

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB YEARLING NATIONAL SENNEN COVE

The Irish National Flying Club's Yearling National was held on Wednesday 11th June this year and everyone was surprised by the huge entry as the race followed a few difficult weeks races which saw many losses reported. I must say that it was one of the busiest afternoons that I have seen at the marking station in Lisburn with long queues for all the electronic systems.

In the end the overall entry was 886 members sending 5243 birds to compete for £37,692 in pools and prizes. This compares very favourably with last year when 800 members sent 4474 pigeons to compete for £34,852. The birds were liberated in Sennen Cove at 8.15am in a light south westerly wind. With the wind turning to a northerly direction at the home end the top ten positions in the Open are all in the South section, with 1st North section going to last year's King's Cup winner Ron Williamson. The race was sponsored by Bucktons Quality Racing Pigeon Foods and we are very grateful to them for their continued sponsorship of the race.

1st South section, 1st Open R Fewings Rathnew, Vel 1550.91, flying 201 miles, winning £2229 and the Nelson Corry Trophy

The winner of the Yearling National sponsored by Bucktons this year is Rathnew's Ron Fewings who had a superb race here with 4 birds in the result at 1st, 2nd, 128th and 130th Open winning over £2,855 in the process. With Ron's second bird taking second Open he will also be the winner of the Sam Buckley Memorial Cup for the best two bird average. Ron becomes the sixth member of his club to win a National and is a worthy addition to a list that includes, Gregory Bros Skibbereen 2002, Robert Duffy Yearling National 2004, J & J Merrigan Yearling National 2007, Moorehouse & Hayden King's Cup 2009, P & J Snell Yearling National 2012.

Ron himself has a great record at National level in recent years having been 3rd Open Young Bird National in 2012, 2nd South section Young Bird Skibbereen 2013 and 2nd South section Skibbereen Old Bird National 2014, but taking 1st and 2nd Open here certainly surpasses all his previous performances.

The winning pigeon is a Blue cock now known as 'Glenn's Lad' after Ron's brother Glenn who is a big help to him as he does all the training. When they start to come steady Glenn single tosses them as they feel that this makes them think for themselves. Glenn picks out about 20 young birds every year and this is one of his selections from last year so good picking Glenn. Ron's girlfriend Tracy is also keen on the pigeons and she too picks a few young birds and often pools them. Ron said she has done very well winning the pools a few times already this year in the club. 'Glenn's Lad' is from Ron's Number One stock pair. The sire is a Busschaert from Eamon Wright & Son, Lurgan. This cock has bred many winners at club level including the pigeon that was 2nd South section Skibbereen OB National this year. The dam is a Gaby Vandenabeele from Ron's good friend Brendan Doyle from Bray and is down from 'Going for Gold' and 'Benson'. 'Glenn's Lad' has been a very consistent racer and was 1st Club, 1st East Coast Fed from Owenahincha as a young bird. His nest mate dropped with him that day to take 2nd Fed with over 3000 birds competing. 'Glenn's Lad' has had all his best performances flying over 150 miles. He was raced on the roundabout up until he returned from Skibbereen and then was paired for the Yearling National and was sent sitting 9 days.

2nd South section, 2nd Open R Fewings Rathnew, Vel 1550.68, flying 201miles, winning £540

We stay with Ron for the 2nd Open bird which helps him win the Sam Buckley Memorial Cup for the best two-bird-average in the Yearling National. Arriving together there was only 2 seconds between them on the clock. Ron had 2 other birds in the result at 85th and 86th South section, 128th and 130th Open. The sire of the 2nd Open pigeon was purchased from Sheldon Leonard down from his Andrea Roodoffs pigeons while the mother is direct Kees Bosua from Holland. This bird now known as 'Skippy' s Dream' has always been a consistent racer, scoring at club level, learning her trade with this race in mind. She was raced roundabout up until the Bude race where her cock was lost. She was sent to the Yearling National flirting with a few different cocks which seems to have worked in her favour.

Ron started to race pigeons when he was 10 and won his first race when he was 13 years old which he says he will never forget. He continued to race until he was 18 but then went away to work. He returned to Rathnew in 2008 and when he built a new house in 2009 he decided to try the pigeons again. He found that a lot had changed in the intervening years but rose to the challenge of the changes that had taken place and has been very successful in that short time.

Ron told me that Paddy Snell has been a huge influence on him and the best advice Paddy gave him was not to race his best birds week after week.

3rd South section, 3rd Open Murphy Bros Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1534, flying 208 miles, winning £907

We move to Newtownkilpeddar for our third Open bird to the lofts of Murphy Bros. In just their third year racing they have a record at National level that any seasoned pigeon fancier would be proud of. In 2012 they were 4th South section Skibbereen OB National and 1st South section Skibbereen YB National. In 2013 they were 5th South section Skibbereen Young Bird National and this year they were 3rd South section Skibbereen OB National.

