

W4LT at the World Radio Team Championship

Lu Romero, W4LT



I was chosen as a Referee for WRTC, along with three other FCG members, Chris, NX4N, George, K5KG, and Charlie, NF4A. We all made the trek to Castel Saint Pietro Terme, a small town southeast of Bologna, Italy, for the competition.

WRTC was not only a great place to meet fellow testers I have worked throughout the years but a great place to watch and learn from those accomplished winners. Kind of a thrill of a lifetime for me to be around such talent.

The WRTC people had a "Welcome Station" at Bologna Marconi International Airport. They ferried contestants and referees from the airport to the venue, about a 20-minute ride from the airport.

Linda and I arrived at the Anuzca Palace Hotel after spending the two previous weeks touring Italy with a group. Here we are in Venice.



Here is Gerry W1VE and Emir E77DX

You get to meet many ham radio "celebrities" at WRTC.



Here is Gerry W1VE with Dev, 4X4DX

Anuzca Palace was a bit reminiscent of a Holiday Inn Express and less like a European-style hotel like we were treated to in our earlier tour. We arrived a day early to get some rest.

Our hotel was the host hotel for the Organizing Committee, who sort of took over the Zumba dance hall upstairs in the hotel Spa.

Here are the judges in the inner sanctum.



No photos were allowed in the “Inner Sanctum”!
But at least here is the welcome checkpoint.



Dinner was served at the Anuzca every evening outside on the patio lawn. The weather was beautiful the entire week. And... No bugs!



On the second day we got down to the business of WRTC with meetings of both the contestants and the referees to go over the rules and the ways the game would be played. The Referees wore orange and the contestants wore yellow .

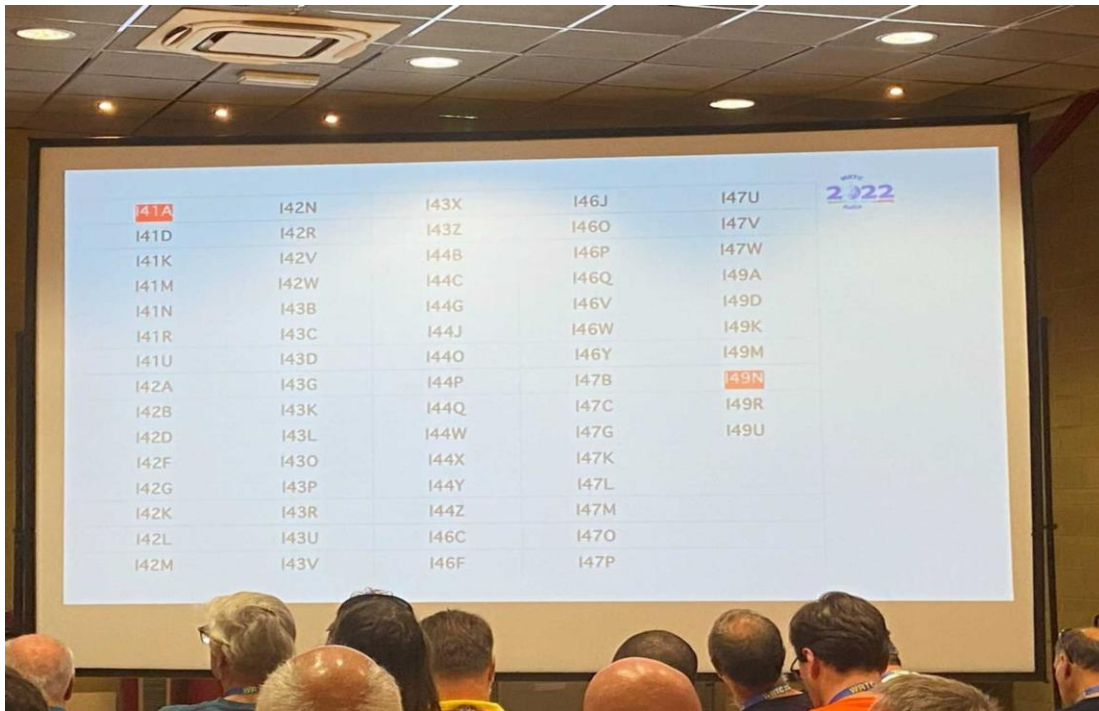


The following day, there was a random drawing of Referees assigned to teams.

