



# **Train Your Weaknesses; Compete Your Strengths**

Presented by  
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2014 Contest Academy

# In a Nutshell

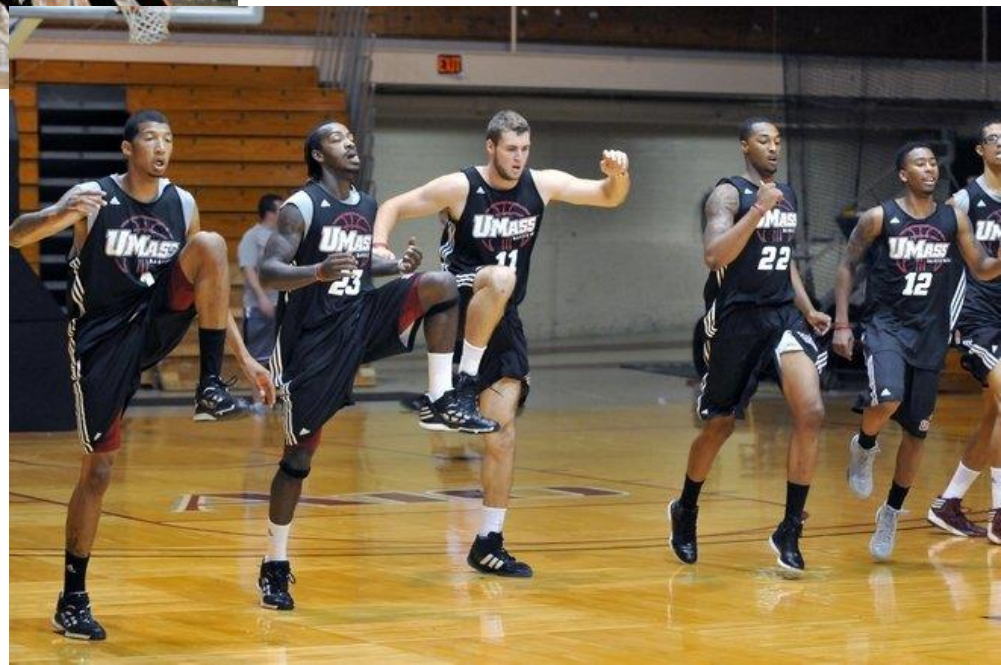


- If you want to improve you have to train
- You need to train skills you are weak on
- What contests do you want to win?
- Other contests are for training those weak skills (while maintaining your strengths).
- Plan your season so you peak at the event(s) you want to win.











