

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB - FRIENDSHIP NATIONAL

The Irish National Flying Club Friendship National was flown from Quimper in France on Friday 12 July. The birds were liberated at 6.15am in a light variable wind, and that was the way it was en route home as well. The difficulty with the race was the intense heat as this turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year. At the end of the first day there were 22 birds timed with 89 birds recorded in race time. Despite the difficult season the entry was significantly up on last year with 271 members sending 1,108 birds compared to 227 members and 818 birds in 2012. The birds were racing for £5232 in pools and prizemoney with the Friendship National once again sponsored by Versele-Laga.

1st North section, 1st Open Malachy Maguire & Son Millvale, Vel 1203; Flying 437 miles, winning £901 and the Friendship Cup

The winners of the Friendship National this year are Malachy Maguire & Son from the Millvale club in Newry. The partnership of Malachy and Mark need no introduction as they are household names. They are previous winners of this race having taken 1st and 2nd Open in 1997 when they had two birds together. They are also former winners of the NIPA National from Fougeres when they had the only bird on the day, their now famous 'Home Alone'. When news filtered through that they had timed here at 4.56pm everybody knew that this would be the one to beat and as the evening wore on it became clear that this would be the winner. Malachy and Mark went on to time another one (a nest mate of the first one) at 7.56am on the second morning to take 32nd Open. The third of their 7 entries arrived on the fourth morning and just missed out on an Open position. This was an exciting week for Malachy and Mark as Mark also races with his own son and they were 10th Open King's Cup the previous week.

The winning pigeon is a two-year-old hen that is down from both 'Home Alone' and 'Portavogie Lass' (the only bird into Ireland in 1996 from Dinard for Palmer & Young, Portavogie). The breeding is Jan Arden based and contains Van der Wegan, Van Geels, and De Kuyper Van Geel. The pigeons got very little racing last year due to work commitments but this hen was certainly raced well this year. In the six weeks prior to this race she flew both Talbennys, Clonmel, Penzance and the difficult Portland. She was sitting on her first ever young bird when sent to this race. Malachy explained to me that their system is neither really widowhood nor roundabout but more a 'Separation' system that suits the long hours they work. They train their birds privately with the Dundalk transporter to Bray or Arklow and when not training they are locked out for 3-4 hours to ensure they get adequate flying.

2nd North section, 2nd Open A & N Lewis Doagh & Dist, Vel 1183, Flying 472 miles, winning £694 and the British Barcelona Club Trophy

2nd Open this year are A & N Lewis Doagh and again this partnership have a terrific record at National level. In 2009 they were 4th Open Skibbereen Old Bird National and 7th Open Skibbereen Young Bird National to win the Gloria Hunniford Trophy, in 2011 they were 3rd Open Penzance Young Bird National and won the Jarvis Cup for Best Average Penzance and Skibbereen Young Bird Nationals. They have also had a couple of notable results within the NIPA having been 5th Open Lamballe in 2007, and 4th and 10th

Open St Malo in 2007. I get the feeling that it won't be long before Anthony and Norman hit that elusive number one spot.

Timing here at 5.57pm they were unaware of the winning pigeon and hadn't heard of any birds in the south so they knew that they wouldn't be far away. As detailed above they are becoming regular attendees at the prize table at the INFC Annual Dinner and Presentation of Prizes and this year they will have at least one new cup to collect. The pigeon at 2nd Open is a yearling hen, one of a kit of six purchased from Alan Darragh, Cullybackey. She contains the very best lines of Alan's distance stock. Raced as a darkened youngster last year she was first bird to the loft in her last four races last year, from Talbenny, Fermoy, Rosscarbery, and Skibbereen. This hen now named 'Lily' was raced on roundabout this year and had three inland races but returned from Clonmel injured. She was given time to recover and then went to 1st Talbenny and the Yearling National. She was then paired up with the Friendship national in mind and was sent to the race sitting 10 days on eggs. She was trained with the young birds regularly up to 20 miles.

