

Contesting and Your Health: Reducing Contest Stressors

A Panel of Distinguished NCCC Members

NCCC Meeting
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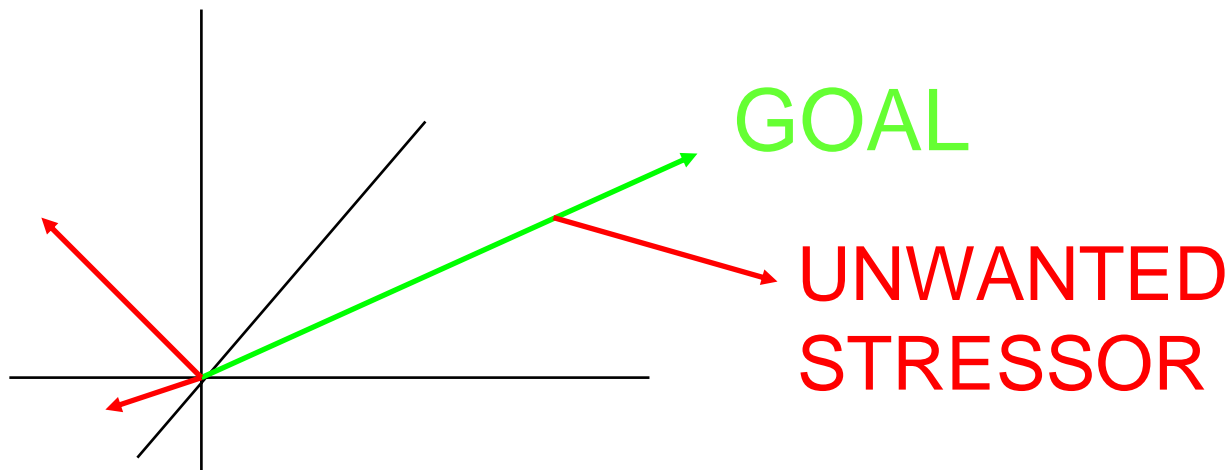
The Panel

- Jack Leddy, N6EM
- Dean Straw, N6BV
- Fred Jensen, K6DGW
- Chris Kantarjiev, K6DBG
- Alan Eshelman, K6SRZ *
- Tom Georgens, W2SC *
- George Daughters, K6GT
- Tom Berson, ND2T, *Moderator*

* The roles of K6SRZ and W2SC will be played tonight by John Miller, K6MM

Can, Should, Contesting Be Stress-Free?

- No
- But
 - the stressors must be aligned with your goal
 - the amount of stress you need is idiosyncratic



Before, During, and After

- Before
 - Prepare yourself, your station, your environment
 - Practice necessary skills
- During
 - Monitor unwanted stressors
 - Reduce them if possible
- After
 - Shed tension
 - Make notes for next time

Some Objective Stressors

- Physical fitness
- Nutrition
- Operating position ergonomics
- Sensory distraction
- Sensory overload
- Environment (e.g. line noise, killer sharks)

Subjective Stressors

- Low commitment
 - I don't like this contest (this mode)
- Unfinished business
 - I'd really rather be doing something else
- Family ecology
 - Someone I care about is pissed at me for ignoring them this weekend
- Neighbors
 - The neighbor is going to ring the doorbell and complain about RFI

Jack Leddy, N6EM

The “Check ’35” Crowd

Dean Straw, N6BV

Contest Stressors

- *Not* preparing your family before the contest
 - Not coordinating contest plans beforehand with your spouse... there probably will be some ‘honey-do’ tradeoffs.
 - Not letting kids know there’s a contest coming up — Dad needs to be left alone next weekend.

Contest Stressors

- Not preparing *yourself* before the contest
 - Physical
 - Rest during the week before contest
 - It's not for everyone, but I try to run 15-20 miles per week to keep aerobically fit. It keeps me alert longer.
 - Hydrating (vs peeing...)

Contest Stressors

- Not preparing *yourself* before the contest
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Foods to keep alert?
 - Caffeine to keep alert?

