



South African Radio League

Amateur Radio Hall of Fame

Bernie van der Walt, ZS4TX

Inducted in 2017



Bernie was born in 1966 and licenced as ZS4TX in 1983. He runs a telecommunications company in Bloemfontein. He is an active DXer and Contester and has participated in the World Radiosport Team Championship four times since 2000.

Bernie has a history of technological innovation that has helped South Africa to stand proud in the world of contesting.

In 2000, the ZS4TX Super Combo Keyer became a world first, with Morse and voice keyers in a single enclosure. The SCK-II of 2002 included full Single-Operator Two Radio (SO2R) capability, and was used by several world-beating contesters.

The success of the Combination Keyer and Bernie's experience in station building prompted Alex Teimurazov, 4L5A to contract Bernie in 2004 to upgrade the D4B super contest station on St Vincent Island, Cape Verde with the design based on his SO2R device. Alex personally, and later the new Italian owners of the station, dominated several major contests from the station in the following decade.

Bernie was also instrumental in the development of the ZS9X contest station on the outskirts of Bloemfontein. Together with ZS4S, ZS4U, ZS4BS, ZS4JAN and ZS4RY, they set new local standards for station building and Multi-Operator Two-Transmitter contesting in South Africa. The ZS9X station has been host to international visitors that wanted to experience operating from South Africa. Since 2006, Bernie has maintained the station and hosted efforts by Bernie himself and by guest operators during many CW and Phone contests.

Bernie also designed, built and sponsored the antennas for 40 to 10 m for the March 2005 FT5XO DXpedition to Kerguelen Island in the South Atlantic. Bernie specially customised and ruggedised the antennas for use in the harsh Southern Indian Ocean climate. The FT5XO expedition made 67 943 contacts in 11 days and was awarded the DXpedition of the Year for 2015 by the Southwest Ohio DX Association, sponsors of the famous Dayton Hamvention.

Realising that residential restrictions will increasingly restrict amateur radio activities, Bernie has experimented extensively with remote station operations. After a year of testing hardware configurations from a residential site in Hoedspruit, he installed the first unattended permanent remote VHF station on a high site at Dongola Kop in the Limpopo Province. The results achieved on 50 MHz from this site contributed widely to the knowledge of the extent of the TEP Zone in southern Africa South Africa at moderate solar activity.

Bernie regularly supports local radio amateurs with his knowledge in station building, maintenance and operating.

Bernie is a leading DXer and contester in southern Africa. He was the second South African to achieve 10 Band DXCC. He is the only South African with 9 Band Worked All States and with Worked All Zones on 1,8 MHz. He has a score of over 2 500 on the DXCC Challenge, ranking him second in the southern hemisphere.



Bernie holds a variety of contest records from Zone 38. He also holds the European single-operator record in the CQ World Wide RTTY Contest, from CR2X in the Azores.

Bernie has recently been active on EME, including recent activity from Lesotho and Mauritius.

