

WCARES Winter Field Day 2023

By Paul Tampien KM4PT

When is it?

The event officially begins at 1pm Central time on Saturday, January 28th, 2023.
It runs for 24 hours, ending at 12:59 pm on Sunday, January 29th, 2023

Setup

You can begin setup 24 hours before the event.
You are allowed a total of 12 hours of setup time.

Introduction

Winter Field Day 2023 is going to be the same as last year. We have the opportunity to both operate in a group setting and individually at Home or Mobile. The official Winter Field Day location for CW and SSB is at the Public Safety Center 304 Beasley Dr Franklin, Tn. Digital will be at your own designated location.

We will participate fully in Winter Field Day as individuals and a group while working together for an aggregate score AND by staying in touch (virtually) throughout the weekend.

Giving credit where credit is due, there are two sources for this interesting concept of how we're planning to carry out this event:

1. In June of 2020, the ARRL announced [two temporary rule waivers for the 2020 Field Day](#) which carries over to this Winter Field Day.
2. One of those specifies that the ARRL will publish the aggregate score of a club, based on the log files of its individual members. By specifying "**WCARES-TN**" in the club name field when submitting our individual logs, our scores will combine for a club score. In this way, we're working together.

The Winter Field Day folks decided to do the same for WFD 2021, 2022 and 2023.

3. Scott Davis, the author of [N3FJP contest logging software](#), sent an email to his users wherein he discussed how his local club stays in touch during contests. I've included that email at the end of this document for your reference.

My hope is you'll choose to participate in this WCARES event and will use the guidelines in this document to make the most of our virtual weekend together. That said, there's no shame (or judgment) if you choose to go a different route. If that's you, this is a good time to stop reading this document.

Still with me? Let's go!

For questions regarding WCARES Winter Field Day 2023, contact Paul Tampien,
RNGGLDWNG07@gmail.com

The Big Picture

There are 3 things that are unique to our 2023 Winter Field Day experience:

1. Playing as Individuals but working toward a common goal...

The Winter Field Day folks announced that people submitting WFD logs as individuals could also specify a club name - and all of the logs that bear the same club name will be aggregated for a total club score. This will allow us to compete as individuals but adds the fun of working together for the good of the group score.

2. Seeing each other's progress and our combined score...

Having our computers networked together during previous WCARES Field Days, we took advantage of the N3FJP logging software's ability to show our combined score in real-time. While we won't be networked together this year, the N3FJP logging software has another trick up its sleeve that WILL allow us to see each other's progress and our combined score! This is pretty cool. Here's how it works...

When configuring the N3FJP logging software, there is a "Settings Menu" choice called *Web Upload Contest Status*. (Detailed configuration instructions are found later in this document.) You can configure N3FJP to upload your contact statistics to the internet every few minutes. Then, a separate N3FJP program (running at my house) looks at all of the cloud files and builds a custom web page showing our total club score AND the statistics of each participating station! By simply keeping a web browser open all weekend to that special web page, we'll all be able to see each other's progress and keep track of our combined score. The web page where the live scores will be shown is: <http://wcares.live>

3. Live chat all weekend...

Another way to hang out together is through a live chat room where we can type messages to each other, post photos, etc.

Cliff Batson, N4CCB, set up a WCARES "server" with the [Discord](#) online service. By creating your free account on [Discord.com](#), you can then click a special link that will grant you access to our "server"/chat area. I'll include that special link later in this document.

To-Do's: Before, During, and After

Prior to Field Day

- Purchase/Configure/Test [N3FJP Logging Software](#)
- Configure CAT interface for automatic band/mode logging
- Configure CW interface if using CW with keyboard macros
- If using N3FJP, configure Web Upload Contest Status
- Create a [Discord](#) account
- Click the special link to gain access to the WCARES server
- Explore WCARES Chat Room
- Read the Winter Field Day rules at www.WinterFieldDay.com
- Decide on your Category (Home, Indoor, Outdoors, Mobile)
- Determine the location where you will operate from
- Decide your "Class" for the event (number of simultaneous transmitters)
- Decide how/where to install your antenna(s)
- Check your antenna(s)
- Get your station ready (including power source)
- Brush up on your Field day operating techniques per mode
- Read Carl Sibilski's propagation information in this presentation he made for WCARES in 2018: https://wcares.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018_FIELD_DAY_PRESENTATION.pdf

During Winter Field Day Weekend

- Check/update your computer's clock for the correct date/time
- Confirm your logging software is working correctly
- If operating individually use your own call sign (not N4FR)
- Chat with other WCARES members online using the Discord chat room app
- Check the progress of others online at: <http://wcares.live/>

To-Do: After Field Day

- Export your log in Cabrillo format
- Edit the log with a text editor to add the line "Club: WCARES-TN" (no quotes) after the "CALLSIGN: XXXX" line
- Email your log to wfda@winterfieldday.com as specified in the official rules

All the Regular Field Day Stuff...

