



The SPARC

Amateur Radio - Communicating Worldwide for A Century

Newsletter of the Boston Amateur Radio Club
Serving Hams in the Greater Boston Area

September 2024 - VOLUME 36, NUMBER 9
www.barc.org - w1bos@arrl.net



Message From the President – Brendan Baldonado, NW1S



Happy September all! It's been quite a summer for the Boston amateur radio club. We had a great field day, two very successful summer POTA events, several new members, and really nice weather to boot. As we approach winter and beginning to have regular meetings let us know what you may be interested in learning about. We will try to get a speaker series that is interesting to you. Our up coming meeting is going to be a quick business meeting and I'd like to try a slightly different format. We're going to have an open discussion meeting where we chat about ham radio and maybe discuss some members ham radio goals. And we as a club with all our experience will work with those numbers to try to help them achieve that goal in the coming year. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting!!

In this Issue of The SPARC

- Meet the Ham
- Field Day is This Month
- Upcoming Meetings and Events



BARC General Meeting, Thursday, September 19, 7:30 pm

The next BARC General Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 7:30 pm, at Artisans Asylum in Allston and on the Zoom teleconferencing platform. As always, the meeting will be preceded with a half hour of social time beginning at 7:00

Repeaters: 145.230 (-) CTCSS 88.5 in/100.0 out

Simplex: 147.420

449.175 (-) DMR CC1

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Meet the Ham – Samir Parikh, K1SIP

This month, we are featuring Chris Larosee, AC1RV. Chris is a PhD student at UMASS Boston and a newly-licensed ham. He has been active with BARC for a little under a year, and the club is certainly the better for it!

Finding BARC

I got my license last December, and a week later, I had a UV5R and a 2m antenna from K9VBR. Talking on repeaters, while exciting at first, got old quickly. I wanted to get more out of my license, but before I found BARC, I thought HF was out of my reach. Not only would it cost me thousands of dollars to get on the air, but then what would I even do once I did? I figured that Ham Radio, though exciting at the time, would be a passing interest to revisit later in life or fall into the category of things I ‘used to do.’

I looked up “Ham Radio Boston,” and at the top of my Google results was BARC. I was surprised by how close they were; only one city block separates my home from Artisans Asylum. I looked at the meeting schedule and made it a point to attend the next one. Little did I know I would be committing to attend WFD and begin my journey on HF.

Winter Field Day: Getting the ‘Bug’ for CW

My first meeting was mostly about Winter Field Day preparation, but I also got a tour of the shack from Joe Harris and Brendan. While Brendan and I watched, Joe hunted a Parks on the Air activator using Morse code (CW). Brendan took a turn sending his callsign with the paddle in the shack.

I hesitated at first. At the time, I had never seen a paddle in person, but the excitement overcame me. “Can I give it a shot?” I asked, just as four more members trickled into the shack. I turned back to six sets of eyes focused on my hand. Let’s just say I felt quite a fool trying to remember if I was sending an R or the correct K starting my callsign.

After this meeting, I realized I had to step up my practice to get to a level where I could operate CW for WFD. To improve my copying skills, I listened to QSOs, POTA activations, and practice tapes on YouTube every day. I also started making my own recordings via text-to-CW converters to study common letter combinations and word suffixes. For sending, I used a straight key, manually sending each dit and dah. I also began reading about CW theory and history.

In the week leading up to the contest, I thought, ‘Let’s give this a shot and try CW. I can do this.’ I was ambitious, having only a few months of semi-serious practice under my belt, but I still wanted to try. Shirley assured me, ‘Well, there’s no harm in trying. There will always be someone to help if you need.’

When the day finally came, I was discouraged by my abilities. I could not copy the callsign from the signal exchange, and at times it felt like the hours I put in were not useful. The few contacts I logged were with Joe Chapman or Shirley holding the steering wheel. I appreciated the wake-up call and the exposure I got to real-world CW operations.