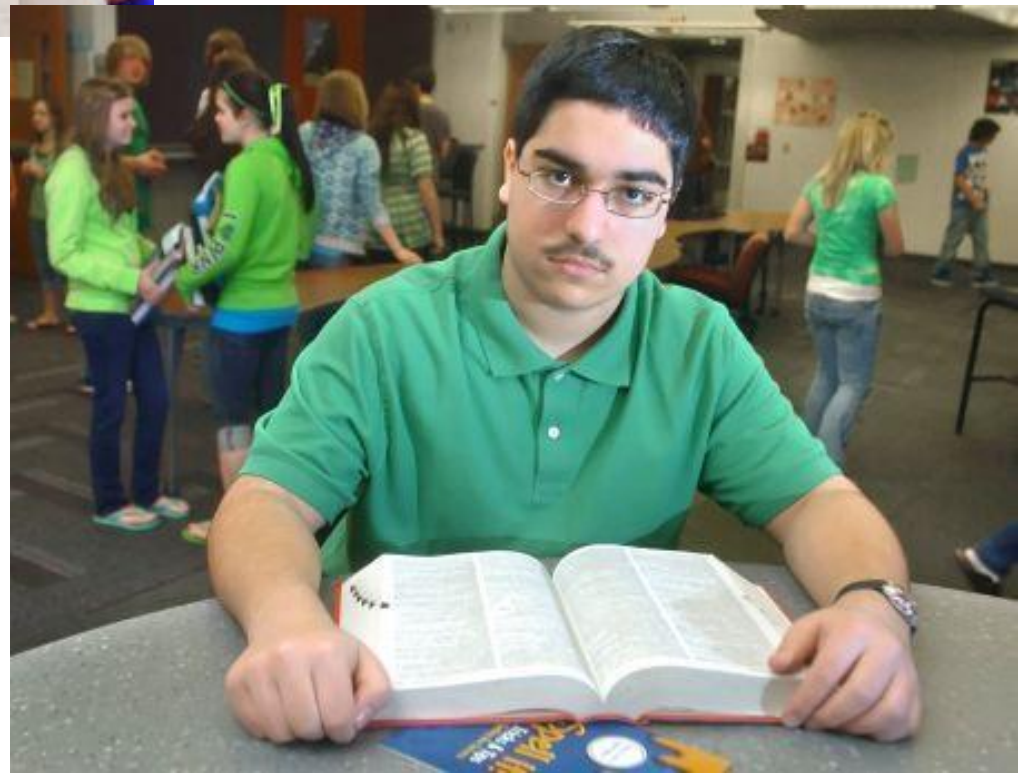














Zuki



Shuto Uchi



Mae Geri



Hiji Ate



Uraken













# The Only Way to Make Progress Is to Work on What Is Weak

- If you're always working your strengths nothing ever improves
- The chain is only as strong as the weakest link
- Irrational people prefer to not train
- Or to train their strengths, which is fun
- **Winners work on their weaknesses,**
- Which is not fun, but it is effective

# Training v. Competition

- Training (or Practice)
  - Focus on your weak points
  - Give marginal amount of time to your strengths to keep them from going backwards
- Competition
  - Play up your strengths



# The More You Sweat in Training the Less You Bleed in Battle

- Practice should be hard and tough
  - It exposes and uses your weaknesses
- Competition should be fun and easy
  - It showcases your strengths
- That's the whole thing of training your weaknesses; competing your strengths

# How To Identify Weaknesses

- Referee reports
- Peer-grade
- Self-grade
- Whatever you hate to do is weak
  - No one hates to do something they good at
- We use our weaknesses as excuses





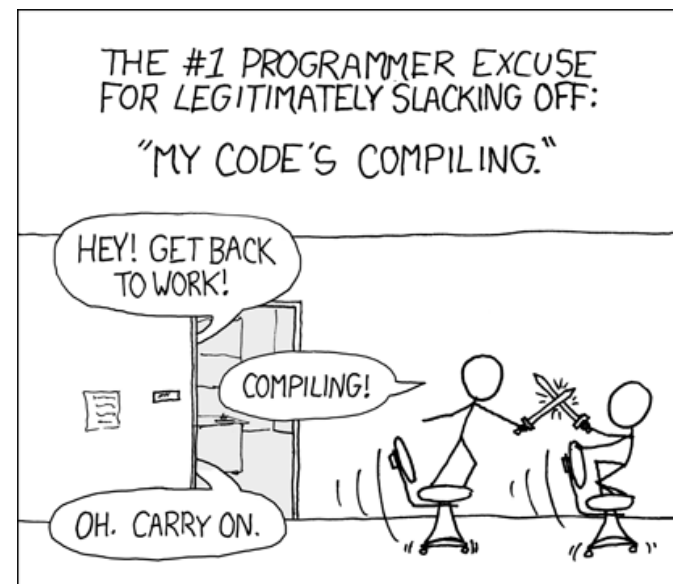
# Typical Excuses

- If only I could touch type
- I couldn't find a run frequency
- I couldn't hold my frequency
- I couldn't copy through the noise
- I was falling asleep at the keyboard
- The dog ate my log



# Actual Excuses – NAQP CW

- I'm new to CW
- I received RFI
- Head cold and rain brought edict from XYL
- I'm not really a CW contester
- Got on after 49er game
- Having serious latency issues
- 80 seemed noisy
- I missed having a second radio
- I need to get quicker in my S&P rate
- I need to hunt for more multipliers
- I deleted all three copies of my log
- We found we were receiving on a wrong antenna





# Actual Excuses – NAQP Phone

- And then I lost my voice again
- Limited participation due to guests
- Started getting stomach flu
- Ugh!
- Too many other responsibilities today
- My dipole isn't good enough to hold a frequency
- Very high noise levels
- I miscalculated times off
- All of my time was spent in S&P
- This station doesn't play as well with SSB as it does with CW
- N1MM bit me in the ass
- A dismal slog through noise and QRM
- I'm not doing domestic contests these days
- Had ergonomic problems with the keyboard
- heavily congested (\*\*understatement and ugh!\*\*) SSB band segments
- The relay in the breakout box was stuck closed
- I encountered a wall of white noise
- Essentially all S&P
- Couldn't get a run going at all
- Frequency "owners" did piss me off
- Had a bug this weekend

