

First ever 50 MHz OH-VP9 contacts, May 10th, 2012

(by Seppo OH1VR)

(classified as "Bigger than Life" by Zaba OH1ZAA, the translator)

Our small scale Bermuda May 7th - 13th DX-expedition (by OH1VR and OH1ZAA) revolved into an unexpected climax on May 10th: the 50 MHz band opened up for half an hour between VP9 and OH. As a result of this six OH-stations got a new country in their logs. How did it happen? Read on to find out!

We arrived in Bermuda on Monday evening, May 7th and we quickly set up the stations at the spacey condominium provided by VP9GE Ed's QTH-rentals. We were on the bands already two hours after arriving on the main island. Tuesday afternoon we also got a 5-element 50 MHz antenna set up and we commenced a keen activation of the band in question, which turned out to produce solely the familiar hiss on the listening breaks. Zaba OH1ZAA got indeed a few contacts to the US East Coast, but that was about all (apart from spots by FG4NN and KP2HC on the back of the beam). We kept the antenna mainly on Europe, but results were nil, and so was the case with South America, of which we thought that it was an easier "reach out".

On the HF-bands the pile-ups were almost continuous, though things calmed down somewhat after a vivid start. Thursday arrived, the third full day of our DX-pedition. Ed VP9GE and Zaba OH1ZAA went off to Hamilton, the Bermuda capital, and the undersigned kept on monitoring the bands. I had already visited the city on some of my five previous VP9-trips. The HF-bands turned out kind of "lazy", so I decided to lay an eye onto Six metres. I spotted myself on the cluster at 15.27 UTC, while mentioning my calling to Europe on 50103 kHz.

A couple of calls went out, and then things started to happen. The signal of Reijo OH3XA emerged suddenly out of the noise and we quickly exchanged reports. After him came OH2ZH, OH3UU, OH3BYZ, OH2ZZ and still following the string of 5 initial contacts, 20 minutes later OH3FK was worked. At that point the flags were flying high in Bermuda.

My rig was an Elecraft K3 with a PR6 pre-amplifier. The beam was a 5-element yagi less than 10 metres over ground. Zaba estimated the cable loss to be at least 4 dB, so that the power at the feed point was less than

40 watts. Thus it was a very modest set up. What about the other side of the path? How did the worked stations experience the opening? Let them speak for themselves, first of all Reijo OH3XA who had the honor of making the first OH - VP9 contact from Finland on 50 MHz.

Reijo OH3XA: Based on the cluster spot I turned my antenna Westward and I heard you immediately with a good signal at 15.29 UTC. The contact was established on the first call. Soon the other OH's started to call, whoever happened to be on the spot. The opening stretched to 16.02 UTC. The OY-beacon was strong then. Rigs: Icom 756PRO2 + PA and 2 x 8-el yagis at 42m height.

Timo OH2ZH: Thanks for the contacts, especially the one on Six metres. I got the info from the cluster, and when I tuned the rig on the frequency, there you were! My rig: Icom 756PRO3, power 70 watts, antenna DK7ZB / 6-el/ 7m boom (Attention: 3 elements of the antenna are broken, its height is 27m over ground). I went straight after the QSO to 3699 kHz, and informed the gang. In Finland it seemed as if all worked stations were East of Tampere, as for example Reiska OH1TN did not hear even a single peep.

Risto OH3UU: Thanks for the blast! I was on 3699 kHz when Timo reported about the opportunity to work VP9. I moved very skeptically to 50 MHz, but surprise, surprise: OH1VR/VP9 came in Q5. The S-meter rose to S5 on an empty band. The signal was readable at least during 20 minutes, while I was listening to the action. Only when the signal started to decline, I hit my forehead and lamented, that I had not recorded my QSO. So finally I recorded OH1VR/VP9's weakening transmission. Rig: Elecraft K3 100W, 4-el SteppIR at 37 m.

Veke OH3BYZ: Hello Seppo. By the way: nice contact! Here a FT-847 as the rig, and a 5-el Tonna as the antenna, 18m over ground. Output power was about 30 watts. I tried many times before Risto OH3UU but the QSO did not materialize. However, during Risto's QSO the meter jumped to 559 - 569 and then I knew that it was going to work out well!

Vili OH2ZZ: I heard on 3699 about others hearing you, and I moved to 50 MHz. There it came in fine. Surprise! I have a FT-2000D, 150W, 2 x 5-el antennas on 4.3m booms.

Pekka OH3FK: It was an unbelievable happening! Thanks very much!

The signal was solid and first I accidentally tried to manage it on the rear of the antenna. It was nerve-breaking to wait for the slow turning of the antenna. It took 3 minutes to get to the right direction, but fortunately the opening lasted. You came in nicely with 559 on a totally interference-free band. The antenna is a 6-el on a 7.3m boom and the IC-706 is fed by a battery. Due to the low voltage the power output was 60 watts, but thanks to your sharp ears it was enough. The height of the antenna is 13m and the QTH right in the middle of Vanajavesi.

As can be seen from the preceding reports, it is pretty safe to expect success just by being in the right place at the right time. Kari OH1UH also heard pings in Ikaalinen (West of Tampere). Maybe there are others who also heard something, but we have not heard from them.

Another story is the facial expression and comments of Zaba OH1ZAA when he returned after a couple of hours from the Hamilton tour. Initially he did not immediately believe for a fact what I had just worked on 50 MHz.

It has been proven again: Six metres - The Magic Band!

P.S. Ed VP9GE is a marvellous DX-pedition host. More information about his services you can find on the web --- <http://vp9ge.com>