NearFest: HF is WAY too EXPENSIVE

This spring, Shirley took me to NearFest in NH. I couldn’t believe how cheap everything was compared to the internet prices I had seen. It’s funny writing about this now because, looking back only a few months, I really had no clue what I was looking at in the ocean of metal sticks and strings, colorful ceramic Cheerios, and fancy glass light bulbs with

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pointy feet. Shirley guided me past many tables and helped me focus my attention. I managed to come home with my first rig, an Elecraft K2, and a Bencher BY-1 bundled for \$400. This was much cheaper than I anticipated the cost to get onto HF would be.

At first, I didn't use it. It sat on my desk and mocked me for not knowing enough. It told me to practice my CW instead. And that's all I did for the first week, but by then, I had endured enough imagined mockery from my new purchase. I found a throw line and bought a beanbag to tie on the end of it.

Now I activate POTA in New York and Massachusetts and have made contacts with hundreds of stations around the world.

Field Day 2024

As I write, CW echoes are ringing in my head—symptoms of operating through the night for Field Day CWOps. This time I did it without needing someone by my side. Not only that, but I made 357 QSOs by the time the contest ended. On the one hand, I'm like, 'Yes! I made it. I can do this. I accomplished this goal of learning CW.' But now that I am most of the way through a semester of advanced CW training from my teacher at CWOps (KK5NA) and the other students in my advanced-level class cohort, I have new goals.

Contesting in CW is fun because it is easier to learn than rag-chewing through a long conversation where you need to recognize words and their meanings. Ragchewing is much harder but opens up an avenue to use CW as a language you can hear and transmit to communicate ideas more complex than: UR RST IS 599 599 BK. It will likely take me a few hundred more hours of practice, but I hope to be there as soon as I can.

My biggest takeaway from Field Day is that it's not really about the points. Instead of optimizing for scores, I realized that our club focused on helping others get on the air or try something they hadn't done before. We had visitors who were soon-to-be hams, fresh technicians, and even a general class operator looking to make his first QSOs. The camaraderie and shared enthusiasm created an environment where everyone felt welcomed and supported

Conclusion:Advice

My accomplishments on HF with CW were possible because there was a strong community eager to help. BARC has been my biggest resource. I can access our club's shack, attend events like Field Day, and meet people who are interested in Ham for similar reasons as I.

Another community I have joined was originally suggested by Joe Chapman and Shirley: CWOps. My cohort of peers are strong supports. We talk in group messenger between our twice-weekly classes and are often working each other when we do POTA activations.

To the new Ham, find your community, whoever it may be. If talking on repeaters is your thing, call into nets, call a repeater daily. Don't have a license (yet)? Go foxhunting, listen to shortwave and HF, build antennas for receiving. Fascinated by space? There is open-source data on space weather dying to be explored. Ham radio is, in essence, a community-based activity. Embrace the journey, and remember that the connections you make and the skills you develop are what truly make Ham Radio a rewarding and lifelong hobby.

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Portable CW Paddles – Joe Chapman, NV1W

When recommending a CW paddle to beginners, the gurus' consensus seems to be that it should be heavy. Ideally it should be the sort of thing that Colonel Mustard might have used to dispatch someone in the library if the candlestick was unavailable. However, if you have already progressed in your figurative CW journey and are about to take a literal journey—a SOTA or POTA activation, or even just packing for a weekend getaway—you might want to give some considerations to size and weight.

Wayne Burdick, N6KR, has a test for evaluating CW paddles: he sends the alphabet, A to Z, at 30 wpm, and if he makes zero mistakes the paddle passes. By that standard every Morse code key I have ever used is no good. I do consider the attached paddles Elecraft makes for the KX2/KX3 to be excellent, and I'm warming to the one on the KH1, but won't cover paddles designed for specific rigs in this article.