# Actual Excuses – RTTY RU

- A POS Chinese power supply stopped regulating
- I took many breaks.
- When I tried to run, I usually got nothing...
- Did not get much time for radio this weekend
- Problem with N1MM
- My immune system slacks off
- Didn't have much success running with the dipole
- Missed about 5 hours due to family obligations
- Couldn't stay awake
- My antenna doesn't DX well
- I'm going to need a second monitor
- Water heater blew out on Saturday night
- I have a relay problem in the amplifier
- Started to feel awful around dinner time
- Tough to get motivated with a head cold
- Slow start due to software issues
- Something is wrong on the coax
- I needed to recalibrate my filters
- RTTY irritates me, so took many breaks
- I had a major distraction during the contest
- I need to budget for a much better antenna
- I was still troubleshooting Friday night
- I caught a cold
- My brain wasn't ready for SO2R



# Some Weaknesses Are Station or Equipment Limitations

- There it is not so much a matter of training as of investment (of time or money) in removing or remediating those limitations
- To diagnose those things try to guest op at better stations than your own to discover whether the weakness is yours or your station's
- You can also plan your strategy to sidestep your weaknesses, whether they are yours or your station's

# Sidestep Example: 160m at ND2T

- I have a poor 160m antenna
- I am not planning to compete in any 160m contest
- I am certainly weak in my 160m skills
- If I would never compete there then why practice? A:
- You need to decide whether an investment of time (or money) is worth the outcome
- There is only so much of each

# Some (Potentially) Weak Skills

- Developing a contest strategy
- Copying (CW or SSB)
- Operating the equipment
- Operating the logging program
  - Typing
  - Recovering from crash
- Search & Pounce
  - Tuning
  - Timing
  - Asking for fills
  - Rate
- Running
  - Finding a run frequency
  - Hold a run frequency
  - Handle a pileup (EU, JA)
- Moving a mult
  - Recognize that you could benefit
  - Choose a band that will work
  - Choose an "empty" frequency
  - Ask the mult to move
  - Getting there and back
- Endurance
  - Good start
  - Energetic middle third
  - Strong finish
- Focus
  - Time wasters
  - Ergonomics
- Others (speak up)?





# Set Your Goals

- Decide what contest(s) are you training for
- What it's going to look like for you to "win"?
- Beat those guys or to beat some objective?
- It could be both
- Try to BE those guys
  - Who are best at what you are interested in?
  - Study what they do

# Training Budget

- You have only limited training time, and want to use it effectively
- Put your time into things that are going to pay off the best for you w.r.t. your goal
- Things you decide to invest in you also decide what kind of contests you are going to be competitive in, and v.v.
- Weaknesses start to fall off immediately and are hard to bring back up
- Strengths fall off slowly, and come back easily

# How to Train



- You can only have a few priorities
- Choose one thing at a time and focus on it
- Train your weaknesses early and often
  - When you are fresh
  - Easy to get motivated
- A little goes a long way
- Leave time for your strengths too



# Do I Feel Like Training My Weakness?

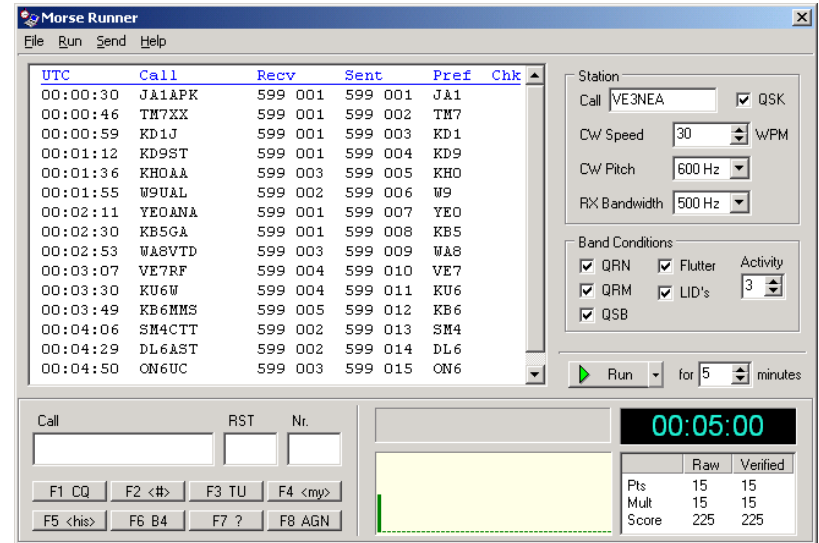
- Of course you don't. Never ask this.
- If it is on your schedule, just do it
- The more you quit the easier it is to quit
- Soon you're down at the bottom
- Don't even give yourself the option
- As soon as you ask yourself that question you're over