Providing detailed information and advice about working Field Day efficiently and effectively is beyond the scope of this document. You'll find many articles and videos on the topic of contesting best practices. Google is your friend.

It's up to you how seriously you want to take this event. You can operate casually and make a few contacts or you can go nuts and try to earn the maximum points possible. Personally, I'm sitting somewhere in the middle. I like working this event and I enjoy making a bunch of contacts - but I don't have the true heart of a "contester". In this twenty-four-hour event, I'll probably spend about 10-12 hours "playing radio". That's enough for me. Your mileage may vary.

We're a month from the big event as I type this and I'm still trying to decide where to operate from. I want to work outside on battery power in order to improve my score, but there are considerations for shelter, how to keep warm, and where to install antennas. Lots to think about and I'm good at over-thinking things. I often fall back to a "keep it simple" philosophy when I can - but that approach will not result in a maximized score in this contest. Hmm...

Everybody should read the official Winter Field Day rules.

Read them online in a web browser here: [Winter Field Day](#)

Read them in a PDF, suitable for printing here:

https://a2a53e2b-2285-4083-9cff-c99fe5ba1658.filesusr.com/ugd/1c7085_2445ed4b22f74e048fe9bd41c8dba103.pdf

If you want to maximize the points you earn in the contest, you will need to read the official rules and take note of the scoring calculation "multipliers" and the five 500 bonus points that are the key to boosting your score.

In a nutshell, ***you'll score the most points if you do the following:***

- Run 5 watts (QRP) on battery power during the entire event
- Make as many contacts as possible on as many bands/modes as you can
- And last but not least, be away from your home by at least 500 feet.

That is how WCARES achieved the #1 EOC and Top 10 (#9) Overall score in the country during the 2018 ARRL Field Day event.

Even though you will score the most points that way, you naturally won't make as many contacts at 5 watts as you will at 100 watts. As much as I love QRP for my everyday ham radio fun, I enjoy running 100 watts during most contests so that I can "run a frequency" (park on a frequency and call CQ instead of "searching and pouncing" up and down the band).

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Logging Your Field Day Contacts

If you're reading this, I'm going to assume you're planning to log your contacts and submit them after the event. It will help WCARES achieve a higher score if you'll specify "**WCARES-TN**" in the "Club:" field when submitting your log. By doing this, our individual scores will combine for the WCARES "club" score. But, hang on, I'm getting ahead of myself...

Every ham radio contact logging software package includes the ability to export Cabrillo files. Paper logs are not allowed this year.

I strongly suggest you use the Winter Field Day Contest Log software by N3FJP. This is the software we've used to log our Winter Field Day contact for years. It's easy to use, it's tailored to Field Day, and it's available for only \$8.99 on Scott Davis' website: <http://www.n3fjp.com/winterfieldday.html>

I recommend you use version 2.8.5 which includes the new Canadian section abbreviations. **It's a free update to registered users**, that includes a number of enhancements.

Launching the N3FJP software will, by default, present you with a setup form where you'll enter your call sign and other information for your station. (Remember you use your own call sign - NOT N4FR!)

While logging your contacts during Winter Field Day, it's very convenient if your radio is connected to your computer via a USB cable or serial port. If the computer can "talk" to the radio, the software can automatically log the Band, Mode, and Frequency for each contact. You may have heard of this called "CAT (computer-aided transceiver) Control". Under the Settings menu in the N3FJP software, there is a "Rig Interface..." menu choice that you'll use to configure your radio. I know from experience that without this computer/radio connection it's easy to forget to change bands in the software when you change bands on the radio. You might make several QSO's before you realize your log is wrong... and may have a hard time remembering when you switched bands!

The WCARES CW folks are familiar with configuring N3FJP for transmitting morse code using keyboard macros so I won't go into it here. If anyone wants to try it for the first time, I'd be happy to help you set up N3FJP the way that Tim Kreth (AD4CJ) has taught us all to set it up for the last few years.

