

From the Editor

The Contesting Fun Scale

At the age of 12, I got interested in two things that 55 years later I still pursue: ham radio and long-distance bicycling (girls came a year later...). Early on in bicycling, someone introduced me to the Fun Scale, which may have come from rock-climbing or long-distance hiking.

The Fun Scale defines three types of fun:

Type 1 Fun is something that is fun while you are doing it. In bicycling, pro racers say it sometimes feels like the chain fell off and the bike is just racing along without the rider putting any pressure on the pedals. In contesting, running at a high rate on a clear frequency on a quiet (and open) band is Type 1 Fun. For dedicated S&Pers, hitting ALT-A or CTRL-UP to S&P and seeing the N1MM rate meter go to three digits is Type 1 fun. For some ops, building an awesome station or adding an 8-element switchable vertical array for the low bands and seeing others use it is the thing.

Type 2 Fun is definitely not fun at the time, but sometime later, the memory of it warms to make it seem like it was fun. In bicycling, riding up a steep hill or into a headwind doesn't become fun until you get to that nice warm coffee shop or lunch stop — or do your next ride and realize how much stronger your legs are. In contesting, finding a run freq on a noisy/echoey 20 meters when it is the only runnable band, or fighting that Sunday pileup to work VY1 or Zone 23 only become fun days later when you tell the story about break-



ing through to high rates or grabbing that final mult.

Type 3 Fun is never fun, ever. Bicycling in the rain or on a flat tire after you ran out of patches or tubes, or the last 10 miles of a century (100-mile) effort is miserable during the ride and the retelling. My first year as an op at the W3LPL multi-multi, I spent the night with George, N3GB, on 40-meter SSB in the CQ WW SSB, back when SW broadcast stations were rampant and working split was not just a mouse click. Thirty-five years have not dimmed the “un-funness” of those hours in my memory.

The Tour de France winners, just like radio contest winners, are always the ones who maximize the time spent having Type 1 fun, while persevering through periods of Type 2 fun, knowing it will pay off. They also build up lactic acid tolerance to endure Type 3 “fun” as an investment

in maximizing future Type 1 fun.

Major bicycle races also feature teams that contain a mix of riders with a few superstars and many others who specialize in different types of fun. Radiosport is similar in having multi-op teams. George, N3GB, actually seemed to enjoy 40-meter SSB in CQ WW! If someone who just loves to run is paired with someone who loves to search and pounce, the fun goes up exponentially when the 3830 scores are posted.

As coaches say, teamwork can be dreamwork. Covid was a temporary speedbump in hams getting together in person, but vaccinations and now, remote operating, have brought back the opportunity to let inexperienced ops get hooked on some Type 1 contesting fun so that later on they will endure Type 2 and Type 3 periods.