Then the callsigns were published.

10:W9KJN->ST5PA KF5EYY	141A	I42N	I43X	I46J	I47U
11:HF4A->4X6FR 4X1DX	I41D	I42R	I43Z	I46O	I47V
12:GJXTT->VR2XAM IK2PFL	I41K	I42V	I44B	I46P	I47W
13:OK1RI->EA8RM EAZW	I41M	I42W	I44C	I46Q	I49A
14:EA5Y->K4AB NN7CW	I41N	I43B	I44G	I46V	I49D
15:W0YK->DL5AXX DL7FER	I41R	I43C	I44J	I46W	I49K
16:HB9CAT->RW7K RA9P	I41U	I43D	I44O	I46Y	I49M
17:NK4N->OM3BH OM3GI	I42A	I43G	I44P	I47B	149N
18:OM6NM->LE1NK LZ4AE	I42B	I43K	I44Q	I47C	I49R
19:9A1UN->N2IC HA3HU	I42D	I43L	I44W	I47G	I49U
20:HB9DHG->OR2F LZ4AX	I42F	I43O	I44X	I47K	
21:9A6A->RA3CO RA3AUU	I42G	I43P	I44Y	I47L	
22:PA3AAV->W2GD AA3B	I42K	I43R	I44Z	I47M	
23:4Z5LA->AD6E K6XX	I42L	I43U	I46C	I47O	
24:ZL3HW->DL3ON EI5LA	I42M	I43V	I46F	I47P	
25:ON5RA->NN3W NJOE					
26:YT7AW->M0SDV DK6SP					
27:I2VXJ->EW6W EU1A					
28:N6AN->I28JAI I28FVN					
29:OH2KI->NE9U K9CT					
30:RA9USU->BA1RB BA4TB					
31:E72T->VA2EW VA2WA					
32:HA0HAR->K5ED W2SC					
33:SS3JO->AD5A AB5EB					
34:W4LT->9A7DX 9A3LG					
35:NP4G->JA1BJI JR2GRX					
36:SV2DCD->JH5GDM WA1Z					

The teams wouldn't find out what callsign they drew until 15 minutes before the start of the contest. All the Refs had a super secret black envelope that contained the callsign for each team!



George, K5KG ended up with a team from "Down Under"