While the partnership started off with bothers Frankie, Terry, Willie and Craig this year it has been mainly Frankie with the help of his son Ross who are looking after the birds as the others have other commitments just at the moment. Frankie and Ross are at the lofts just after 6 most mornings when the roundabout birds are let out, the lofts cleaned out and the birds fed. Frankie tells me that some mornings he has to leave the traps open for the hens as they fly so long and he has to go on to work.

The pigeon at 3rd Open here is a nest mate of the bird that was 5th South section Skibbereen last year. The parents are stock birds bought from Gavin Morrison, Ballynahinch and are Karel Hermans x Van Koppens. A blue hen racing roundabout she was 14th South section in this year's Skibbereen OB National. Prior to this she had taken a few minor prizes as a young bird. In the week before the Yearling National Frankie gave the birds 4 or 5 short tosses per day from Rathnew (5 miles) from Monday to Thursday. Feeding is just the same as it was for Skibbereen with just a little bit extra fats in the last week before Sennen Cove.

4th South section, 4th Open P Byrne & Son Ballybrack, Vel 1530, flying 220 miles, winning £255

4th South section, 4th Open goes to Paul Byrne & Son from Ballybrack, just south of Dublin and a very strong pigeon club. When I was getting the details of this bird Paul asked that firstly to thank his wife Sarah and children Wesley, Mark and Callum for all their help and support, to his dad whose help and advice he would be lost without and to his good friend Tommy Gregory for bringing him up to the marking station with the birds for the race and to all who offered words of congratulations on this result.

Named after his wife, 'Sarah' is a Blue tip hen that was set up for the National sitting eggs between 18-20 days. She had 4 club races and this was her first channel race. She is Grondelaar x Van Loons. The Van Loon lines come from his good friend Jackie McMahon and the Grondelaar lines are a cross between his own and birds obtained from another good friend, Bill Davis. On the day of the race Paul had taken a half day off work, and had just settled in to get ready for the race when out of nowhere 'Sarah' appeared like a rocket hitting the board and straight on to her nest. Looking like she had just come home from a training toss and not a channel race 'Sarah' spent the rest of the day sitting on her eggs. Paul said that his dad always said "If its not broken don't fix it", so the feed is never broken down, and medication is the standard cocci, canker and worms at the beginning of the season. Paul believes that it's all about motivation after that.

5th South section, 5th Open Murphy Bros Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1529, flying 208 miles, winning £643

We go back to Murphy Bros for our 5th Open bird and the lads can count themselves very unlucky not to be picking up the Sam Buckley Memorial Cup. I don't recall anybody having two birds in the top 5 and not winning it. The Murphys had a great race here with 4 in the result and 11 home out of 13.

The bird at 5th Open has been named 'Forest Gump' by young Ross due to the way it flies incessantly for 3 or 4 hours morning and evening, in the same way that Forest was relentless about his running. A blue hen also on roundabout she was 5th to the loft out of Skibbereen OB National and has always been a steady racer never far away from the prizes. The sire of the one is again from Gavin Morrison, Ballynahinch while the dam is from Mickey Croskery Annsborough, through Gavin.

While we were talking Frankie said he thought it was very important to attract young members to the sport and he was delighted that Ross was showing such a keen interest and hopefully younger brothers Zaach and Olly will follow Ross into the sport.

Frankie asked me to thank Jason Byrne and Liam Paisley for all their help since they joined the club.

6th South section 6th Open P Rock & Son Skerries, Vel 1496, flying 232 miles, winning £185

6th South section, 6th Open goes to former King's Cup winners P Rock & Son from Skerries. Paddy and Martin had another great race here with other birds taking 16th South section, 16th Open and 143rd

South section, 283rd Open. As I mentioned above this would normally be good enough to win the best two bird average but on this occasion it only leaves them third for that award. Nevertheless this was a very rewarding race for them. They haven't rested on their laurels since winning the King's Cup in 1997 and have put up many fine performances since.

The pigeon timed here is a Cheq w/f widowhood cock. He started the season on the third race of the year and had the entire land programme with his last race before the National being the Pilmore Beach on 31st May. His sire is a son of the King's Cup winner when he was paired to his own daughter. The King's Cup winner was ½ Southwell through Ernie Deacon and ½ their own old stock. The dam was bred by A & N Lewis Doagh & District and was bought at the INFC Charity auction in 2011. The Rocks are grateful to the Lewis' for presenting the hen to the INFC.

They don't normally train after racing starts but as the birds were twice brought back from the race point this year they got a toss the following week. Feeding is a mixture of Frasers Fraserplus and Sandyhill Champion Plus.

Martin asked me to pass on their congratulations to Ron Fewings on winning the race.

7th South section, 7th Open T Doran & Sons Gorey, vel 1489, flying 181 miles, winning £282

The partnership of T Doran & Son are 7th South section, 7th Open and with another two birds at 34th South section, 38th Open, and 132nd South section, 247th Open this was a great race for them. The partnership was originally formed by Tom Doran and his sons 32 years ago but when Tom passed away the sons just retained the name. For the past three years Joey has been racing here on his own.

