

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB

SKIBBEREEN OLD BIRD NATIONAL

The first of the 6 races organized by the Irish National Flying Club was held on Tuesday 27th May from Skibbereen in Co Cork. 466 members sent 4,293 birds to compete for £15,189 in pools and prizemoney. This was slightly up on last year's entry of 4,205 birds, which was encouraging as most organizations were racing on the day the birds were marked for the race. It was feared that this might deter some fanciers from rushing off to the marking station to send pigeons to the National but the Nationals are viewed as very important races in the calendar and nobody likes to miss them. As the result is divided into 3 sections I will cover the top 5 in the three sections in this article.

The birds were liberated at 8.45am in a light south-easterly wind, which is reflected in the velocities with the early pigeons in the North section doing velocities of over 1500 with the winners of the Middle section and the South section doing 1519 and 1477 respectively.

1st North Section, 1st Open, E & M Curran Armagh, Vel 1535, Flying 218 miles, winning £403 and the Ronnie Johnstone Challenge Cup

The winners of this year's Skibbereen Old Bird National are the father and son partnership of Eamon and Matthew Curran from the Armagh club. Eamon and Matthew began racing 14 years ago when Eamon who had been a long distance lorry driver gave that up. This is their second National win having won the Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2012. This is a great achievement for the partnership to join an elite band of dual National winners. Eamon had always been very friendly with Gerard Campbell and they followed a lot of pursuits together including fishing and shooting. I suppose it was inevitable that when Eamon was to find a bit more spare time that he would follow Gerard into the sport of pigeon racing. The winning pigeon here, a two-year-old blue cock, now known as 'The Postmaster' is a half brother of their 2012 National winner "The Postmistress". The breeding is $\frac{3}{4}$ Luc Geerinckx Soontjens and $\frac{1}{4}$ 'Vigo' on the sires side while the dam is a full Geerinckx Soontjens. The National winner has been in great form this year having been 2nd club, 10th section E, 33rd Open NIPA from Clonmel and then 3rd club, 28th section, 173rd Open from Roscrea. The birds are raced on the roundabout and trained regularly with Aaron Murtagh from Carrickmacross, Castleblaney or Ardee. Eamon told me that as they train hard they feed quite heavy, with a mixture of Versele Laga and a Cyril and Hilary Beattie mix combined. They get this twice a day, with a half an ounce given in the morning and an ounce in the evening.

The Curran family home is an old Post Office and Matthew is a postman and that is where the names of their two National winners come from.

In closing Eamon and Matthew asked me to thank all their club members for all their help and support over the past year with a special word of thanks to Aaron Murtagh.

2nd North section, A Craig Tandragee, Vel 1517, Flying 227 miles, winning £788

2nd in the North section and 3rd overall is Alan Craig of Tandragee although he tells me he used to live up in Belfast. Alan has been racing exceptionally well so far this season and a lot of his results are coming down from 9 widowhood cocks which have all been racing to the one small shed. All 9 of these cocks were raced lightly in 2013. Alan had 8 of them in year's Skibbereen National getting 7 of them on the day and the last one a few days later, well flown.

The bird Alan clocked in the National is a two-year-old blue cheq cock and he now has 4 club wins. A brother of this cock has a section winner to his credit, from the 5 Bird Mallow a couple of years ago. They are both Van Wildemeersch breeding from the late Bertie Fletcher & Son lofts. Alan said that it is hard to know how any bird will do on the day of a race but it was coming well so he had high hopes. As it was a Monday race Alan was at work so had to leave the loft ready and the ETS on in the hope of getting an early bird. He didn't see the pigeon come home but his birds usually trap well being widowhood cocks. Alan has 3 wins from the birds in this shed so far this season and hopes to enter 5 in the 5 Bird Mallow at the start of June.

Alan summed up what pigeon racing means to him by saying "The first I knew I might have a good one was when I went to the Centre. This is what pigeon racing is all about. High hopes and expectations, and it's what keeps me trying to do better."