I'll start with expensive keys, and give pride of place to the lust-worthy **Begali Traveler**. Begali keys are made in Italy, pricey, and (in my opinion) worth every Euro. People who attended BARC events like Field Day will have seen the Traveler, since both Scott, K1SU, and I have one. In its box it is 5" × 3" × 3" and weighs a pound and a half. Adjustability is excellent and it's a dream to send with. (*Pietro Begali*, www.i2rtf.com, €298.)

Another Begali gem is the **Adventure**, available in both a dual and single-lever version. You can get mounting brackets for the Elecraft KX2/KX3, KX1, and the Yaesu 817/818. Like the Traveler, it's easy to adjust to your liking and is delightful to use. It is 3" long and a touch over 1 inch high and weighs 4 ounces, measured without the optional heavy magnetic base. (*Pietro Begali*, www.i2rtf.com, €268.)

Returning to the category of "maybe a little heavy" and certainly expensive, there's the **ZN-QRP** iambic paddle from N3ZN. This is part of a line of premium keys, which you will probably be able to try out at HamXposition in Marlboro in August. The ZN-QRP is a reduced size version of the iambic paddles N3ZN makes for shack use, and is ¾" × 2¼" × 2¼" and weighs 1 lb. 4 oz. (*N3ZN keys*, <https://www.n3znkeys.com>, \$345.)



And returning to Europe, there's the **BaMaKey TP-III** from BaMaTech in Germany (not to be confused with the capital of Mali). This is one of my favorites of the smaller paddles in my list, and I probably come as close to sending the alphabet at 30 wpm without error than anything outside the luxury collection above. (In sending das Alphabet I even include ü, *dididahdah*.) The tips of the paddles are rubber and I love the way they feel in the hand. 3" × 1½" × 1" and 2½ oz. (*BaMaTech*, www.bamatech.net, €161.)

Before going on, there was once a legendary portable Morse code paddle from Palm Radio in Germany that has fallen victim to Herblock's Law ("If it's good, they'll stop making it"), and there are a number of 3D printed and other designs that are clearly an attempt to duplicate the Palm **Mini** and **Pico** paddles. They featured a rectangular housing, and the paddles could be retracted into it for travel. All I can say is, should you see one on eBay, grab it immediately.

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One attempt to create a similar travel paddle, and sadly something that's caused me to reevaluate my opinion of GHD, a Japanese manufacturer with a stellar reputation, is the GHD **GM702 Palm-Size Travel Iambic Paddle**. This was apparently redesigned after a much better initial version. Adjustability is marginal (contact spacing) to impossible (tension) and on the one I tried, the tension on the two paddles was wildly different. Yes, I measured it. (*Available from DX Engineering, www.dxengineering.com, \$169.95, or nothing if you take my advice and don't buy it.*)



CW Morse in Texas makes a whole skilletful of inexpensive 3D printed keys. I find the company a delight to deal with; the customer service is top-notch and they ship promptly. The key of note is the **SP4 POTA/SOTA CW Morse Magnetic Tension Iambic Double Paddle** which was designed by N0SA. N0SA made some scrumptious portable iambic paddles in very small quantities for his own use and assorted random people who are much luckier than I am, so it's nice to see them being made by a company that has the resources to make more than a few. CW Morse also makes lots of less expensive keys that are nice for just throwing in a bag. (*CW Morse, <https://cwmorse.us/products/sp4-sota-pota-cw-morse-magnetic-paddle-by-n0sa>, \$92.95.*)

Also in the “inexpensive and suitable for throwing in a bag or a pocket” category are the miniature paddles from Whiterook. They do look pretty sharp—especially the MK-33 single lever model—and you might find them appealing if you're getting tired of all this furshlugginer 3D printed stuff. 2" × 2.4" × 1.5" and 1.2 oz. (*Whiterook MK-44 Iambic Mini Paddle, <https://electronicsusa.com/mk.html>, \$33.*)

