Marathons are competitions that involve making QSOs in order to chase awards in a fixed time-frame. For the CWC Marathon, our award chasers had 31 UK and nine International callsigns with which to have contacts. UK callsigns had a unique GB19 prefix. For each callsign, QSOs were counted on three modes and on each of nine bands (except no SSB on 30m). The chase for QSOs could become addictive and operating using the special callsigns was an interesting experience, often with huge numbers of callers.

The challenge for the RSGB was to find sufficient Members who were willing to activate the 31 callsigns on each band and mode to give the award chasers an opportunity to maximise their scores.

Marathon progress was tracked using the Hamlogs website. All QSOs were uploaded so that participants could regularly check their status and could target the callsigns, bands and modes that they needed to achieve the next level of award.

Headline figures

QSOs including both GB19* and International callsigns: **440,442**

QSOs for the 31 GB19* callsigns: **371,489**

Unique callsigns that appeared in the GB19* logs: **44,774**

UK and Crown Dependency callsigns in GB19* logs: **4,492**

Our final QSO count exceeded our expectations; by numbers of contacts, the marathon was significantly larger than any previous coordinated activation by RSGB members.

How did this come about?

In 2018, the RSGB Contest Club used one of its historic callsigns in a radio marathon to coincide with the FIFA Football World Cup in Russia.

With over 50,000 QSOs and much experience gained, we were keen to organise something similar. Our planning group comprised the RSGB HF Contest Committee plus Bob Whelan, G3PJT.

At the time of the 2018 RSGB Convention we had identified that the Cricket World Cup

was coming to England and Wales in 2019 and that it had a regional element – the locations of the Cricket Grounds correlating quite well with the RSGB regions. The ICC abbreviations for the teams had two or three characters that could provide suitable suffixes for Team callsigns.

Ofcom

There were two key requirements to agree with Ofcom before we could signal the start of play for the marathon:

- 1 The context for using the special GB19* callsigns would not be the usual 'public-facing' special callsign event but would be an international activation, where 'the public' are other radio amateurs in the international radio community. In the event, some GB19* activations were in public locations, but that was not the norm.
- 2 The allocation of callsigns to activators would be managed during the event, rather than in advance. Our operators would be able to request slots to operate at relatively short notice and would also be able to operate using different callsigns so that we could balance the activity to accommodate our award chasers.

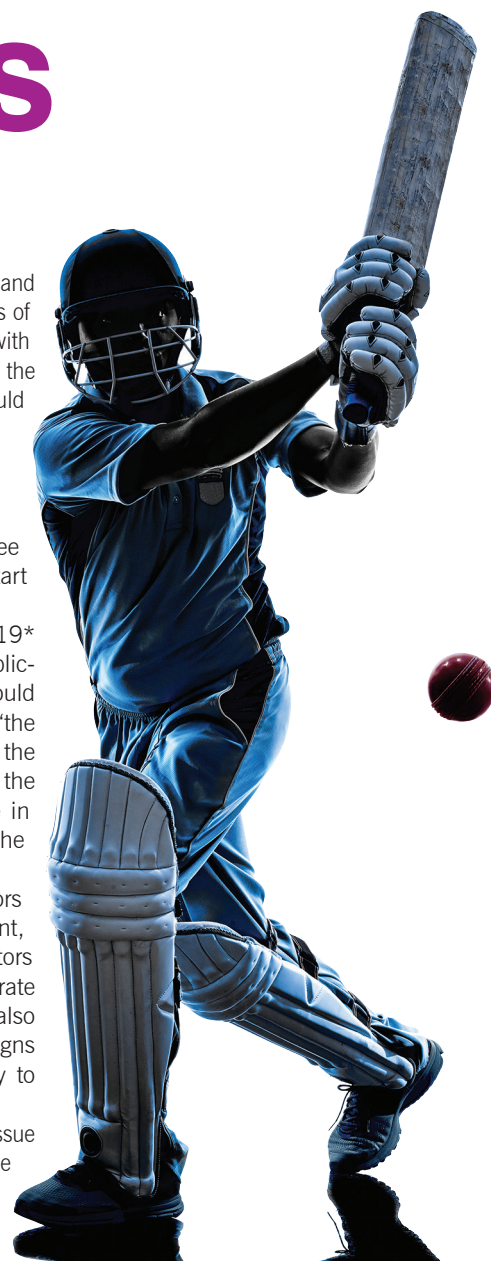
After some discussion, Ofcom were able to issue an NoV for all 31 callsigns as variations to the RSGB Contest Club callsign, G6XX. This meant that RSGB Members who joined the Contest Club could operate using an appropriate GB19* callsign in addition to those of our operators who had been members previously. Thanks to Ofcom for enabling this hugely successful event.