3rd North section, J Carson & Son Corcreeny, Vel 1514.3, Flying 234 miles, winning £300

3rd North section is the Corcreeny Lofts of Jim Carson & Son, who timed a yearling blue hen which was racing natural. She was sitting on eggs 10 days and this hen has been consistent racing hen for the partnership having been timed before. Her sire was bought at the Blackpool Show from Ian Gibb and is a son of John Patterson's 147, and it was this cock paired to a Soontjens hen of Capper Bros that produced this blue hen. Jim has had four birds of these bloodlines to score in either the Yearling National or Skibbereen and was high in praise of them and also birds he had from the late Maurice Wilkinson. To prepare them for this race Jim trained them on the trailer with Ivan Mawhinney regularly. With the Yearling National only a short while away the loft of J Carson & Son are looking forward eagerly to this next National race.

4th North section, P & J Boal Dromore, Vel 1504, Flying 238 miles, winning £563

Philip and Joe Boal from Dromore are 4th North section here and this is another superb performance for them having been 1st and 3rd North section in this race last year. They have two more in the result here at 44th and 171st North section for a good day's racing.

The pigeon timed at 4th North section here is a blue cheq yearling hen racing on the roundabout. The sire is a Willy Van Herck cock while the dam is a direct Leo Heremans, a daughter of 'De Power', a son of 'Olimpiade'. The pigeon at 4th section is a cousin of Rea and Magill's winner of the NIPA's Young Bird Talbenny. The hen herself has a great record having been 2nd Club, beaten by a loft mate, 4th section D, 14th Open NIPA (13,884 birds). She then was 2nd Club again, and again beaten by a loft mate, 14th Section D and 25th NIPA in their Yearling Hens National (1859 Birds).

Philip and Joe never train after the first race and are flown only once a day around the lofts due to Philip's work commitments. A typical day sees Philip at the loft at 5am and on the evening I spoke to him he had just come in after 10pm. That's the type of dedication that keeps you at the top. Feeding is 100% Van Robaeys all year round.

5th North section P Hope Edgarstown, Vel 1501, Flying 237 miles, winning £120

5th North section is Paul Hope also in the Mid Ulster area who races in the Edgarstown club. Paul timed a two-year-old blue hen which was being raced Roundabout and she had been in most of the Inland races earlier this year and had always been a steady racer but Paul tells me that she has also been very unfortunate as a number of ETS rings have failed with her so it was good that this problem was resolved. The hen is bred down of a pair of birds from Jeffrey Greenaway and Paul was full of praise for these Greenaway pigeons.

1st Middle Section P McFadden Monaghan, Vel 1519, Flying 205 miles, winning £181 and the Gerard Delaney Trophy for the best Velocity in the Sections not winning the Open

First Middle section and second overall goes to Monaghan's Patrick McFadden who has featured regularly in the National reports in recent years. Last year he was 4th, 29th and 36th Middle section in Skibbereen YB National, and was 2nd Middle section in 2012. He completes another successful National race here with 6 birds in the Middle section result at 1st, 6th, 7th, 16th, 22nd and 34th

The sire, a Soontjens from K & B Smyth, Skegness is himself a Section winner with the NIPA having been 1st club, 1st section, 3rd Open Roscrea YB in 2012. He was also 4th club, 4th section Tullamore YBs last year, in a race where Patrick had the top seven in the section with another 7 in the result. The dam is a Louella Eagleson Busschaert x Peter Van de Mewre.

The yearling cock winning the section, had one race with the Middle Route club from Mullingar, the bad Clonmel and then into the Skibbereen National. He wasn't paired at the beginning of the year and was in a loft of spare cocks but had mated to one of the other cocks and was very keen. Feeding is depurative and then built up with Beattie's Champion Supreme from Wednesday. The only other thing they are given is cider vinegar in the water.