Chris, NX4N ended up with a team from Slovakia

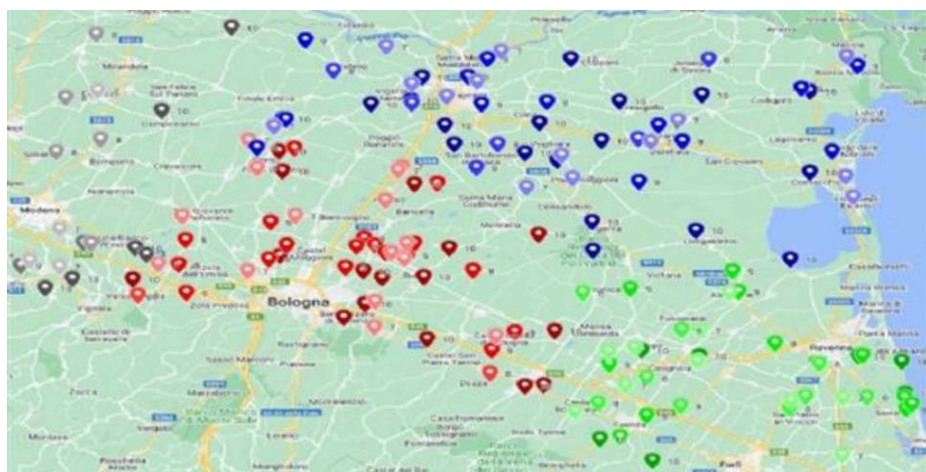


I ended up with a team from EA7: a small mountain village in Croatia called Daruvar. The Team Leader, Vedran 9A7DX is the guy in charge of town infrastructure logistics (like garbage collection, water pipes and sewers), and the other operator, Zvonko, 9A3LG is the personal chauffeur for the mayor of the town. In fact, they drove down to Italy from Croatia in a city car with the blessings of the town, who gave them a party on their departure! These guys are Rock Stars and celebrities in Daruvar!



They had been together as a team for 15 years. Zvonko taught Vedran the code and was his Elmer. Vedran was the Team Leader who qualified... And a masterful strategist. These two ops were like one person doing SO2R when operating. Like they read each other's minds. It was exciting to watch, and instructive too! They had mult passing down to an art form!

Finally, it came time to assign the sites. This year, unlike previous years, there were no tents. Each



station was housed in an existing building. Some were bed and breakfast facilities; others were farms and private villas. Still others were vacant QTH's. They ran the gamut from luxurious to primitive.

The sites were chosen from a "hat" by Camilla, a precocious 5 year old

Team EU7 was one of the last to be assigned a site. We got the coordinates and then I attempted to register the site with the site coordinator who was to find the site manager for me. Registering sites and teams was like an Italian pileup... Lots of chaos, lots of confusion! In this mess, finally, we connected with the site manager, in my case, Dave, K3ZJ. Off we go to the site with our coordinates in hand...



About 100 yards from the site, there is a high-speed Trenitalia regional electric train track.

To the northwest of the site is a large power line.



When we get there, we find it is a Winery. No one is around. Cant find the owner. Finally we find the owner, and he directs us to the location of the station. The station is housed in the fermentation vat building. Looking at the roof of the building, it is 100% covered in solar panels! The antenna, located in a small orchard, has its rotor installed 180 degrees off (it stops on north, not south). There is no air conditioning.



The crew notices that there are sparks coming from the transformer at the power line. They pull out a radio, beam towards the transformer, and the noise level is S9+10! I look at the solar power controller panel and take it upon myself to disconnect the power, hoping that I don't spoil that year's wine fermentation. Upon turning off the Solar, the noise drops to S5. Turning it on gives us S9 again. Pointing the antenna to the power transformer gives us 10 over S9. A train goes by. The noise increases to 40 over S9 as the train travels by.

Moments later, we spy some tenting and the owner informs us that there will be a wedding at the site on Saturday afternoon. There is an altar and several tents over by the main house. This altar has large speakers hoisted on stands. I can just imagine the QRM from our transmitters getting into those speakers at the worst possible time.

I try calling the OC on the provided cell phone, but its battery is exhausted. I charge it for a little bit and get it to come on, but it cannot connect. I attempt to text the OC Site Manager via my personal cell phone, but I get no answer.

Obviously, this site is completely unusable! I ask the team how long it will take for them to assemble the station. They tell me one-hour tops. Theirs is a very simple setup, with two MP1000's, a triplexer, filters and two SDR's on the IF out of the Yaesu's for a panadapter display using Waterfall Bandmap on N1MM.

After this discussion, I ask the team if they accept the site we were at. Their answer is a resounding NO! They proposed moving the antenna, but we were told we were not to touch the antenna locations, so I turn that offer down. After discussing a bit more and reminding them that if we do move, the situation might be worse, and there was no going back, the team decided to take a chance on a new site. I told them to sit tight for a while, and then the site manager and I make a decision to head back to Anuzca and personally explain our situation and beg for one of the alternate sites, since we can't get them on the telephone.