This would not be a proper amateur radio newsletter article if I did not send you to your soldering station! Fans of YouTube celebrity Thomas Witherspoon, K4SWL, may know about the **Pressure Paddle** designed by VK3IL, now in its second iteration. It's very simple, with a pressure sensor on each side of a PCB that vaguely looks like a tongue depressor that Dr McCoy would carry. It uses surface-mount parts, so it may not be an ideal first project, but I found it came together in an hour or so without excessive gnashing of teeth. You do have to go through the trouble of having PCB boards made and placing a parts order with Mouser or Digi-Key. Full details are at <https://vk3il.net/pressure-paddle-v2/>.

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On the microscopic end of the spectrum is the N6ARA **TinyPaddle**. This is so small it should probably come with a swallowing hazard warning; do keep them out of the reach of children under 4. You can buy it as a kit or assembled, and it can be built around a 3.5 mm plug or a jack. The plug model will plug directly into many of the tiny QRP rigs (and you can get a nifty adapter for the Elecraft KH1). I carry one as an emergency backup, but it's usable for a full session. (*N6ARA Electronics*, <https://n6ara.com>, \$28.99.)

Finally, in any survey of stuff to buy one will, like Marco Polo, eventually end up in China. There are about forty separate versions of this key on eBay: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/155382805172> (if this one has disappeared, try searching for "CW Morse Key" on eBay and look for the steel ones with the perforated fingerpieces). It has a magnetic base and should cost anywhere from \$30 to \$50. Mine came in a plastic tube that's 1½" square and 3½" long and the whole thing is less than 4 oz. I haven't tried adjusting it too much, but it's serviceable enough. There is also a "\$25 paddle" that's a cube about an inch on a side. You will also find these with the same eBay search; the one I'm looking at (<https://www.ebay.com/itm/314906448625>) adds "Automatic Base Magnetic Absorption." I haven't tried these, though they get the occasional mention among field radio types.

There are some accessories that will make your CW life in the field more pleasant. Morse Express, now sadly out of business, used to send a piece of rubber mesh (almost like a shelf liner) with key orders, and it will help keep your key from moving around on something like a picnic table or one of the tables at Field Day. I haven't been able to find the exact material, but you could try a Google search for a suitable material. You will also often need a 3.5 mm TRS cable. I really like the cloth-covered ones sold by CW Morse (<https://cwmorse.us/products/3-5mm-aux-cable>), and the **Cable Matters Retractable Aux Cable** (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00UGA6QIE>).

Finally, for magnetic keys, the **BESTNUL Professional Bench Block** (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08L4V9Z7T>) is an inexpensive three-inch diameter steel disk that weighs about 13 ounces. Given the weight you probably don't want to take it summiting for SOTA, but on less adventurous outings it will give your key a lot of stability, and the BaMaKey in particular sticks to it with a satisfying thunk.

In writing this review I now realize that I have even more Morse code keys than Zsa Zsa Gabor had husbands, though it will be a long time before I catch up with K4SWL. Happy field operating!

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BARC's Online Discussion Group – Joe Harris, N1QD

BARC has an online forum at Groups.io. The group serves as a sounding board for members to post their suggestions and comments, and is intended to foster discussion. The group can also be used to share photographs from club events! Come visit us at: <https://groups.io/g/BostonARC>. You can join, if you're not already there, by sending an email to BostonARC+subscribe@groups.io.

New Course from HamRadioPrep – Joe Chapman, NV1W

Our friends at HamRadioPrep have just announced a new course: *HF Masterclass*. Unlike their licensing courses, this one aims to lead someone with a General or an Amateur Extra license from the first steps of buying a radio and assembling a station through becoming a competent operator on the HF bands. You can read more about it at <https://hamradioprep.com/hf-masterclass/>.

As with all of HamRadioPrep's courses, you can use the coupon code **bostonarc** to receive a 20% discount. BARC also receives a commission for every sale that uses our coupon code, so you help the club as well.

BARC Meeting Calendar for 2024

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings and VE sessions will take place at Artisans Asylum.

General Meetings

April 18	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
May 16	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
June 20	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
September 19	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
October 17	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
November 21	2024	Thu	7:30 pm
December 19	2024	Thu	7:30 pm

VE Sessions

October 14	2024	Mon	7:30 pm
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Member News – Joe Harris, N1QD

This space is reserved for your news! Send it to N1QD at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Net Preamble

The control operator for the BARC Net is Joe, W1JJF. He rarely misses a net, but when he does any ham can take up the position and run the net. To assist you in opening and closing the net the BARC Net Preamble is printed below. Do not be afraid to step up and take the challenge.

Is there any further business for the repeater before we begin the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net? This is «YOUR CALL». Calling the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. This is «YOUR CALL», my name is «YOUR NAME» and I am located in «YOUR TOWN». This net meets each Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time on the 145.230 Boston repeater, PL 88.5. This net is an informal round table discussion concerning matters of interest to the members of the Boston Amateur Radio Club and the Boston Amateur Radio community in general. When checking into the net, please say, “this is” and drop your carrier to check on doubling. Then give your call sign, name and location. All amateurs are welcome to join the net. Any check-in’s for the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net please call now.

[Compile the list of the check-ins and proceed with the net.]

Is there any further business for the net before I close? Hearing nothing, this is «YOUR CALL» closing tonight’s session of the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the net and those who stood by while I ran the net. The Boston Amateur Radio Club Net will return next Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time. This is «YOUR CALL» returning the repeater to general amateur use. 73.

I See the Future

19 September	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
28 – 29 September	CQWW RTTY Contest
14 October	BARC VE Session, Arstisans Asylum. 7:30pm
17 October	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
18 – 20 October	Head of the Charles Regatta (public service event)
20 October	Flea at MIT
26 – 27 October	CQWW RTTY Contest

▲ Note change from usual date and/or location
(Rp) = BARC Repeaters will be used for these events

As you might expect, there are many more events (public service, hamfests, flea markets, etc.) taking place—some only peripheral to ham radio. For information on these, covering much of the Northeast, the “Ham - Electronic Flea Market” and the “PSLIST” lists tell the story. Of course, if you know of an event that would be of interest to the readers, please let the Editor know. For an up-to-date calendar of events, including web links, visit <http://www.barc.org/calendar>.

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Businesses Can Advertise Here

The SPARC accepts commercial advertisements. BARC encourages monthly promotion of your products and services which would be of interest to hundreds of our members and others interested in the Amateur Radio Service.

The rates for display advertising are:

1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$15 per issue
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$75 per 6 consecutive months
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$125 per 12 consecutive months
1 col × 4 in. (½ column)	\$30 per issue
1 col × 9.5 in. (full column)	\$60 per issue

Originals of ads must be presented to the Editor in MS Word or .jpg format to print 1:1. Other composition will be at extra cost. We will be glad to quote other ad sizes and durations. Members are urged to seek prospective advertisers who are appropriate to our readers. For additional information, contact Joe Chapman, NV1W, at 617.267.6349 or nv1w@arrl.net.

Two Ways to See Yourself in Print! (well, PDF) – Joe Harris, N1QD

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter. I have reserved this space for your articles, reviews, tips, how-tos, hints ‘n’ kinks, photos, schematics, or other ham related information. Photos of you operating or your shack are especially welcome. Send your submissions to the Editor, Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org. Articles for the October issue must be received by October 5.

Are you a depressed BARC member because you have a treasure you must turn to cash? Cheer up, Bunky! The SPARC will run your (non-business) ad for free. Of course, a 10% donation if you sell it will be cheerfully accepted. Just send your ad to Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Volunteer Exam Sessions

The Boston Amateur Radio Club offers license exams quarterly. The next session will be held on Monday, October 14, at 7:30 pm. Test sessions are held at Artisans Asylum, 96 Holton St., Boston, MA 02135.