Marathon logistics

With 31 callsigns available, we recruited a team of volunteers to coordinate the operation of one or two callsigns each; taking responsibility for their callsigns and recruiting local operators or clubs to share the activation.

The coordinators maintained an activation schedule using a QRZ.com page. Anyone planning to operate could check the availability of a callsign and request a time-slot from the coordinator.

After the operating session, the coordinator received the log from the activator as an ADIF file, to upload to the



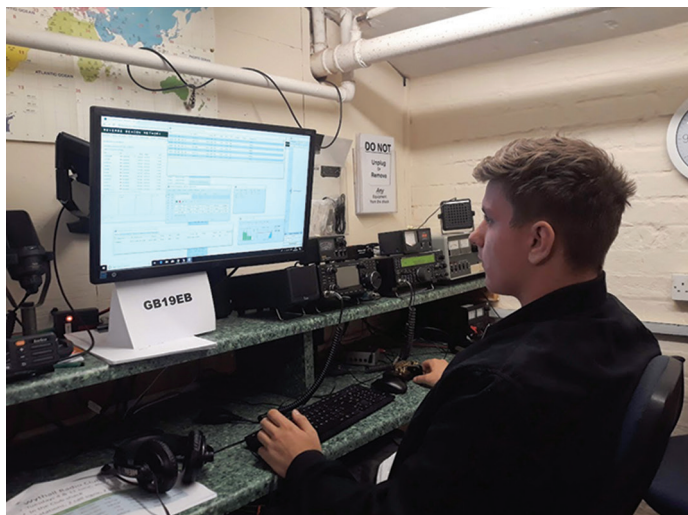
Hamlogs server. The QRZ.com page for the callsign could be used to confirm that the log had been uploaded.

Although the process of slot booking, ADIF file creation and log uploading was a little cumbersome, the functionality achieved was very good, and this enabled us to make a huge number of QSOs and to achieve a balanced activation of the bands/modes. We were particularly keen not to have any residual un-activated slots, which presented some challenges on less popular bands. We found few stations were equipped for 12m or 160m.

Nick Totterdell, G4FAL
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Fred Curtis, G3SVK, one of our leading activators.



Jamie Williams, MODSV, activating GB19EB at the Wythall Club.

UK callsign activators

We had some 200 RSGB Members operating using the GB19* callsigns. Some were operating from competitive contest stations and others using very simple wire aerials and low power. The most popular modes were CW first, SSB second and FT8 third; each mode was responsible for in excess of 100,000 QSOs. We were able to exploit the current popularity of FT8 in its role as a weak signal mode that is effective at low signal-to-noise ratios, with activators able to operate successfully from locations that are electrically noisy.

Leading batsmen

Gordon Higgins, G3PXT was the coordinator for GB19SL – the Sri Lanka callsign. Gordon not only ensured that GB19SL was the Team callsign with the highest number of QSOs but he also activated the twenty other England callsigns, making a total of over 21,000 QSOs for the marathon.

Fred Curtis, G3SVK, steadily worked his way through all the 21 England callsigns, with 12,106 QSOs to his credit, mostly on CW.

Terry Robinson, GM3WUX kept both the Scottish callsigns on the air for many hours on CW, making around 5,500 QSOs. Terry is one of the most prolific white-stick operators in the UK.



Rich Mortimore, GW4BVJ, coordinated and activated GB19SG.

International special callsigns

Our International Activators added 68,953 QSOs to our marathon total and provided more band/mode slots for the award chasers – many thanks to all of them. Here are a few of their comments with QSO count in brackets.

VK19AUS (4,606): we had a blast even with the conditions the way they are for us so far away in Oceania.

LX19CWC (10,316): here in Luxembourg, we had a great time, trying our best with our small team.

5P19CWC (14,158): as the organiser in Denmark I've had a great time with all the daily incoming logs that were sorted, checked and then uploaded.

PJ4DX (2,089): propagation was reliable only on 20m, though I did find a couple of short openings on 10m and 12m on the very last day of the marathon.

5B19CWC (26,357): the stations operating this callsign were spread over the Pafos area. The club operated every day/night for the entire period.

We also had the following on the air for the event (totals in brackets again): CS2019CWC (4,655), VR2019CWC (4,649), ZS19CWC (820) and AP19CWC (1,303).