# Strength Is Mental

- It's no fun to work what's weak
- It's fun to work what's strong
- Your strength is from your mind
- When you get used to training your weaknesses it makes you mentally strong
- And that carries over to everything you do

# Ways to Train

- **Simulators**
  - Typing
  - CW
  - CW pileups
- **Training contests**
  - Other events which require your focus skill
- **NS – NCCC Sprint**





# A Training Session

- Keep focused on the goal
- It's not supposed to be fun
- Try to do what the best guy would do
- He's going to do it because he wants to win
- Focus on wanting to be that best guy
- Keep your eye on the prize



# Working Up to a Competition

- When do you want to peak?
- Start there and work backwards
- Make a calendar of relevant contests
  - They require your focus skill
- E.g., you want NAQP CW, you're weak at moving mults. Train during other NAQPs, SQPs, any contest that allows mults per band

# Training Contests

- We have lots of contests
- Use training contests to practice weak skills
- It's all about mindset and intent
- What's your intent for this training contest?
- What skill are you working on in this contest?
- What are you trying to bring up? What is the weak point?



# Training Contests - 2

- Roll through them
- Seriously train rather than seriously compete
- Also, use them to diagnose and experiment
  - When do you fade? Lose focus? Why?
  - Nutrition? Sleep? Fitness? Pace?
- Play with solutions and learn to use them

# -- Nutrition

- Management of blood sugar
  - Ability to think and to last
- Sugar or simple carbs -> 30 minute then crash
- That could be a weak point
- Training: figure out what diet, food substances, allow you to maintain optimal mental focus for the longest period of time.
- The brain uses nothing but sugar for energy. But you have to be fit enough to be able to maintain that.
- Some people may do better with less food. Some with more





# -- Sleep

- Sleep deprivation is a real hard thing
- Would be part of training for long contests
- Learn how to nap effectively
- Practice taking a nap, getting up, and jumping back into the event.
  - *E.g.* when I wake up from my nap I need caffeine
  - Or I need fruit instead of protein because protein doesn't wake me up.
  - So I need fruit, but then I need to follow it up with some protein and fats to sustain it.
- These things are going to be individual

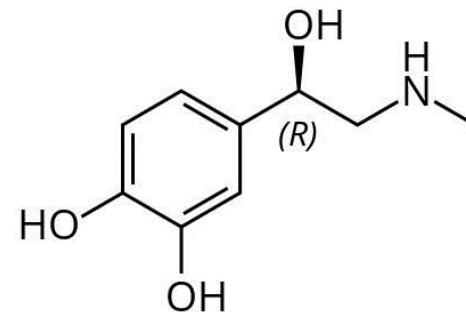


# -- Fitness

- Do you stretch out?
- Do you sit straight through?
- How to you reset when you start getting uncomfortable?
- Are you hydrated? How do you take bio breaks?
- All will contribute to ability to focus and be strong



## -- Pace



- Contests start out fast, then settle down
- Everybody is fresh and adrenalized
- The only thing that counts is who has the highest score at the end
- Stay calm. Conserve your energy for the long haul
- Mental focus and strength in middle third
- Finish strong