3rd North Section 3rd Open M Wilkinson Wilton Cross, Vel 1170, Flying 455 miles, winning £423

In 3rd place it is Maurice Wilkinson who follows on from the success of the previous week in the King's Cup when he was 8th Open with another great performance from France. Bear in mind that Maurice won the King's Cup from Messac in 2005 and you can see the quality of fancier we are talking about here. The pigeon timed from Quimper is a two-year-old blue cock which was feeding a seven-day-old young bird. The breeding of this cock is almost identical to Maurice's King's Cup pigeon being a grandson of his 2005 King's Cup winner and Ron Williamson's 'Lady Helen', the only bird on the second day from the Friendship National in 2004. 'Lady Helen's bloodlines are in Ron Williamson's King's Cup winner, in C & H Beattie's bird that was 2nd in the King's Cup and also in Maurice's bird at 8th Open King's Cup.

In 2012 this cock was 149th Open in the INFC Yearling National and this year he had flown Skibbereen, Rosscarbery and 1st Talbenny plus regular training with Ivan Mawhinney and a number of private tosses from Belfast. Maurice is primarily interested in the longer races and has cultivated a family of pigeons which can perform with great consistency from these events. It's worth noting that in a race that saw only 89 birds home in race time Maurice timed a second bird, a pied hen to take 49th Open.

4th North section, 4th Open Friendship National P & C Swindell Newry City, Vel 1164, flying 443 miles, winning £60

Paul and Courtney (aged 9) Swindell started flying from France in 2010 with Newry City Pigeon Club and for the second year running have had a fantastic race result in the Friendship national from Quimper. Last year they were 2nd, 10th and 74th Open while this year they are 4th, 37th and 42nd Open. They had a superb race last week in the King's Cup taking 26th, 75th, 83rd, 104th and 120th Open. Their 4th Open bird, now called 'Extreme Heat' is a homebred latebred dark chequer cock. When Paul was asked about his regime for preparing for French races he said that this is his system – he doesn't train young birds but lets them grow out and mature naturally. Training started after the third Old Bird race of the season and

was gradually built up as follows, 2 tosses from 4 miles, 2 tosses from 6 miles, 2 tosses from 10 miles, per day, and finally on days 5 and 6 a toss from Malahide, approximately 45 miles. They were then split cocks and hens, trained and sent to the races separately. At this early stage they are fed on Frazer's Four Season mix right up to 2nd Talbenny when all pigeons are allowed to pair up as they are into preparation for the French races.

Their fourth National winner is out of a home bred stock bird from 2011 that Paul has called 'The Policeman 999'. The dam is a half sister to the dam of last year's 2nd National bird 'Queen of the Rain', down from a hen that flew Barcelona International 4 times at 846 miles. Paul insists his best producing birds from France are bred down from stock from Dave Goddard, Tom Marshall, David black, Malachy Maguire and Ken Ambrose. Paul would like to pass on his congratulations to all winners with the INFC this year, outstanding performances by everyone in such a difficult race season.

5th North section, 5th Open W Corrigan Loughall, Vel 1083, Flying 456 miles, winning £60

In 5th Open is another loft that likes to have a go at the longer races and has a wonderful record in the Nationals, that of W Corrigan Loughall. Last week saw Willie 160th North section, 187th Open from the King's Cup and two years ago Willie was the winner of a coveted Triple Crown award for timing the same pigeon in the result in successive years from Penzance Young National, Yearling National and King's Cup. Willie had another great race here with three birds in the result with the other two taking 12th and 35th Open, remembering that only 89 birds were timed in race time. The bird timed at 5th Open is a two-year-old blue cheq pied hen sent sitting on a large young bird that was almost ready for weaning. This hen had four or five inland races and one channel race in preparation for Quimper with very little training in between. The breeding is from Willie's own distance family while feeding is just the standard mixture with clean water a necessity.

