

## KANSAS QSO PARTY 2010

K0RU - Navigator/Driver: Considering all the obstacles we had to deal with, Dragan and I sure had allot of fun.



Let me explain, 1st off that previous Monday I had trade-in my Lincoln Town car and purchased a brand new 2010 Ford F150 4x4 truck. Of course now I have less than a week to transfer everything that was in the car into the new truck. On Friday afternoon (day before the contest) the antenna was mounted and that was it, no radios, no coax, no power, nothing else was completed. Dragan calls and says we can do this, we started Friday evening around 6pm to begin installing all of the equipment. Rig: Yaesu FT857D, Amplifier ALS500, APRS Rig, APRS ant, Extra Battery, Large DC Cables, CAT5 cables, Metering, 2 laptops, keyer and whatever misc junk we needed. By 3 AM (6 hours before the contest was to start) we had been up all night installing everything we were finally ready to fire

everything up to see what worked and what didn't. OMG, we have power, but we also have RFI/EMI everywhere. Computers tripping/locking up, radiokeyer locking up, RFI tearing up everything you could imagine in the truck. Quickly grabbed my box of RFI Clamp on chokes and started choking every cable you could imagine. We were finally able to get things settled down where we had full output 400 watts on 20 meters, with no RFI and we could run 100 watts on 40 meters (amp just wouldn't stay online, kept tripping). We finally said it was good enough; we have to get on the road. By this time it's now 5:00 am and the contest is starting in about 4 hours.

Dragan headed home to get his bags packed and get a shower, I jumped into the shower and grabbed my bags and off I went, picked up Dragan and let him drive west on I-70 until we got to Topeka where we planned to stop and grab some breakfast and then I would take over driving. This would give me about 1-1/2 hours of sleep. While driving to Topeka, Dragan had never driven a vehicle with such a large antenna on it, didn't realize that every over pass he was driving under, the Antenna was striking. I'm sleeping, I'm not hearing anything, by the time we get to Topeka, KS the entire top portion of the antenna (Tar heel HP200) corona ball was gone and the top of the antenna was bent over like a fish hook.



We both shook our heads and said oh well, let's go. I take over driving from Topeka, KS heading NW toward Dickinson and Washington County lines. Dragan by this time was firing everything up Rig, Laptops and Amplifier etc. getting ready to start a run. When we realized the RFI problem still was haunting us, by interfering with the keying circuit on the logging laptop. At this time, 8:30-8:45 the countdown clock is ticking, we are not at our targeted county line to begin the run were still a good 1 hour from there and we are still having all kinds of troubles getting the logging laptop to stay online while keying without locking up. Finally we get things under control with the laptop, not realizing we had even consider getting the GPS laptop up and running we had no idea where we were or what direction we needed to travel to get to where we needed to be. We knew the county we were in and just began the contest at that point. While Dragan is running the county, I'm driving like a mad man trying to get to a county road with a sign to tell us where we were. I'm following and gravel road that eventually turns into a 2-lane trail, that eventually winds and twist through some trees towards this lake which I could see off in the distance. As we're travel down this 2-lane path, all of a sudden the radio goes dead (no receive) and there was a loud THUMP. I knew immediately what had happen I just struck a large tree branch with the screw driver antenna.



Sure enough, climbed out of the 4x4 truck and there sets the antenna bent over, busted off at the base mounting bracket completely snapped off. 2 hours or so into the contest and we are dead in the water, no antenna. Tear open my toolbox in the truck, and in the box are some fittings from some old antennas I've used in the past for hustler mounts. Quickly I scrambled and was able to come up with a completely new base thread mount that I knew I could make work. Tore of the antenna from the main mount, bent everything back into place with a pipe wrench and installed the new base thread assembly onto the Tarheel HP 200 and away go. We are up and running and on the air once again. (That Tarheel is tough), we hit the tree branch hard, and it did not damage anything on the antenna itself, it simply snapped off the base mount assembly.

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After the tree branch incident with the antenna we both agreed we needed to get the GPS laptop up and running with our map so we could stay on schedule, but also on the right roads.