2nd Middle Section A Marsella Newbridge Vel 1494, Flying 164miles, winning £187

Second Middle section is Angelo Marsela from the Newbridge club with a three-year-old widowhood cock. This was a great result for Angelo as he had only two birds in the race. The same pigeon was 19th section in this race last year, and then was 1st club from Skibbereen and its no surprise to hear that this cock is now known as the “Skibbereen Cock”. Angelo originally raced in Tallaght before joining the Newbridge club in 1995. “The Skibbereen Cock”’s first race this year was Macroom (134 miles) where he won the Nom in the Mid Leinster Fed and then Bantry (165 miles). Angelo started the season with 39 widowhood cocks and didn’t breed from the racers this year at all.

The sire is a Janssen bred by his good friend Damian Farrell, while the dam is from Roly and Rocca and is from the late Terence O’Brien pigeons.

Feeding is Geryplus and Versele Laga Champion Plus.

Angelo asked me to thank all the lads in Newbridge for all their help and support.

3rd & 4th Middle Section S Duran Blanchardstown, 1492, 1491, Flying 174 miles, winning £112

3rd and 4th Middle section is Safet Duran Blanchardstown who had a wonderful race here with 8 pigeons in the result at 3rd, 4th, 13th, 15th, 26th, 27th, 32nd and 33rd Middle section, having the first two pigeons in the Irish South Road Fed. Safet was 3rd section in this race in 2012 and followed that with 7th section, 8th Open Yearling National, and I know he is going to the Yearling National with another good team. Safet came to Ireland 14 years ago but has only been racing pigeons for seven years with a lot of success. Back home in Bosnia he had kept some pigeons but these were mostly tipplers but he received good help from his club mates, in particular Liam Donnelly and he has is now the man to beat in the competitive Blanchardstown club.

The pigeon at 3rd section here is a blue yearling hen ‘Splitbone’, flying on the roundabout. As a young bird she was 2nd Mallow with 466 birds competing. This year she was 3rd club, 211st Fed with 7,313

Birds competing. Her nest sister was 1st club, 72nd Fed (9991 birds). She is the half sister to 3rd Middle section, 20th National Skibbereen (4227 birds). She is also half sister to many winners. Her dam is an Eijerkamp Janssen hen, a great breeding hen. She has bred many birds to score at club, Fed and National level. She has bred winners with every cock she has been paired to. The sire of the 3rd section bird here is ‘Blue Power’ bred by Davy Hutchinson, Ashfield. He is the direct son of ‘Nenagh Cock’, a top racing and breeding cock, winner of 1st Section, 1st Open NIPA from Nenagh, 147 miles (23,000+ birds). His dam is ‘Classy Lass’ 1st Section, 2nd Open Penzance in a strong northwest wind.

The 4th section pigeon is another blue hen, ‘Blue Angel’. Her nest sister was 13th Section in this race. Her sire is a Van Loon going back to Van Loon’s number one pair. He is a very good racer winning 3 club races and with many club, section and National positions. He was 33rd Fed (10,227 birds). This line of pigeons does well in all types of wind and have performed well from the first race right through to the King’s Cup. The dam was bred by Ron Williamson from his racing team. This hen has won 3 club races and scored at club, Fed and National level. She was 27th Open Barley Cove (3410 birds), 112th Fed (10,135), 17th Section, 64th Open Skibbereen National (4227 birds).

The pigeons were sent to Skibbereen on a roundabout system and are trained on a daily basis from 30 miles. One week before the Skibbereen National the birds were fed as much as they wanted with Beattie’s Champion Supreme. On top of this after every training toss they were a mix of Versele Laga Energy and Geryplus with a bit of hemp. The last two days before basketing they were getting only Versele Energy Plus mixed with Gerryplus and a bit of hemp, grit and homoform mixed with red band given fresh every day.

Safet would like to thank his sister Zumreta and his daughter Merjem for clocking the pigeons from the National, and his very good friend Liam Donnelly for taking the pigeons to Lisburn and his clock to Balbriggan.