6th and 7th North section, 6th and 7th Open K Carolan Coalisland, Vels 1053, 1031; Flying 465miles, winning £263 and £263 and the Henry Beattie & Son Trophy for best 2 bird average

We move to the Coalisland club for the next two pigeons in the result to the loft of Kevin Carolan. This is another loft with a tremendous record at distance racing. He has won from St Malo twice with the NIPA in 2006 and 2009 and was 2nd Open in the Friendship National in 2005. Kevin timed his two birds here at 7.13pm and 7.29pm out of an entry of six birds and had another one the next day to take 46th Open. The week previous to this race Kevin was 99th Open King's Cup.

Kevin's first pigeon is an eight-year-old black hen that was 20th Open St Malo with the NIPA in 2007 and was then in the stock loft for three years but she was always slow to lay and Kevin felt she wasn't laying enough to merit staying there so she was put back on the road this year. Kevin intended to send her back to St Malo but as she was slow to lay again, he had to send her to the Friendship National instead. She is a black Busschaert with the sire from Henry McLaughlin and is a grandson of 'Slimmin'. The dam was bought at the King's Hall Charity Sale and it is a daughter of Jackie Patience's 1995 King's Cup winner. This year this bird had four inland races and 2nd Talbenny.

Kevin's second pigeon is a two-year-old blue cheq cock. His sire is a grandson of 'Slimmin' while the dam is a Harthog also from Henry McLaughlin. It is interesting to note that the bird that was 2nd Open Friendship National in 2005 was also a Harthog from Henry McLaughlin. This bird had similar races to Kevin's first one but had Penzance as well. This one was always a steady racer and raced through to Penzance as a yearling as Kevin likes all his yearlings to go as far as Penzance. Both birds got very little training after their last race as Kevin goes to work very early but he gets home again around lunch time when the birds are flown for an hour. The birds are paired the first week in February and are kept natural during the racing season. He likes May reared young birds and finds that they go well if you get them through the first year. Feeding is a basic all round mix from Henry McLaughlin.

8th North section, 8th Open N Black & Son Dromara, Vel 1004, Flying 450 miles, winning £147

In 8th Open is a loft with a tremendous record at National level, previous King's Cup winners and National Champions for the last two years, N.Black & Son Dromara. They have been 3rd, 13th and 8th in the Friendship National race this last 3 years. They had another one in the result here at 40th Open, which wins a Triple Award for 3 times in the result in the Friendship race. They were 55th and 81st in the King's Cup this year. The bird timed in the Friendship National this year is a two-year-old blue cheq hen sent sitting a one day young bird. She had four inland races where she was first bird to the loft from Clonmel, plus 1st Talbenny and Penzance where she was 2nd club. She had three or four tosses after Penzance from 40 miles. Her sire is a son of the loft's "Annie Mary", who was 4th and 8th Open King's Cup while the dam is a daughter of "Big Darren", the loft's Gold Medal winner. The feeding is all Frazers, basically Continental Widowhood and Energy Mix with all the supplements.

9th North section, 9th Open C & L Woodside Ballyclare, Vel 1003, Flying 473 miles, winning £147

In 9th Open is another loft with a tremendous record at National record level, that of C. & L. Woodside, Ballyclare, previous National Champions and Young Bird National winners from Penzance. They too timed another one in this race to take 70th Open. The week previous in the King's Cup race Leslie was 14th, 197th and 200th Open with his third bird winning a Hall of Fame award. Leslie timed a yearling blue w/f cock here sent sitting eggs 6 days. He had 4 or 5 inland races and the Yearling National from Sennen Cove in preparation for Quimper plus a few more tosses. In fact his nest mate was Leslie's timer in the Yearling National race. His sire is from Wilf Reed, Monmouth and the dam is Leslie's Penzance YB National winner a Romain Legiest Janssen. The feeding is Frazer's Breed and Wean supreme.

10th North section, 10th Open L Magee & Son Lisburn & Dist, Vel 956, Flying 456 miles, winning £147

No details available on this one at time of going to press but I will report on it when available

I would like to thank Clifford Browne and Davy Black for their help in completing this report and all who helped with photographs. Thanks also to all who helped at the marking centre and the clock stations, and thanks again to Versele Laga for their continued sponsorship of this race.

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer