



Radiosport GO

When talking about growing radio contesting and engaging youth, computer games are often mentioned as having the mindshare that we wish our hobby had. Over the last few days, you may have heard of [Pokémon GO](#), a new game that is a variation of an old card collecting game that has rapidly captured the interest of gamers of every age. It's a big deal, and getting bigger. From July 5th to July 8th, the percentage of the 90+ million Android phone users in the US playing this game [went from zero to five percent](#). In just four days. While we were participating in the IARU contest over the weekend, the game gained hundreds of thousands of users. Its daily usage is already approaching that of Twitter. It's an opportunity to watch a phenomenon happening right in front of us.

To play, you must install the application on your smartphone. The application doesn't come with instructions or have any manuals. It's free to play. You have to either experiment with the application to figure it out, or find a mentor who has used it before. The premise is that you start with nothing, and advance in the game by collecting, developing, or winning Pokémon characters, which you can find by walking around outdoors and consulting the game application.

What makes this game so appealing? One of Pokémon GO's innovations is that the Pokémon world is an overlay to our real world, with your phone showing you Pokémon that exist at particular places. You can visit new places to find particularly rare Pokémon. Another innovation is, that travelling at human-powered speeds by walking or biking in the physical world can reward the player with additional Pokémon opportunities. Once you have gained experience, you can also join a team or battle other players in particular places to achieve higher status and more Pokémon.

Pokémon GO has recaptured the interest of many previous Pokémon players who thought themselves too old to be playing Pokémon. Anecdotal information indicates that nostalgia for past Pokémon fun, combined with the perceived virtuosity of walking or running to find characters makes it okay to play again as an adult. Of course, there are already [reports of people cheating](#) by driving in cars, flying drones, or using other techniques that are viewed as unethical.

Aspects of the game have analogues in our hobby -- we generally start with no experience, and then learn by doing, sometimes with the help of a mentor. We might always be on the quest for our next DX entity, or that next multiplier. We develop skills that allow us to best other players in pileups or in contests. We can compete by travelling to particular locations that give us an advantage, like grids, mountaintops, or rare multipliers. We can compete singly, but we can also team to achieve. Also similar -- the original Pokémon was viewed as "moribund" until the new GO version appeared. Pokémon has reinvented itself through use of technology and modern engagement metaphors. Pokémon is not just a card game anymore. Some new players will never touch a card.

Radio contesters have continuously drawn upon new technology and techniques to compete more effectively. That contest sponsors in general don't offer modern features like on-demand contests, instantaneous and continuous scoring, and faster turnaround of contest results makes us appear quaint. But will it still be radio contesting if players of the future don't have to physically touch a radio?

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