We get into Dave's rental car and lurch our way back to the hotel. Lurch is the operative word... The rental has a manual transmission, and Dave isn't keen on driving manuals. After some harrowing meetings with trucks on what is barely a two-way road back to the hotel and some narrow escapes from deep culverts at the roundabouts, we find ourselves back at Anuzca and head up to the inner sanctum.

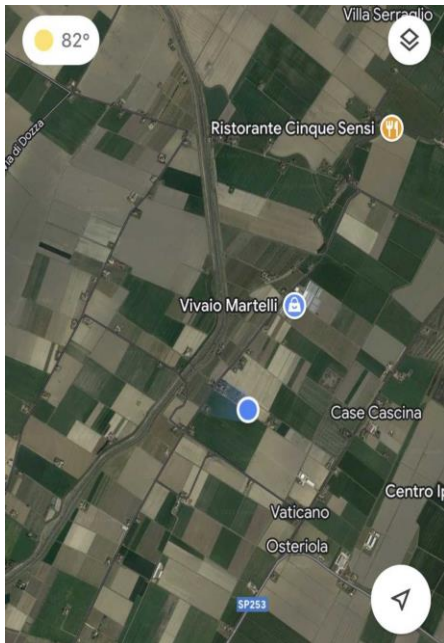
We had made some video recordings on our cell phones of the QRM. Claudio !4VEQ, a personal friend, was the guy in charge of sites. He became involved in some heavy arm waving and discussions in Italian with other members of the OC and people in the field while sort of avoiding making eye contact with me. Seems like we are not the only ones that find our site has issues. After Lots of arm waving and pacing and moving about the room discussing situations by others, I personally appeal to I4IFH, Fabio, the Vice President of WRTC. Claudio then presents us with the choice of moving to the last available backup site.

I call the team and they emphatically accept the move! We tell them to wait for Dave, who will bring them the coordinates and keys.

While Dave heads back to the team, I ride with Claudio to the site. Claudio continually apologizes for this "horrible" site. I fear the worst. All the way there, Claudio is on the telephone with other site managers dealing with issues such as towers that are not correctly installed, rotors that don't work, low band dipoles with infinite SWR, and lots of fun stuff. Claudio is stressed to the max; you can see it in his face!

He tells me he personally visited 85 sites and checked them for QRM himself. I don't doubt that, and I'm not blaming him, but our original site was truly unusable, especially when using 25-year-old Yaesu rigs known to be somewhat deaf on 10 and 15 meters. He continues apologizing for how horrible the site we are heading to is!

We drive way out into the Bologna countryside and turn at a dirt road that splits a field filled with beautiful Sunflowers.



Driving down this road, I spot two homes sitting literally in the center of the sunflower patch... One of them has two towers behind it!

We pull into what should be called a bare patch of land and not a driveway and find a garage with some desks in it. This is the site! Vedran and Zvonko are already there!



This was once the home of I4IKW. He abandoned this site 10 years ago and was refurbishing the property to sell it. There was electricity, running water and a toilet... But nothing else. No furniture to speak of except for a rather dusty bed. No air conditioning, and even no fan. And there was a small marsh next to the garage with frogs and mosquitos. Lots of mosquitos!

Our tower is placed 15 yards from an existing tower with a KT34 and a large 6-meter yagi. When we turn

our yagi, its longest element barely clears one of the guys of the tower holding the KT34. We find the SWR on both dipoles sky-high. And notice that the tuning pigtails that were supposed to be placed on the 75-meter dipole to move it to 80 meters are placed on the 40-meter antenna instead. Removing those and clipping them to the 75m dipole resolves the SWR problem on the wire antennas.

This rotor is also installed 180 degrees out, with the hard stop being counterclockwise north. I own the same rotor, so I suggest a way to deal with the issue so that the overlap of the rotor goes at least to east and sweeps through the north. North America is 340 degrees from Italy. This at least gives the crew a fighting chance of being able to move the tribander through north to the east.