5th Middle Section P Coughlan Monaghan Vel 1477, Flying 208 miles, winning £67

We go back to Monaghan for 5th Middle Section to the lofts of Packie Coughlan. This is another loft that has been in the National results before having been 1st Section in the Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2012.

The pigeon timed here is a three-year-old blue Pied hen racing celibate. The sire is Nauwaelarts and was 12th section in the same race last year and is also related to the pigeon that was 1st section in 2012. The dam is Nauwaelarts x Packie’s old Janssen breeding.

This loft is certainly in form at the moment having been 1st and 2nd Club Bude the weekend following the Skibbereen National race, and had another one in the result here at 39th Middle section. Packie's birds don't get any training after the racing starts but are flown around the house morning and evening. Feeding is Beattie's Champion Supreme with a little bit of barley added. They get the same all week from Saturday to Saturday with only a little homoform added. Packie asked me to congratulate his clubmate P McFadden on winning the section in this race

1st South Section S Shannon Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1477; Flying 171 miles, winning £75

1st South section and winner of a Framed Diploma is the Newtownkilpeddar lofts of Sean Shannon and his son Thomas. This loft was in a great run of form in and around the time of the National. They were 2nd club Talbenny on the Saturday before then 1st club, 1st South section here, and followed that with another 2nd club, this time from Pilmore Beach and then from Bude they were 1st club, 2nd station, 4th Open East Coast Fed winning 700 Euros. The section winner from the National is a two-year-old blue W/F hen; now known as 'Poppy's Choice' after Sean's first granddaughter who is only 4 months old.

Her dam is Soontjens x Van Reet from Gregory Bros and is a full cousin of their bird at 5th South section in this result. The sire was a gift from Frankie Doyle & Family and is a Busschaert. 'Poppy's Choice' was a late bred in 2012 and only raced lightly. Last year she was 3rd club Owenahincha and this year she was 4th club Pilmore Beach winning the pools in the process. The pigeon that was 4th Open from Bude is the same way bred. Thomas does most of the training himself and takes Frankie Doyle's pigeons with him. Cocks and hens are trained on alternate days from Cortown Harbour (35 miles). This is Sean and Thomas' first year on the roundabout and it is proving very successful for them. Feeding is a mix of Natural corn from Sheldon Leonard.

2nd South Section R Fewings Rathnew, Vel 1474, Flying 167 miles, winning £128

2nd South section this year is Rathnew's Ron Fewings and its no coincidence that the same names appear over and over again in results. Over the past couple of years Ron has been 2nd section Young Bird Skibbereen in 2013, and 3rd section, 3rd Open Penzance Young Bird National in 2012.

The sire of the two-year-old hen timed here to the 'Westview Lofts' is a Busschaert from Eamon Wright and Son Lurgan that has bred 4 winners for Ron. The dam is direct Andre Roodhofs which Ron bought while visiting Belgium with his good friend Sheldon Leonard. This hen has always been a steady racer and in the Yearling National from Sennen Cove last year she was 7th South Section, 14th Open. She was sent to this race flying on the roundabout but was paired after this for channel racing. Ron had two other birds in the result here at 10th and 20th South section.

Ron uses the Natural products from Sheldon Leonard. Early in the week they are given a light Professional mix and a heavier mix coming up to the channel racing. They are then given a light depurative Saturdays and Sundays with half and half on Monday and heavier for the rest of the week.

3rd South Section Murphy Bros Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1469, flying 170 miles, winning £80

This partnership is made up of brothers Frankie, Terry, Willie and Craig and was only formed 3 years ago. This year it has been mostly Frankie and his son Ross who are looking after the birds due to other commitments. They have named their lofts as 'Magpie Lofts' after their local football club. They started the Old Bird season in 2012 with 7 birds and managed to take a superb 4th South section in the Old Bird Skibbereen National. They followed that up with 1st South section in the Young Bird National from Skibbereen. They were then 6th South section last year in the Skibbereen YB National so a terrific start for them. In the Old Bird national this year they have another three in the result at 14th, 15th and 18th south section.