SSB people might want to "get fancy" and record audio files a) calling CQ and b) giving the contest exchange. If your radio doesn't provide the native capability of transmitting audio files, you might consider configuring N3FJP to do so. This can really save your voice during a long contest. Under the Settings menu, the menu choice "Transmit->Phone Setup..." is used to configure this.

As you log each contact there are only three fields to enter:

Call - the call sign of the station you are communicating with.

Class+Category - A number + letter combination that indicates the number of transmitters and working conditions of the other station. Examples: "1H", "1O", "2I", "1M"

Section - A two or three letter designator for the geographic area of the other station. A printable version of the official section list can be found here:

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Contest%20-%20General/ARRL%20Contest%20Sections%20List-%20rev%202004-2020.pdf>

Note: don't forget that the Band and Mode are required to be set correctly for each contact.

Interestingly, the actual frequency of the contact isn't required but the Band and Mode are. Setting up CAT Control is highly recommended so you don't have to worry about changing these things when you change bands or modes during the contest... let the computer poll the radio for the information as each contact is logged.

Note: WCARES members ARE allowed to work each other during Field Day.

After The Contest - Submitting Your Log

Congrats! The twenty-four-hour event has come to an end and you've got some contacts to contribute to the group score. Awesome.

Please read the log submission instructions in the official rules. (Again, found here:

https://a2a53e2b-2285-4083-9cff-c99fe5ba1658.filesusr.com/ugd/1c7085_2445ed4b22f74e048fe9bd41c8dba103.pdf)

The N3FJP software contains the ability to export a Cabrillo log file and that process will also prompt you for your bonus points and do the scoring calculations for you. To access this functionality:

1. From the program's "File" menu, select the menu choice, "Write Cabrillo (Contest Submital) File"
2. Fill out the form fields that appear.
3. Select the applicable Bonus Points in the form of the four checkboxes.
4. Click the "Write Cabrillo Summary File" button and select the destination where your log file will be written.
5. Make sure you fill in the line **CLUB: WCARES-TN**

The example is shown, below.

```
START-OF-LOG: 3.0
Created-By: N3FJP
CONTEST: WFD
CALLSIGN: [YOUR CALLSIGN]
CLUB: WCARES-TN
LOCATION: Franklin, TN
ARRL-SECTION: TN
[fields continue on]
```

See the Rules document for information on where to send this log file (as an email attachment) and how to format the "Subject" line of your email.

All logs must be turned in BEFORE March 1st.

View Live Scores During Winter Field Day

Everyone using the standard N3FJP software to log their Winter Field Day contacts can contribute to the group score in real-time. Do this by configuring N3FJP to upload your contacts on a periodic basis. (The next section of this document shows you how to configure the software for this purpose.)

During Winter Field Day weekend, view individual scores and our group score by going to this web page:

<http://wcares.live>

When you go to that site on Field Day, you'll see a web page like this:

N4FR (WCARES) Total Score = 1,891,383

Current status: 06/05 03:59 UTC

Total uploader currently off line. Please see individual upload pages.

Call	Score	QSOs	20 Min	60 Min	Frequency
W3JX	1,554,656	911	0	0	28.44600
WC3N	336,567	429	0	0	
N4CCB	133	89	0	0	
N3FJP	27	18	0	0	

N3FJP Software: www.n3fjp.com

Serving the Amateur Radio community with contesting and general logging software since 1997.

The program that produces this live web page will be running on a computer at my house. Leave your browser open to this page and it will automatically reload every 60 seconds.

Configure N3FJP to Upload Your Log Statistics

Automatically upload your log statistics so we can include your QSO's on our live web page (which will be seen at <http://wcares.live>).

In the N3FJP "Settings" menu, choose "Web Upload Contest Status" and the following screen will appear. **Ignore all of the text on the right-hand side of the screen.** Use the instructions on the following page to configure this screen properly.

Web Contest Status Uploader

Call, Club or Group Name (Web Page Title)

Message Ex: Your Call / Club Name Field Day Status
 Use to remind folks coming later of any needed supplies (ice, bug spray, coax connectors, etc.).

Enter a message that others will see if they click on your call sign in the live web page.

Upload web page to the following site:

FTP URL of Your Hosting Site (Ex: ftp://yoursite.com)

Your Hosting Site User Name

Your Hosting Site Password

File Name on Website

Forecolor Backcolor **(TEST BY CLICKING HERE!)** Passive Mode

Create text file for packet distribution

Location to Save Text File for Packet Distribution

Upload Frequency in Minutes (3 is default)

Recent Contacts to include (10 is default)

Include Score Statistics

Include Current Frequency (if known)

Enable Automatic Upload

Status **(Look Here For Success Message When Testing)**

I added this FTP status upload feature with Field Day in mind and that is how the following description is written, but when users heard that I was working on this feature for Field Day, I started getting requests to add it to all the programs, including AC Log! Using this status upload feature, clubs can see what their club station running AC Log is doing from home, club members can track their club's progress of all supported contests, DXPeditions can post where they are operating, recent contacts, etc., and you can upload your activity as well!

Have you ever had to leave your Field Day site and wonder how your group was doing while you were away? Maybe you'd like to listen along from home, but you can't find the frequency they are running? Perhaps you are headed up to the site and are wondering if there is anything they need that you could bring along? This feature, first coded in July of 2014, is designed to answer those questions!

The concept is simple. Every three minutes (or whatever interval you set), this software will FTP upload your current score statistics, a brief message and your most recent contacts (including frequency if known) to your web hosting site. Simply give the URL to your group members so that they can check via the Internet. This is an excellent way for club members to keep tabs on how it's going and any needs that may develop at your Field Day site while they are away. You can see an example by navigating your browser to:

<http://www.n3fjp.com/fd/fdstatus.html>

This isn't designed with viewing from the general public in mind, but rather a quick status update on the Internet for club members to be able to follow along from home. The HTML coding is minimal, with an emphasis on keeping the ASCII file upload to be as small as possible. The web page may be accessible on the Internet to anyone, but it is likely that only folks you provide the URL to will be able to find your data, so view this primarily as an internal communications tool for your group.

To enable the web upload, you will need:

[View HTML File on Hard Drive](#)

Configure the fields on the left-hand side of the screen as follows:

Call, Club or Group Name (Web Page Title)

Enter your call sign here

Message

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The message that you enter here, if any, will be displayed on a custom web page that shows your detailed statistics. If someone clicks on your Call Sign on our live web page at <http://wcares.live>, they will see your web page. (See the following page in this document for an example.)

[X] Upload web page to the following site

Make sure this box is checked.

FTP URL of your Hosting Site (Ex: ftp://yoursite.com/)

ftp://wcares.live/ (“ftp” is followed by a colon and two slashes + “wcares.live” + a final slash)

Your Hosting Site User Name

wcaresftp@wcares.live

Your Hosting Site Password

wcares

File Name on Website

Enter your call sign + “.html” (Ex: N4CCB.html)

Forecolor, Backcolor, Passive Mode

“Black”, “LightBlue”, Checked

Create text file for packet distribution

Leave unchecked

Upload Frequency in Minutes (3 is the default)

Leave at 3 and your stats will be uploaded every 3 minutes

Recent Contacts to Include (10 is the default)

Leave at 10 and people will see your last 10 QSO’s on your custom web page

Include Score Statistics, Include Current Frequency, Enable Automatic Upload

CHECK ALL THREE

Now, let’s test our configuration to make sure data will be uploaded correctly. See the next page...

To test that you have configured the upload screen correctly, do this:

1. Click the “**Upload Now**” button
2. See if the Status line (bottom of the screen) says, “xxx- File successfully transferred”

If you entered everything correctly, you should see the success message at the bottom of the screen.

If there is an error message, check your configuration settings from the previous page. If you’ve checked and re-checked and still can’t get it to work, shoot me an email (batsoncliff@gmail.com) and we’ll schedule a time to look at your screen together remotely via my ZOOM account.

To see what your custom web page will look like, click the blue link underneath the “Upload Now” button that’s labeled “[View HTML File on Hard Drive](#)”. When you do, your web browser will launch and load your custom-generated page so you can take a look at what others will see when they click your call sign at <http://wcares.live>. Here’s an example for you...

N4CCB

Current status as of:
 2020/06/06 12:40:45 UTC
 2020/06/06 07:40:45 AM Local
 Updates are set to upload every 3 minute(s).
 Your Internet browser will refresh this page automatically every minute.