The team then brings a radio online and notices that worst-case QRM at this site is S3-4! The team says they are staying! They tell me they were prepared to operate this contest from their car if they had to as they begin assembling their station.



The assembling went well; they were on the air in about an hour and a half! Keeping it simple helps! But, due to the conditions at the site, staying overnight on Friday night was out of the question as we didn't have any citronella candles or spirals to keep the mosquitos at bay. It was decided that we would go back to our hotel that evening and return the following day, as all the gear was operating just fine. Dave, our Site Manager, had promised us dinner, so we went looking for a restaurant... and since we were literally in the middle of nowhere, they were not very convenient to the site.

I joined Dave in the rental car and off we went following a GPS coordinate of a restaurant. Over the river and through the woods we went. and arrived at the restaurant to find it dark. Dave then proceeded to enter the very small, very tight parking lot to see if it was really closed. Yes, it was really closed. But now, how to get the car out of the lot! There was a rather deep culvert on one side, a large tree in the back and a large wall on the

other side. And, of course, Dave had entered the lot directly from the road and couldn't back out in the manual transmission car.

I decided to get out of the car and help Dave avoid disaster. After many back and forth movements, the car was headed in the correct direction. Another rental car saved, although the clutch smell was a bit overbearing.

By this time, Ved and Zvonko had headed out to the next restaurant we found online and sent us the coordinates via text. We plugged them into Dave's GPS and headed to the restaurant, or so we thought. It seemed we were going around in circles for a while until the boys attempted to rescue us by coming to our location. Having found the restaurant, they waited for us in the parking lot and then left, headed out to find us and guide us to the place.

Dave and I finally arrived at the restaurant and I called the team to ask where they were. They told me they were searching for us, having left the restaurant minutes earlier. They then returned and we had a really good meal in a local family place where the waitress spoke Spanish and I could translate the menu selections to English.

At the end of the meal, we headed back to our Hotels and awaited the next day's events.

The following day, I headed out with the team as Dave had something to do that morning. It was an early start, 7AM, because we had to stop by a grocery store to pick up supplies. Other teams were fed by their hosts. Not us. We were on our own out in the Sunflower patch.

We stopped by a store and picked up water and ready-to-eat food, and high-tailed it to the site. Here, as Ved incessantly teases him, "professional driver" Zvonko took a wrong turn, and we ended up on a toll road without a way to pay. Finding a way off the toll road and stopping at the unattended toll booth, we were lucky to speak to an English-speaking attendant somewhere in Italy and pay our toll via a credit card, all to a symphony of horn honking from local commuters stacked up behind us at the toll booth.