The pigeon timed here at 3rd section is a yearling chequer hen from their number one stock pair. The sire was a gift from Willie and John Smullen, Rathnew and is a Busschaert. The dam is a Van Dyke x Koopman from Syndicate Lofts. They had 6 youngsters out of this pair last year and still have 5 of them. This hen had a couple of minor cards as a young bird and has been 1st club 13th East Coast Fed from Tramore this year. Racing on the roundabout she lost her partner early in the season but had just started to show an interest in another cock. Frankie tells me that this hen just loves her nest. The birds are given 5/6 tosses before racing with Eric Kennedy. While they continue to train the cocks the hens fly an hour morning and evening

around home. The hens had every race down land except the Saturday before the National. Feeding is just a light feed of homoform and groats in the morning and Merrimans French Petite in the evenings. Frankie asked me to thank Liam Paisley, Jason Byrne and all the lads in the club for all their help and Willie and John Smullen for the gift of the sire of the pigeon timed here.

4th South Section Massey & Duffy Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1453, Flying 171 miles, Winning £35

Massey & Duffy Newtownkilpeddar are 4th South section. This partnership is Alan Massey and Philip Duffy. Alan had raced about 20 years ago and rejoined the Newtownkilpeddar club in 2011. Late 2011 he was going to Larne to collect a loft and asked Philip to go with him and from there the partnership was formed. Alan is a gamekeeper by trade while Philip is one of his breeders. They were particularly thrilled last year when in their first attempt at the King's Cup they had two in the result. They had also been 104th Open in the Yearling National so a great start for them at National racing.

The pigeon timed here is a two-year-old blue cock, bred from a pair from Corcoran & Keegan, Barrow Valley. He was raced as a Natural young bird and also natural as a yearling. This year he has been racing on roundabout and has been quite steady. Training is usually single or double ups but they also train with Eric Kennedy. Feeding is a mixture of two widowhood mixes and a few peanuts are added as the season goes on. They don't break the birds down at all during the week. They started the season with 20 pairs on roundabout and 25 pairs on natural.

Alan and Philip asked me to thank the following who have been a great help to them since they started, Liam McCall, Pat Lambert, Tommy Speers, Gregory Bros, Gary Hughes, and the O'Reilly family.

5th South section Gregory Bros Rathnew, Vel 1434, Flying 167 miles, winning £43

5th South section are Gregory Bros Rathnew who need no introduction at all having been previous winners of the Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2002, and winners of the South section in the Old Bird National from Skibbereen in 2012 when they were also second. In 2012 they were also 5th South section in the Young Bird National from Skibbereen and it is the very same pigeon that is 5th South section here again. The pigeon timed is the same way bred as the section winner from the Old Bird National in 2012. The sire is a Staf Van Reet from Jeff Greenaway, Dromore while the dam is Delbar/Jan Arden with a touch of Soontjens and Staf Van Reet. A full sister was clocked in the King's Cup in 2009 and a cousin was 6th Open Friendship National in 2011. The dam has bred 12 winners with 3 different cocks. She is a full sister of the 2007 Yearling National winner for J & J Merrigan, Rathnew. These bloodlines go all the way back to 'Hercules', a Delbar/Jan Arden cock. This two-year-old hen has won a few races in between her two 5th South sections including another win from Skibbereen. Tommy and Roger were 6th South section here as well and the same two hens dropped together from Owenahincha to take 1st and 3rd club, 1st and 3rd East Coast Fed this year. The South section winner for Sean Shannon is a cousin of their 5th south section hen.

The committee of the Irish National Flying Club would like to thank all those who helped at the marking station and all who helped at the clock centres. Thanks to Clifford Browne for his help in completing this report and to all who helped with photographs.

Brendan McLoughlin
INFC Press Officer