We give all exams (Technician, General, and Extra). *Testing is by reservation only.* Please bring the following with you:

- Your current license and a photocopy for the ARRL, if you are upgrading
- Any CSEs you are claiming, and a photocopy of them
- Valid picture ID or two valid non-picture IDs
- A pen and a calculator (if you want to)
- **\$15.00** (good for all the tests you take at that session, except for retests)

Note: Written tests can be taken sequentially at the same session for the same \$15 fee. The needed FCC forms will be provided.

To reserve a seat or for further information, contact: Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net, or Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net.

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NEW ENGLAND SCI-TECH

New England Sci-Tech Inc is a new 501(c)(3) STEM education center, amateur radio training center, and maker space located at 16 Tech Circle, Natick. It is home to New England Amateur Radio Inc (NE1AR) and the youth radio club Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS). NE Sci-Tech welcomes memberships and donations via www.NESciTech.org or www.NE1AR.org.

BARC Officers and Staff

President: Brendan Baldonado, NW1S

brendan.baldonado@gmail.com

Vice President: Joe Harris, N1QD

n1qd@n1qd.org

Secretary: Joe Chapman, NV1W

nv1w@arrl.net

Treasurer: Mark Duff, KB1EKN,

emgmt@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor *locum tenens*: Joe Harris, N1QD

n1qd@n1qd.org

Volunteer Exams:

Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net

Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net

Public Service Coordinator: Ethan Hansen, KC1OIP

ethan.kc1oip@gmail.com

Public Information Officer: Geri Duff, KB1ISG

geriduff52@juno.com

The Boston Amateur Radio Club is a non-commercial association of persons interested in the Amateur Radio Service. The Club is organized for the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and education, for the establishment of emergency communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies, for the advancement of the radio art and the public welfare, for the representation of the radio amateur in legislative and regulatory matters, and for the maintenance of collegiality and a high standard of conduct.

The Club is open to all persons interested in Amateur Radio without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual preference. Our General and Business meeting locations are handicap accessible. Other meeting and activity locations may be handicap accessible by arrangement.

The Club is an ARRL-affiliated club, and is a member of the New England Spectrum Management Council (NESMC). The Club is also an associate member of the Courage HandiHams system.

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Greater Boston Net Directory

Daily 7 pm	MARI (Mass/Rhode Island CW Net) (NTS)	3.565
Daily 8 pm	Eastern Mass 2M Traffic Net (NTS)	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Daily 8 pm	Slow Speed CW Net	28.160
Sun–Fri 9:45 pm, Sat 10 pm	Heavy Hitters Traffic Net (NTS)	MMRA-linked repeaters: 146.610, 146.670, 146.715, 146.820, and all 222 and 440 repeaters
First Mon 8:30 pm	EMA Section ARES Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Mon 7 pm	Two Meter SSB Net	144.244 USB
Mon 8 pm	New England DMR Net	DMR New England Talk Group (TG 3181)
Mon 9 pm	BARC Club Net	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Tue Thu Sat 5 pm	MA RI Phone Net (NTS)	3.978
Tue 8 pm	Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS) Net	446.325 (PL 146.2)
Tue 8 pm	MMRA Club Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Wed 8 pm	Wellesley Amateur Radio Society Net	147.030; 444.600 (PL 88.5)
Wed 9 pm	Waltham Wranglers Swap Net	146.640 (PL 136.5)
Sat 9 am	Northeast SATERN Net	7.265
Sun 9:30 am	Yankee SSB Net	50.275
Sun 8 pm	Algonquin Amateur Radio Club Net	446.675 (PL 88.5)
Sun 8:30 pm	NSRA Net (with Newslines)	145.470 (PL 136.5)
Sun 9 pm	CAARAnet	145.130 (PL 107.2)



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