

## CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

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The ends always justify the means. Do you believe this? Is it always an acceptable statement? Is it always a true statement? Is it ever a true statement? Well, I can think of a few means that must always be found to attain the end. Things such as breathing and eating are absolutely essential for life. Some readers of this column will honestly believe that in their highly competitive world, they must be ready to do just about anything to achieve their personal goals or win in their sport. We know about the mess that Barry Bonds has made of his Hall of Fame baseball career over his use of performance enhancing steroids.

Also in the sports department, our friend Charlie was watching the fifth game of the NBA Finals on TV. It was played in Los Angeles, home court to the Lakers who were playing the Boston Celtics. Late in the game, the score had become tight and foul calls were being made every few seconds against both teams. Charlie noticed that when any Celtic player was shooting foul shots, a few Lakers players on the bench, just to the shooter's right and easily within his field of vision, threw white towels high into the air just prior to the moment when the shooter was going to release his foul shot. Clearly, the Lakers players were trying to distract the shooter. Charlie saw them do this towel thing many times in the last five minutes of the game.

Is this fair? Is it OK since they were the home team? Simply, do the ends justify the means? Charlie sat in silence, shaking his head while watching these overpaid bench warmers perform their childish distraction in an attempt to gain some advantage for their team. Charlie really didn't care greatly who would win the game and series to become the 2008 NBA Champion. But, he enjoys fair competition in everything and he didn't feel this behavior was fair at all. Charlie, as do thousands of other sports fans, follows legendary rivalry games to see top notch athletic competition, not to see a bunch of millionaires acting like children in full view of millions of TV sports fans across the country. In the end, the LA towel throwers received what they deserved. They eventually won that game in LA but lost the next game and the championship series two nights later. Justice was served.

Recently, the DX Advisory Committee was asked to examine one of the popular technological methods growing in popularity; to contact a station through the means of a third station that is in a remote location to the operator and its relationship to DXCC rules and DXing in general. This isn't a new or novel concept. Echo Link and IRLP have been around for several years and permit someone accessing a network via VHF or UHF to contact other stations or repeaters throughout the world through an intermediate Internet connection. Of course, this doesn't equate to a legitimate contact by Amateur radio because Internet made the point to point connection, not a propagated radio signal. In another variation, an HF operator may remotely operate a distant HF Amateur radio station using an Internet connection to manipulate the station's tuning and other controls. In effect, someone sitting in front of his laptop in a New York 50<sup>th</sup> story apartment may be the operator of a KW station in San Antonio, Los Angeles or Moscow. The actual station which is on the air may conceivably be as elaborate as money and imagination will permit. Cool, huh?

Charlie's division DXAC representative telephoned Charlie a few weeks ago to poll his opinion. He stated that he was calling several other prominent DXers as well to get a sense of how the DX community felt on the topic. As he explained this remote station issue to Charlie, his reaction to it became more negative as the concept sunk in. Even though he had to agree that it was surely

innovative and definitely cool, it was not what DX competition is all about, what DXCC was built upon or anything that he, as a career DXer, could support. Charlie's opinion was that this opened the door to those who would cheat and use the system rather than their own operating skill to work DX.

By operating a station in a different propagation zone, a DXer in Boston could operate a station in Hawaii and work Pacific island or SE Asia stations using his or her own FCC call even though the band is totally dead at that time in Boston. Similarly, a DXer in Seattle could operate a giant DX station in Maine and work hundreds of European and mid east stations at 3 to 5 AM in Washington state, hours before the bands are open in that region. In this way, a DX chaser or contester could gain a sizable advantage over competitors who were patiently waiting for sunrise and the bands to open. One may easily imagine how an Amateur could work a DXpedition on different bands and at times when there is no propagation to the DX location from his station.

Using a remote station frees up the apartment dweller in major cities, the ham who has no space for antennas, even hams who are on vacation to chase DX and stay up with ongoing DXpeditions, special events, etc. They could be chasing DX while sipping coffee at Starbucks through their laptop and using the provided WIFI high speed Internet connection. Cool indeed!

But, the DXAC was not asked if a remote station was cool. They were asked to consider how to treat DX contacts made through these remote stations and resulting QSL cards that were submitted for DXCC entity credit. The committee is made up of informed and respected DXers from every district of the US plus Canada. They have no interest in dictating how each of us should pursue our DXing. Their duty is to monitor the DXCC rules and assure all of us that DXCC awards and achievements are administered on an absolutely level playing field.

So, Charlie chatted for an hour with his caller and then thought for a while afterward about the possibilities that someone could cheat his way onto the DXCC Honor Roll. The very words present a contradiction in that some one would actually cheat his way onto the Honor Roll. Yet, surely some have and will do so in the future, hopefully in a minimal number. Charlie knows of a few instances of false operating and QSLing by some to gain higher DXCC endorsement. There are some who cheated in obtaining a 40 wpm Code Proficiency award from ARRL. How? Tape recorder played at slower speed. Why? Well, years ago, the CP speed could be used as a bonus in calculating your Sweepstakes contest score. There are those who would do anything to gain a few points over their rivals. I won't describe the QSL methods here but I will assure you that there are ways to obtain DX QSLs without ever working the station. We have some cheating all around us by those to whom the end always justifies the means needed to attain it. In the end, contesting, DXing and attainment of code copying awards are all done for personal satisfaction. If one cheats to participate and gain points, he or she will always know the truth. Even if it manages to fool some Amateur brethren, it will never change the fact for the recipient of the award that he cheated.

In contest competition, DXCC application or many other things we submit, we are asked to read and sign a disclaiming statement saying that we have followed all the rules, etc. If one is disposed to cheating as his means to attain the end, there's nothing that the rest of us who follow the rules of honor can do. We know that the ends do not always justify the means. Charlie doesn't think he will ever use a remote station but now understands why some apartment dwellers might be drawn into this novel technology. It truly is quite cool indeed! Just remember, DXing by remote stations can be fun but submitting the resulting QSLs for DXCC is not acceptable. The ends do not always justify the means.