International award chasers

The clear overall winner was Alec Otulak, SP2EWQ, who made 1,059 unique callsign/band/mode QSOs with GB19* and International activators. His QSOs break down like this: CW: 307, FT4: 6, FT8: 322, PSK: 15, RTTY: 135, SSB: 274. We combine the digital modes for awards, so Alec's total is reduced to 866. Alec is also the highest scoring individual Phone, CW and digital award chaser.

When I asked Alec for some words for this article, his response was: *"My suggestion is perhaps you could ask SP2PBY – it is a club station whose branch operates from a school for blind and visually impaired children in our area. I am quite positive they deserve much more attention than me..."* These comments speak for themselves. Congratulations Alec – you are our winner.

Second came Laci Illés, HA7XL, with a great QSO count of 772: *"Marathon activity always takes a lot of time and you need to be actively monitoring every day and be present in every mode for effective performance."*

Third was Classe Bergman SM3GSK with 740 QSOs: *"As a DXer I have learned that you have to spend lots of time listening on the bands, in this competition especially on 10 & 12 & 15m, not to miss short openings."*

UK award chasers

Top UK spot goes to Darren Collins, G0TSM, who also activated



Classe Bergman, SM6GSK, completed 740 qualifying QSOs with CWC stations.

GB19RB. Darren made 439 qualifying QSOs and came from behind in the last few days to become the clear winner.

Terry Bucknell, G4AFS, who also activated GB19RG, was second with 388; having led the field for some weeks he missed the last four days due to a holiday in Croatia. Terry engaged with FT8 for the first time to achieve a competitive position. Terry's station was 100W to an inverted L, tuned at the base with an Auto Matching Unit, which really lent itself to snappy band changes.

Marathon Scorecard

QSO totals for each mode for all 31 GB19* callsigns

CW	134,012
SSB	122,469
FT8	101,969
RTTY	10,534
PSK	1,659
FT4	825
SSTV	12
JT65	7
FM	2
Total	371,489

UK Stations Worked	Foundation	Intermediate	Full	All
England	187	427	2,885	3,499
Scotland	57	40	316	413
Wales	30	40	248	318
Northern Ireland	23	25	162	210
Isle of Man		5	15	20
Jersey			23	23
Guernsey			9	9
Totals	297	537	3,658	4,492

How many stations made multiple QSOs with GB19* Stations?

Number who made 10 or more	5,823
Number who made 100 or more	716
Number who made 500 or more	19

Top Ten Countries worked by the GB19* stations

1	Germany	17.2%
2	Poland	9.2%
3	European Russia	8.6%
4	England	7.3%
5	Italy	6.7%
6	Czech Republic	5.2%
7	Ukraine	4.2%
8	USA	4%
9	Spain	3.5%
10	France	3.2%



Steve Telenius-Lowe, PJ4DX, batted for the West Indies.

In third place was Brian Sparks, GM4JYB, with 356, who also activated GB19CGM.

Top Intermediate was Neal Giuliano, 2EOMNG, with 135 QSOs, mostly SSB, and top Foundation was Gleason Bradburn, M3ECT, with 184 QSOs – a mix of CW, SSB and datamodes.

Country totals

More than 200 DXCC entities were logged by GB19* stations. Sixty-seven of those QSOs were with stations in Alaska (mostly 20m), which is usually conspicuous by its absence. Also 2,718 QSOs were made with stations in Japan (80m – 12m), which included some excellent runs on the higher bands.

QSOs with the CWC team nations

The combination of summer propagation and our being at the bottom of the sunspot cycle meant that we were very pleased that our GB19* callsigns were able to complete QSOs with each of the nine other countries who were participating in the cricket tournament. Some of these are quite rare DXCC entities.

Country	Prefix	QSOs
South Africa	ZS	170
Australia	VK	97
West Indies	Various	77
India	VU	42
New Zealand	ZL	25
Pakistan	AP	6
Afghanistan	YA	4
Sri Lanka	4S	3
Bangladesh	S2	2

What next?

International interest in the marathon was second only to that attracted by a major DXpedition. We met or exceeded our objectives – particularly in enabling RSGB Member operators to enjoy activating a sought-after callsign.

We will look for future opportunities to facilitate RSGB Members to engage in International Radio Marathons – either those organised from other countries or a future marathon organised by the RSGB.

More marathon information can be found on the RSGB website at www.rsgb.org/cricket.