# Multiops

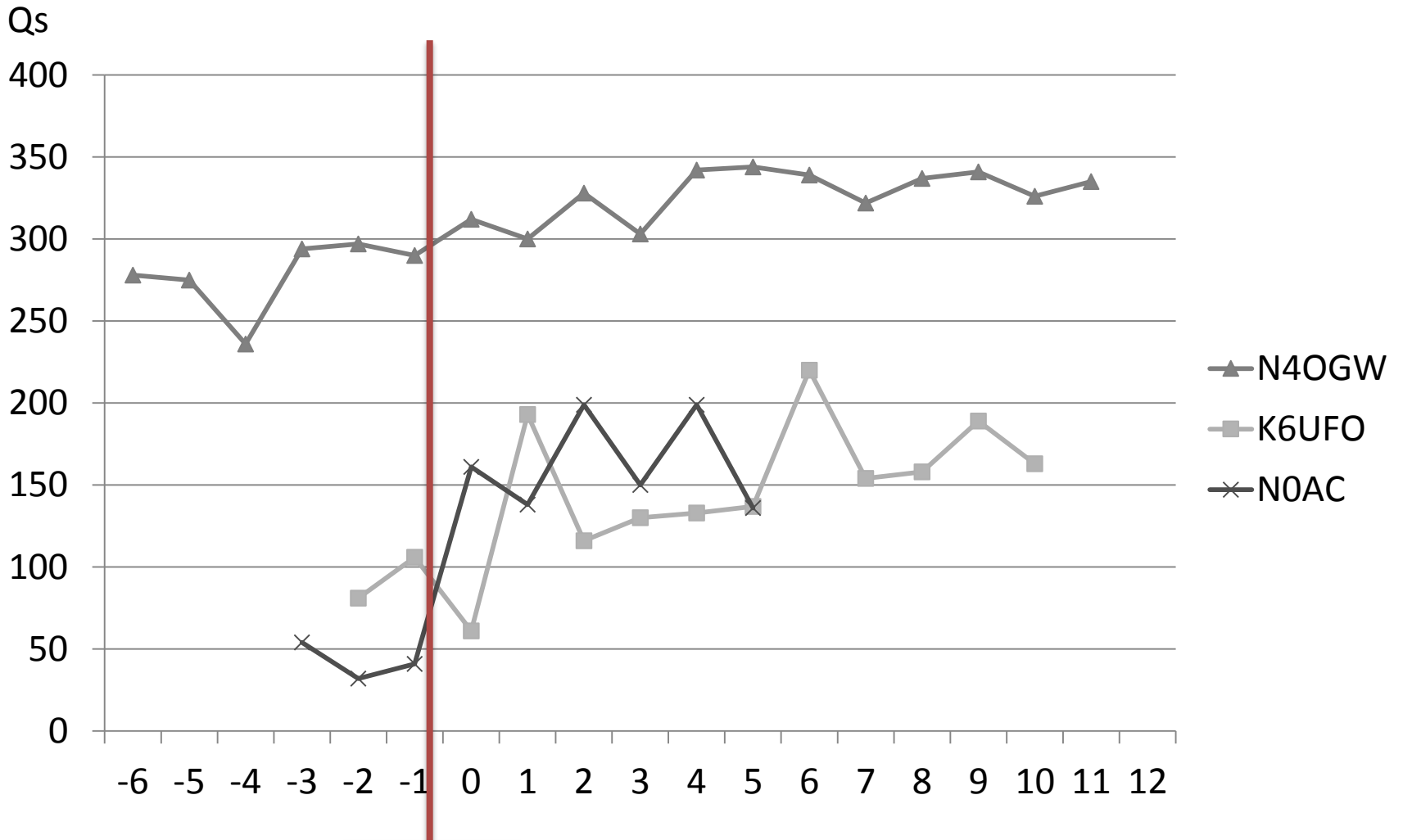
- There are individual strengths and weaknesses and team strengths and weaknesses.
- Do a separate analysis of each
- Training event: Assign ops to train their weaknesses
- Competitive event: Assign ops to use their strengths

# NS – The Contester's Edge

- A contest in itself (with prizes!), and a training event.
- Every Thursday night, 30 minutes.
- [www.ncccsprint.com](http://www.ncccsprint.com) for details.
- NSL: N6ZFO is a runner. He wanted NSL to be analogous to a runner's ladder.
- Interval training is a proven method of enhancing runners' performance even in a marathon. So it may be that NS has this effect in radiosport.
- Does it work?



# NS Lifts Sprint Scores



Start NS

# NS Anecdotes

- NS is where I figured out how to do SO2R in the Sprint. Maybe a 30-50 Q increase.
- I used to consider myself a "poor" CW operator. Now I'm probably faster and more on the ball than 90% of the operators.
- I can't say enough about the benefits of the weekly practice
- My CW skills have improved beyond my expectations.
- This practice has helped me immensely.
- For longer events I just began to feel more relaxed and more confident.
- Weekly NS has given me the "intestinal fortitude" to deal with many kinds of contesting with confidence and high expectations.
- In NAS the name of the game is to pull a mult out of a pileup. Weekly practice imprints many call/mult combinations (including my own).
- Doing CW actually helps me do SSB better because I had to learn how to type and keep the calls in my mind as I put them in the log.
- Practice, Practice, Practice is what it take for a slow learner like myself.

**Build your weaknesses**  
until they  
**become your**  
**STRENGTHS.**

- Knute Rockne





a Little Golden Book®

49¢

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# The Little Engine That Could

TRADE MARK



NCCC

014 Contest Academy



# Shoutout

- Mark Reifkind  
— [giryastrength.com](http://giryastrength.com)



- N6ZFO, N4OGW, K6UFO, N0AC, N3QE, KI7Y, N7WY