The pigeon timed here is a blue hen flying natural. She had reared 4 youngsters this year but was sent to this race just flying back to her cock. Her sire was bred by Joey's brother Peter who also races in Gorey and is an M & D Evans Vandenabeele. The dam is a bird that Joey was minding for a fellow club member Owen Dunbar who was sick at the time and was one that Owen had bought from Marco Brasspenning, Holland. The hen hadn't won any prizes prior to this so it was a good time to come good. She had three land races as far as Barleycove (169 miles) this year, and this was her first time on the channel.

Training is to 25 miles before racing and then for three weeks but just flown at home after that. Joey feeds Natural Finesse Light with a bit of Homoform added and they are not broken down at all. In concluding Joey asked me to congratulate everybody who did well in the race as there were some very good performances.

8th North section, 8th Open S Duran Blanchardstown, vel 1488, flying 229 miles, winning £1868

Safet Duran Blanchardstown is 8th South section, 8th Open this year, having also been 8th Open in 2012. Safet had another pigeon at 111th South section, 185th Open. Safet had six pigeons on the day and had the first Irish South Road Fed pigeon. The pigeon at 8th Open is a Cheq cock, 'Wingboy', as he came back with an injured wing. As a young bird he flew two channel races. This line of pigeon does well for Safet on the channel. His sire is a Robert Van Eycken and is a son of 'Stive', National winner from Bourges against 17,788 pigeons. Her dam is a Jan de Wijs, sister to 'Lindsay' one of the best racing pigeons from

Barcelona. She was 19th National Barcelona, 7520 birds. 16th Perpignan, 5294 birds. She is from 'De Barcelona', 19th National Barcelona, scoring 3 times out of 3 Barcelona races. 'Wingboy' is a full brother to 'Cleopatra', 39th Yearling National Sennen Cove, 4882 birds, 92nd Penzance YB National, 2437 birds, 108th Talbenny, 3000 birds. 'Cleopatra' is also dam of the pigeon that was 8th Open Yearling National in 2012 (4319 birds). This line of pigeon has won over £4500 in the Irish National Flying Club and is doing well in the Million Dollar race for Safet. 'Wingboy' was racing roundabout. Paired in January, he reared a pair of youngsters but he didn't want to take a nest box and Safet had to give him a nest on the floor beside the young bird section where he was last year. At the beginning of the season he got a wing injury after a hawk attack but recovered well after 4 weeks. Then he was trained and sent straight to the Skibbereen race and had 2 short races before the Yearling National. The pigeons were paired the day before basketing for the National and 'Wingboy' built a big nest with loads of straw and because he was so contented looking Safet chose him as his fancied pigeon.

Safet would like to thank his daughter Merjem for clocking the pigeons while he was at work and his friend Liam Donnelly for bringing his pigeons to Lisburn and his clock to Balbriggan.

9th South section, 9th Open P & S Harris & Ptrs Bray South End, vel 1485, flying 215 miles, winning £130

9th South section, 9th Open goes to the partnership of P & S Harris & Ptrs from the very strong Bray South End Club. The partnership is made up of Paul and Stephen Harris, Paul's wife Tracy and Stephen's son Stephen Junior who help out when needed. The pigeon timed here is a Cheq Pied hen and was sent to the National sitting eggs 10 days. While they race Busschaerts mostly this one is a pure Vandenabeele, from Brendan McCann of Bray. The Vandenabeeles were obtained to cross with the Busschaerts. The hen had most inland races this year. Training is with Eric Kennedy of Newtownkilpeddar and the pigeons are also flown around the loft. They had two more birds in the result here at 24th South section, 25th Open and 164th South section, 341st Open for a good day's racing.

The partnership has won the channel averages in the club for the past 5 or 6 years as they are more channel orientated. They were 15th Open East Coast Fed from a difficult Truro on the Saturday after the National so they are a loft in form. The Harris partnership are no strangers to success having won 1st Open Bude in East Coast Fed in 2009 and then 1st Open St Malo in 2012 but this is their best result to date at National level.

10th South section, 10th Open Willie Berns Gorey, vel 1484, flying 181 miles, winning £130 and the Charles Ingle Memorial Trophy for 10th Open Yearling National

We go back to the Gorey club for 10th South section, 10th Open to the lofts of Willie Berns. Another relative newcomer to the sport Willie has been racing for just seven years. There are many who have been racing pigeons a lifetime would love the opportunity to attend the Irish National Flying Club's annual prize night to collect a trophy. The pigeon timed at 10th Open is a Cheq Pied cock racing natural and sent to the race just paired to his hen. The sire is Jan Arden bought from Ian Axe at the Dublin Show

while the dam was a gift from Joe Reid Ballycarry and is a Janssen. He had six land races this year and improved as the races got longer.

Training is twice a week from 25 miles and is Tuesdays and either Wednesday or Thursday depending on the weather. Willie feeds light from Sunday to Wednesday and then the birds are given a high energy feed on Thursday and Friday.

I would like to thank everybody who helped with photographs for this report and to all the fanciers who give me an insight to their birds and racing methods

Brendan McLoughlin

INFC Press Officer