

What a nice challenge !

Just three of us were ready, Fabio, Santos and me. Santos confirmed his presence just 5 days before the departure.

WPX SSB 2011 was coming very quickly and everyday we hoped somebody else could join us: we wanted to compete against Morocco and Canary Islands for the Multi two world record.

Quite surely all the three station could overlap the world record, but nobody knew who would be the winner of the contest.

All these stations have something more than the others: Morocco has the closer position for Europe of the three, an appetizing call-sign (5D5A) a plus man who now has the M2 category world record (so much more motivated than the others), good signals both in Europe or in State side.

Canary Isl. station is going to be listed as one of the most powerful station in the world, lots of operators, fantastic good location, and always a good signal on low bands.

D4C (Cape Verde) station with good setup and good antennas and best location for 10 m. band, but with one problem: the farthest of the three, and that means lowest signal on low bands , and the wpx rule gives double points to low bands. I can't list here the fact that we were just three operators because in Morocco they were three as well !

So before leaving Europe we weren't decided, but just counting each other it was clear that we couldn't participate in a M2 category, and that MS was much better. There was a record to be beaten, and exactly Morocco was the owner; if propagation conditions **were going to remain** as they were it would have been within our reach.

When we arrived in Monteverde we had to replace a transceiver power supply and immediately we found that something else was broken, so we had just two radio available and not three. We worked all the week on **antennas** and cables and setting up the station just knowing that we would have had only one chance: MS category. We also had to consider that if we ever had a problem, during the contest, with a radio we couldn't replace it.

Thursday evening, as usual, we went to town (Mindelo) to get some goods for the contest, and had the last "normal" meal at the restaurant before the race. We usually invite Carlos (D44AC) and it was Fabio birthday too. Really nice to talk all together about the incoming contest but Carlos didn't understand why we couldn't participate to the challenge between Morocco and Canary Isl...at the end he offered us his personal transceiver and all our plans started to change immediately.

Two stations active for 48 hours and one multiplier station for both runners with just three of us was really the first challenge.

We looked each other in our eyes and started to asked: "Are we focused enough to do this ? Do we know that we are leaving an almost known and possibly sure route (MS) for an unknown one with **lots** of bonds and snares ?" We all were much more excited by the station to station challenge than the world MS record. I didn't even think for a while about the possibility of reducing my wrtc 2014 score caused by the M2 risk.

So we went back to Monteverde trying to find and fix an amplifier for the third station and worked a lot also on antenna that the other station's antennas could share with the third one.

We were ready: the only possible plan was to work as much as possible on high bands where we were convinced to have some advantage, and defend us on low bands. But we had to work a lot of multipliers on the third station at the same time in any case. We started to give numbers and numbers trying to figure out a possible number of qso on each band, but we didn't have any comparative element so it was just a loose of time.

One thing we had to do: start the contest and see !

The contest started and we immediately found that it was much more workable the 20 m. band than the 80 m. one.

Our signal in Europe on 40 m. wasn't that strong but we managed to work. Always running as fast as possible, but in night time it was very difficult; in the morning we started quite early to work on 15 m. and 10 m.. It was really fantastic: in the same direction towards Europe we could work Japan and Asia at the same time. What to say about wpx exchange qso's: all those numbers... you must be careful not to make a knot to your tongue while speaking and have good ears. Not a problem when you are awake: but what happens when you start to be tired ? All things that you don't expect at all. A lot of pauses: it takes more time to have in your brain and in your mouth the next number you have to pass; then if you have just passed or received a report as 77 you might start as "D7C", or continue missing a 6 number which is always the worse number to receive and all sorts of mistakes. But the score was growing very fast (about 1,4 million each hour) , and when we passed the old record it was about 13z on Sunday and we were so happy that we stopped the running station for a "give me five" .

But what was happening with our competitors ? It was very difficult to know their score because we knew we couldn't only compare the qso number but we had to compare points which, of course we couldn't know. So sometime we just went to listen to them and compare qso number. However we had to work harder, whether we were in advantage or not.

We also considered that we had one hour difference with our competitors.

All the three station had mostly the same score on high bands except us. We were always a little better: but would this advantage be enough to go over the others qso/point made on lower bands ? So this was our and their problem.

Multipliers number went over 100 units more than what we expected and it was really a fun working side by side with Morocco and Canary Isl. stations.

We could sleep just less than two hours each time but most of times we woke up before the reveille of our own portable phone. At the beginning during the day it was quite difficult to get asleep, and, at the end it was easier to sleep on the radio than on the bed.

Last hours of contest we pushed hard : we reached the 4000 qso's on 15 and total around 1800 multipliers, but we didn't know whether this was enough or not.

No more voice strength but a great will to do our best.

Claimed scores now on 3830 shows :

[EB8AH](#).....73,128,256

[D4C](#).....70,773,967

[5D5A](#).....67,492,200



EB8AH crew: but Toivo (left-down) wasn't there this time.



EB8AH but I suppose it is an old photo ! Canary Islands – Galdar – Gran Canaria



5D5A (CN3A) one tower missing in this photo. Safi Morocco



5D5A 80m 4 Square



Stefano (IK2QEI) , Rich (N6KT) , Matteo (IK2SGC)



D4C – Monteverde – Sao Vicente Isl. - Cape Verde Islands



Carlo (IK1HJS) , Fabio (I4UFH) , Santos (CT1DVV)

Just in claimed scores we had two achievements : beaten 5D5A and old record, but not the first place.

So we enjoyed very much the pileups, the rare stations calling us, but mostly we had the possibility to work a lot on radio during a contest from a big station as D4C. In Multi category usually there are a lot of operators and the total number of hours on radio are less than this time.

I would like to add a personal comment: I had the rare possibility to improve my skill, learning from the other operators, taking care of pileups from a big station. The object was also to reduce as much as possible mistakes, and I must say that in wpx is very hard. I'd like to count how many thousands of number I have received and wrote down on the keyboard ! So this has been a very important stage for my ssb skill. I had the possibility to realise what I can improve and what I should avoid. From that location you must think as an African not as an European, in terms of sunset, sunrise, timing, distances, beamings, etc and that's a unique experience in Cape Verde. Thanks to D4C for this possibility, thanks also to 5D5A and EB8AH for the nice "head to head", and we will check the final result in September !

73 de Carlo IK1HJS

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJr1_JfeWFQ