

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB NATIONAL

SKIBBEREEN YOUNG BIRD

The curtain came down on the 2014 racing season when the Irish National Flying Club held their Young Bird Inland National from Skibbereen in Co Cork on Sunday 21st. 352 members sent 3075 birds to compete for £11,981 in pools and prizemoney. This was slightly up on last year's entry which may just have been due to last year's race having been brought forward to the Friday. Coupled with this the young bird racing was generally better overall this year. As with the Old Bird National the race was divided into 3 sections and I will cover the top 5 in each section in this article.

The birds were liberated at 10.30am in calm conditions and on route the wind was to turn variable. With glorious sunshine throughout the day it was a perfect day for a race. Rain in and around the Cork area on Saturday morning prevented a Saturday race on this occasion.

1st North Section, 1st Open, D Irvine Harmony, Vel 1476, Flying 246 miles, winning £303 and the Tom Marshall Trophy

The winner of this year's Skibbereen Young Bird National is Dennis Irvine of the Harmony club, in Ballynahinch in Co Down. Dennis lives in Derriaghly and raced in the Fortfield club in the Ulster Fed until this year when he switched to the newly formed Harmony club. It has been a very successful move for Dennis as he has had a great year's racing and what a way to finish it off by winning 1st North section, 1st Open Irish National Flying Club. The winning pigeon is a blue white flight hen sent sitting on a 10 day old youngster. Breeding is Hereman-Ceusters with the dam being bought at the Dublin Show from Syndicate Lofts. The sire is from Gordon Parker, Hillsborough and Maze and contains a lot of Hereman-Ceusters from Syndicate Lofts with a touch of 'Drum' from Marije Vinks added. This bird had been showing a bit of form having been 15th Open NIPA from Fermoy two weeks prior to this race. She was also 3rd section, 5th Open in the NIPA 5 Bird race on the same day.

Training is with John Abernethy two or three times a week especially at the beginning of the season but as the races get longer Dennis tends to train just on either the Tuesday or Wednesday. This bird had every race this year except for the weekend of the Talbenny race when she was rested. Feeding is Tilburg from Henry McLaughlin, Coalisland. This was a super race for Dennis with three other birds in the result taking 48th, 68th and 138th North section.

2nd North section, D Calvin Bondhill, Vel 1461, Flying 230 miles, winning £722

We move to the Bondhill club for 2nd North section to the lofts of David Calvin, a loft that has been in tremendous form all year. A few weeks prior to the Skibbereen National David was 1st section, 13th Open NIPA Talbenny and then in the week before the National he was 3rd section, 3rd Open, 6th section, 6th Open, 7th section, 7th Open and 11th section, 20th Open NIPA Roscarberry. The pigeon timed here is a mealy cock that was racing to the perch. The breeding is Van Lock who was an uncle of Luc Gearing. David has been working on this family for 13 years with a very odd cross and by this stage they are very much his own family. They are mostly reds and mealies and the base hen was a mealy hen responsible for many winners at club, NIPA and National level. This turned out to be a super race for David with three other birds in the result taking 31st, 132nd and 138th North section. David uses a mixture of private training and transporter training with Ron Williamson two or three times a week. Feeding is all from Frazers Animal Feeds. David has a great record at National level and has had many great results particularly from the Young Bird Channel National from Penzance.

3rd & 4th North section, Mr & Mrs G Delaney Dromore, Vel 1434.77 & 1434.77, Flying 234 miles, winning £865

Mr and Mrs Gerald Delaney Dromore, another well known pigeon partnership are 3rd and 4th North section and what a terrific record they have from this race. They have won the North section five times from this race. In a record that goes back for years they were 1st Open NIPA in 1980 from Skibbereen and then the following week won 1st Open Irish National Flying Club from the same race point. Gerald and Pat were 4th section from Roscarberry with the NIPA the week before this year's National race so the loft was in form.

Both pigeons are Willy Jacobs x Jan Grondelaers, which they bred themselves at the Oroory Hill Stud. Both birds arrived together and were timed on the same second. The pigeon taking third North section is a chequer hen while the bird at fourth section is a blue w/f cock. They were both sent to this race sitting on big young birds. The Delaneys hadn't planned on sending to this race this year as their young birds weren't right on the darkness this year so were well up their wing. As a result they hadn't been out following the Roscarberry race until the Thursday morning when they were let out for a bath. They showed such good form that they decided to send and are glad they did. Gerald and Pat had five birds in the result altogether at 3rd, 4th, 52nd, 100th and 156th North section. These young birds had only three races this year with their first race being from Clonmel. Prior to this they had four tosses to the border and four tosses to Ardee. After this they had very little training. Feeding is all from Frazers Animal Feeds and they are given Natural Herbal Products from Blue Sky, Newry plus Frazer products. They are never given any antibiotics.