We are so far behind on our planned schedule we decided it was time to just hit the major road heading East (hwy 36 - The Pony Express Highway) and start knocking down some of these counties and try to catch up or we weren't going to be very successful. Off we go, both of us are so tired we just can't seem to grasp what's going on, we are constantly being plagued by RFI into the logging laptop, Dragan would start a county CQ call, the pileup would begin and he would get the 1st or 2nd station logged and the stupid computer would lock up on us. Nuts, this kept going on and on, we would put chokes on this, on that, everything we could get to. Finally we decided it had to be that specific laptop, so quickly we pushed the logging software off from that laptop onto the other and swapped the GPS software over with the maps and changed laptops. Wow, it's working. Bang, we are up and running. Off we go, county after county running the pile-

ups as we moved along. On the fly, Dragan's running a Q rate of about 40 to 50 per hour. We finally reached our evening destination Topeka, KS once again where we planned on holding up for the night. The brand new truck with less than 700 miles on it, was covered with dirt from end to end, what a day.

The next morning, we decide to push on, heading SW towards Osage, Lyon, Wabaunsee counties and westward. The pileup is holding mild, nothing to brag about, but the stations are still calling. We finally reached the county of Wabaunsee, KS. I spotted a gravel road leading up from Lyon to Wabaunsee which put us in the parking area of an old school house landmark. We parked and at that point I started posting spots for Wabaunsee, KS on DX Summit and County Hunters net. Wow, station after station was calling, the pileup was intense. First we were on Phone 20 meters running 500 watts and working DX stations left and right and it seemed every station calling us was saying Wow, what a strong mobile signal your 20+ over S9 etc. Dragan is pumped, this is his first time on the run like this, he has never run any counties for county hunters, let alone a QSO Party. Finally we switched over to 20 Meter CW on Wabaunsee, KS and again the pileup just kept coming, wave after wave. I saying to Dragan, we have to go, we are going to run out of time and not get all the counties we want to run. We have already been setting here for 1 hour and the pileup is still strong. Finally we both decided it was time to move on, sorry to all those we didn't get, but time was ticking and we had to move on.

County after county were running on the fly SSB and CW Dragan is bouncing all over the place trying to keep the laptops down and key from flying as I'm driving back roads up and down, up and down hills. When we come to Marion County, KS we need to take a 2 track that cuts across a farm land towards another county (can't remember right now where we were) but the two tracks was nothing but two tracks in tall grass. Slowly were driving across this farm land 2 track when again, all of a sudden the receiver goes dead. Nothing! Stopped the truck, climbed out and sure enough the entire top whip of the antenna is completely gone. Poof! It had come un-threaded from the screw driver coil (someone forgot to put a lock washer on it) and the whip portion of the antenna was gone. Since we were on this 2 track and had not been driving very fast I knew we should be able to find it, so we slowly begin backing up, after about ¼ mile there it was laying on the tracks. We put it on (with a lock washer this time) and off we went, up and running again. It was a wonderful adventure, and it seems to never amaze me how much fun we can have running as a rover in a QSO Party. I'm looking forward to running in the TX QSO Party because last year I had a wonderful time there and hopefully I will be a little more prepared this time than we were for the KS QSO Party.



Dragan did excellent, considering all the obstacles I was putting him up against as the driver/navigator he did a fantastic job of operating.

Photos are available at: [www.k0ru.net/ksqp](http://www.k0ru.net/ksqp)

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K0AP - Dragan - Operator: "Despite all the issues we had along the way it was so much fun activating KS counties, some literally in the middle of nowhere. When I lived in Z3 Macedonia I loved chasing counties. Now, the hunter became hunted. Who was going to bet that this will happen to me 10 years after, hi! Anyway, Rob K0RU has invited me to join him in this adventure which I gladly accepted without much hesitation. He generously offered my call sign to be used for this operation and I thank him for that very much. We did not activate all counties we planned to but still managed to activate 22 of them. Notable was working DL3DXX from 14 counties, N6MU 19, W7GVE 18, NT2A 15, KO1U 14 etc...  
CU next year."