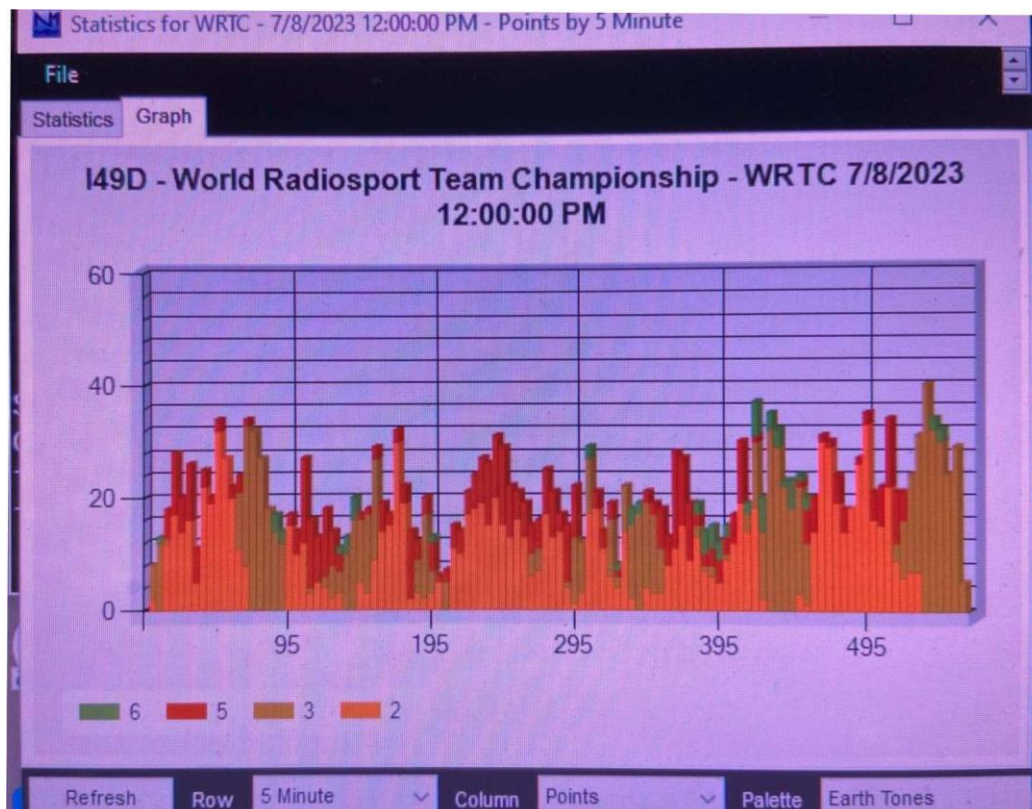
Getting to the site, the team got everything working and then strategically placed citronella spirals near the window so as to keep the mosquitos at bay. Yes, it did keep the mosquitos away, but the flies seemed to like the environment, and we were accosted by a number of them during the day. They enjoyed landing on the monitor screens and moving around, imitating the mouse cursor. 15 minutes before the start, I opened the black

envelope and we discovered that the callsign we received was I49D. The team entered this into their computers, and we waited for the start of the contest with audio on the radios off. Watching the clock, at exactly 1800, the guys started to operate and the first QSO was made one minute later.



These guys were superior ops. By virtue of their having worked as a team for over 15 years, it was like they were one person doing SO2R, passing mults back and forth efficiently. I was really impressed by their teamwork and learned a thing or two by watching them. Simply impressive operating, using 25 year old radios to their best advantage.





In the morning of the second day, Dave was kind enough to get us coffee and I4IKW and his wife stopped by with an espresso machine and some delicious pastries.

I had been warned that if someone with a video camera showed up near the end of the contest and began shooting, that meant that we were placing high. Suddenly, we get a visitor with a video camera. How high were we placed? Third!

WRTC2022 Competition Score		
Rank	WRTC Teams (TL / TM)	Score 2023-07-09 14:56:25 UTC
1	UW7LL / VE3DZ	7522868
2	DJ5MW / DL1IAO	7110200
3	9A7DX / 9A3LG	6825812
4	F8DBF / F1AKK	6734130
5	OM3BH / OM3GI	6465064

Callsign I43C I44W I49D

Hour

Score - 6,857,340 Points

Band	Mode	QSOs	Pts	Cty	HQ	Pt/Q
3.5	CW	347	754	34	18	2.2
3.5	LSB	199	600	9	6	3.0
7	CW	850	2192	42	20	2.6
7	LSB	550	1713	18	9	3.1
14	CW	1181	3682	43	8	3.1
14	USB	670	2451	31	22	3.7
21	CW	781	2789	54	15	3.6
21	USB	251	915	16	18	3.6
28	CW	253	593	43	20	2.3
28	USB	20	75	4	5	3.8
Total Both		5102	15764	294	141	3.1

Score: 6,857,340
CW = 66.9% SSB = 33.1%
1 Mult = 36.2 Points
1 Mult = 11.7 Q's

Both Ved and Zvonko worked hard for this victory. It really was all about operator skill for these two! They were received as Heroes in the village of Daruvar. And I have made lifelong friends of the Pride of Daruvar, the EU7 team of 9A7DX and 9A3LG!