Contest Stressors

- Not preparing *yourself* before the contest
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - **Attitude**
 - “Nobody answers an apologetic CQ.”
 - I am *strong*!
 - I am not afraid of QRM.

N6BV

Contest Stressors

- Not preparing your *station* before the contest
 - Software issues
 - Logging software problems
 - Packet, if used
 - Practice, practice, practice!

Contest Stressors

- Not preparing your *station* before the contest
 - Software issues
 - Hardware issues
 - Interface to radio(s)
 - Interfaces to switching systems

Other Contest Stressors

- That dreaded telephone call about RFI
 - Have your spouse practice a friendly, soothing response: “Dean is trying to make the Top Ten nationally in this contest. He’ll get back to you as soon as the contest is over.” (Get ‘em involved emotionally.)
 - And it’s way, way better to fix any RFI problems *before* the contest... !

Other Contest Stressors

- *Not* having a sleep or time-off strategy.
- *Not* having a propagation (multiplier) strategy.

Fred Jensen, K6DGW

From Combat to Contest

Chris Kantarjiev, K6DBG

Nutrition for Endurance

Lay Off the Coffee and Sugar

- There's nothing wrong with them in their place, but
- The buzz is quickly followed by a crash
- Not just sugar, but simple carbs
 - Pasta
 - White rice
 - Bread
- “White food bad”

Small Amounts, Often

- Need protein to keep your brain working
- Balance carbs, fat, protein
 - (Zone http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_diet)
- Try tea, cheese and nuts at night
- Try this out before the contest!

A Few Yummy Examples

SNACKS:

- Balance bar + 8 almonds
- 1 sausage, 1/3c peas, 2 crackers, 36 cashews
- 1 string cheese, 1/4 bar dark chocolate, 4 macadamia nuts
- Soft cheese, 1/4 bar dark chocolate, evening tea
- Miso soup, smoked trout, 24 cashews
- Chicken noodle soup + 1 sausage; 24 almonds

MEALS

- 1 cup yogurt, 1 cup whole grain muesli, 20 nuts, coffee
- 1 bagel, 10 slices salami (or packet of tuna), 2 oz cheddar cheese

Alan Eshelman, K6SRZ
Tom Georgens, W2SC

[played tonight by John Miller, K6MM]

Advice From: Dr. Alan, K6SRZ

1. Family

- Let family members know well in advance
- Circle the date on the calendar.
- If you are traveling to another station, minimize problems for family members.

2. Food

- Healthy finger food (dried fruit, rice cakes, string cheese, peanuts)
- Yogurt, Juice

Advice From: Dr. Alan, K6SRZ

3. Sleep

- He does well on 4 hours per night
- Contests with 36 out of 48 or 24 out of 30 hours work for him.

4. Operation Type Important

- Multi-Operator is easiest on mind & body
- Avoids “urge to quit” if rates drop
- Take deep breathe, stick it out

Advice From: Dr. Alan, K6SRZ

5. Exercise

- Aerobic exercise before serious contest effort
- 4 miles before contest
- Home contests: Bicycle or YMCA

6. Preparation

- Anything to improve station well in advance
- Produces greater rates, satisfaction
- Get help with antennas, heavy equipment

Advice From: Dr. Alan, K6SRZ

7. Neighbors

- **Become friendly, invite over for drinks**
- **Fire up station and have a QSO**
- **Create as much good will as possible**

Advice From: Tom, W2SC

1. Before The Contest

- **Prepare Station – Make Easy To Operate**
- **Everything controlled by logging program**
- **Resolve all RF and hum problems in advance**
- **Be in reasonable physical condition**
- **Exercise – circulation, muscle tone, stamina**
- **Rest up before the contest**
- **Comfortable chair, headphones, operating position**

Advice From: Tom, W2SC

2. During The Contest

- Stay hydrated – he drinks Gatorade
- High protein foods
- Assure high protein drinks
- Fatigue will go away – if necessary sleep for 15 minutes
- Re-focus eyes periodically
- Stretch regularly. Try to put your feet up occasionally.

Great Foot Exercisers



George Daughters, K6GT

Devil's Advocate

NCCC Members and Guests