Message:

I'll be around if anyone needs help with anything this weekend. (615) 631-2494 or batsoncliff@gmail.com

Current Score Statistics:

Total CW Contacts = 44
 Total Phone Contacts = 45
 Total DIG Contacts = 0
 Total QSO Points = 133
 QSOs / Hour Last 20 Minutes = 0
 QSOs / Hour Last 60 Minutes = 0
 Total Op Time (breaks > 30 min deducted): 0:57:11
 Avg Qs/Hr (breaks > 30 min deducted): 93.4

Recent Contacts:

Date	Time	Band	Mode	Callsign	Frequency	Country	Sec
2019/06/20	18:45:21	10	CW	AD9TH	28.35248	USA	ORG
2019/06/20	18:44:17	10	CW	N4SDF	28.35248	USA	NH
2019/06/20	18:43:41	10	CW	W9REE	28.35248	USA	ME
2019/06/20	18:43:15	10	CW	K5UY	28.35248	USA	EMA
2019/06/20	18:42:48	10	CW	AD5RE	28.35248	USA	VA
2019/06/20	18:42:22	10	CW	W3TWW	28.35248	USA	NH
2019/06/20	18:41:42	10	CW	A4TI	28.35248	Oman	EMA
2019/06/20	18:41:17	10	CW	N8ER	28.35248	USA	ENY
2019/06/20	18:40:59	10	CW	N4AJS	28.35248	USA	TN
2019/06/20	18:40:34	10	CW	AD4WW	28.35248	USA	SB

Current Frequency:

Created by: N3FJP's ARRL Field Day Contest Log 6.3
N3FJP Software: www.n3fjp.com
Serving the Amateur Radio community with contesting and general logging software since 1997.

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Live Chat

During Winter Field Day weekend, we can hang out with each other in an online chat room. To facilitate this, we've chosen to use the Discord.com platform.

1. **Create your free account at [Discord.com](https://discord.com)**
2. **Afterward, click on this link: <https://discord.gg/vzTJYNU>**

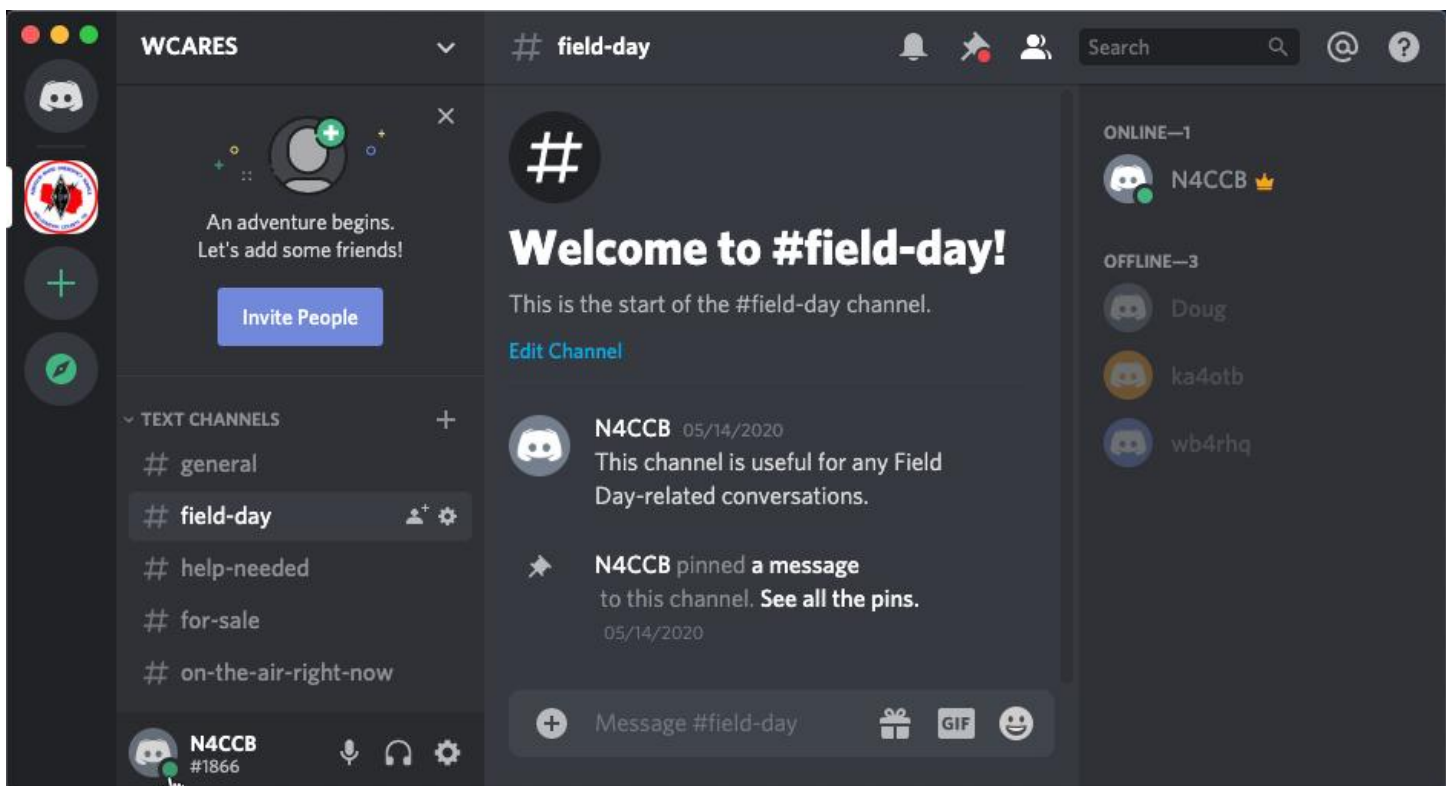
This is an "invitation link" and will grant access to the WCARES "server" forever. (You'll click this link once.)

The WCARES server currently contains the following "Text Channels" (chat rooms)

- general
- field-day
- help-needed
- for-sale
- on-the-air-right-now

These channels are used for live free-form text messages that are meant to be read in real-time.

Use the **field-day** text channel to post messages and/or photos during Field Day. Encourage each other, ask questions, celebrate interesting contacts, talk trash, etc.



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From Scott Davis, author of N3FJP software...

(This is where the idea to use Chat and web-based stats came from - Cliff)

How can our group enjoy Field Day together virtually, while staying apart?

Our NEMARC club hangs out together virtually for every major ARRL and CQ contest, so I have a lot of firsthand experience to share with this question! Since we won't be able to physically be together this time for Field Day, operating together virtually is our plan for Field Day 2020 as well.

Some folks enjoy contesting as a lone wolf, spending the weekend in solitary pursuit, but running with the pack and contesting together as a team has more than doubled the enjoyment for many in our club. We all operate from our individual homes and we each submit our own scores, but we thoroughly enjoy each other's company, as well as the fun of seeing our current club total and individual scores in real time on our leader board virtually. Very briefly, here's how:

- We have a text chat group that we set up on the free Discord app, which has evolved beyond contesting. It is our virtual clubhouse. Guys sign in almost every day to chat, alert members to DX, seek help and offer advice. This works beautifully during contests too, as there is lots of fun, encouragement, newer guys can ask questions and others can answer when convenient. Of course we have good natured banter and camaraderie, just as if we were physically together. The virtual clubhouse has become the backbone of our club in many additional ways that would take too long to explain now, but you can get a little more sense of how we use it from this video here:

<http://www.nemarc.org/clubhouse.html>

- We use my free Club Score Processor, so we all can see how we are doing as a club, as well as individually, in real time. The real time leader board display that the processor creates is an automatically refreshing web page. You can be sure all club members keep the leader board and virtual clubhouse displayed on their desktops all weekend. Of course, there is friendly competition within the group, but the key, especially for new folks, is that they understand there is zero pressure and that more importantly, we are a TEAM, working together. Every QSO helps the group, so jump in and have fun!

With ARRL's 1,000 foot Field Day rule, I don't think ARRL will be combining individual scores to create a club total, but there's no reason you can't see how your club fares against other clubs in your region directly. Comparisons to other clubs aside, it is great fun to see how everyone in your club is doing throughout the weekend, evaluating results with similar setups, seeing if someone needs help, etc.

You'll find my free Club Score Processor here: <http://www.n3fjp.com/clubscore.html>

I have lots more information on how you can operate together virtually in this article that I wrote for ARRL (published in August 2016 QST) here: <http://www.n3fjp.com/help/clubcontesting.html>

I am very grateful for this question. These methods have thoroughly revitalized our local club over the last few years. Our membership is growing and we are more active and vibrant than ever. I know they will bring positive energy and lots of fun to your group as well!

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