5th North section J Smyth & Sons Drumnaddy, Vel 1433, Flying 229 miles, winning £246

5th North section is Joe Smyth and his sons David and Andrew from the Drumnaddy club, just outside Banbridge in Co Down. This is another loft that has enjoyed a terrific years racing with 16 x 1st prizes in their club, with 6 of these coming in the young bird season. The pigeon at 5th North section here is a Blue Bar hen sitting on a 3/4 day old youngster. The breeding is mainly Soontjens from Frank Sheader's 'Docherty' lines, with a touch of Mick McMurchie's breeding added. The Sheeder Soontjens have produced many winners for the Smyth family including this year's winner of the NIPA Old Bird Roscarberry. The hen timed here was a consistent youngster taking a few prizes in the club but they noticed she was very keen in the days approaching this race. She had six races prior to the National as the Smyths only start at the third race as they like to ensure they are well trained before racing. They have another bird in the result taking 108th North section. Training is mostly on their own to Dundalk with one or two tosses to Balbriggan with Ronnie Williamson. Feeding is Champion Supreme, Diet200 and Jet corn all from Beatties.

1st, 2nd 3rd Middle section, N Cruise Newbridge, Vel 1447, 1446, 1431, Flying 162 miles, winning £887

The winner of the Middle section is Noel Cruise from the Newbridge club, and what a race he had taking the top three positions in the Middle section with three other birds in the result at 19th, 20th and 27th Middle section. This is Noel's first year racing with the Irish National Flying Club and this only his second race so it's a magnificent start for him. Noel started racing pigeons in 2006 and had to take a two year break following a fire at the house in 2011. This was his first year back and it has been a dream start for him. However he did have some success before winning the IHU National in 2010 from Barleycove. The three pigeons timed are all hens and none of them were on the 'Dark'. The first bird was a blue pied hen sent sitting on a small youngster. This hen was 5th Mid Leinster Fed from Skibbereen the week before when Noel had 4 landing together to take 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Fed. The breeding is off stock obtained from Gregory Bros, Rathnew. In fact all three pigeons are from the Gregory pigeons. The second one was a dark cheq hen that was sent racing to her cock, and this one was 2nd Mid Leinster Fed from Skibbereen. The third hen was a blue pied hen, a nest mate of the first bird and again sent racing to her cock. Noel trains privately three times a week from 18 miles. Feeding is all Versele Laga with just the usual grit and minerals added. Noel reared 70 young birds this year and I'm sure following a start like this we will hear more from him in years to come.

4th Middle section L Newman & Family Ballymun, Vel 1419, Flying 179 miles, winning £109

We move to the Ballymun club in Dublin for 4th Middle section, to the lofts of L Newman and Family. This partnership is made up of Lee, his sons Scott and Nathan and his brother Darragh. Lee is a former winner of the Miller Gold Cup in 2011, when he raced in partnership with James Kelly. This is Lee's first year racing with the new partnership and it's been quite a year having been 3rd Open Irish South Road Fed from the difficult St Malo. They also won the Young Bird averages in the Ballymun club, winning six races in the process. The pigeon timed here is a cheq hen sent sitting 14 days. She raced all through the inland programme. Breeding is from club mate Noel Farrell, Van Herck from Billy Harris and also has bloodlines from Billy Wallace from Cork. Training is normally with Herbie Thorpe to Blessington (35 miles), four days a week weather permitting. However the week before this race the hen had 3 x 10 mile tosses. He took

the hens away from their nests about 10pm at night and they flew home to their eggs as by that time the cocks were already basketed for Blessington. This was a tip he got from Noel Farrell. The birds are fed a small seed mix in the mornings and Vanrobaeys PLX in the evening. The Newman Family's second pigeon was 32nd Middle section.

5th Middle section D Kelly Cabra, Vel 1417, Flying 176 miles, winning £179

5th Middle section is yet another top Dublin loft, that of Donal Kelly from the Cabra club. Donal timed a blue hen sent to the race sitting 14 days. Her nest mate was 10th Middle section here and topped the Irish South Road Fed the week before from Barleycove. The pigeon at 5th Middle section was 4th Open IRSF herself from the first Barleycove. Breeding is direct from his good friend Bob Fenech. Having sold his entire first round of young birds Donal got a team of 20 Louis Cooremans youngsters from the Fenech lofts and put them on the 'Dark' on 24th April. He has had considerable success with them with 5 x 1sts in his club and 1st and 4th Open ISRF from Barleycove as mentioned above. Last year he was 1st, 2nd and 4th Open Thurles with Fenech pigeons. Training starts at 20 miles and Donal trains very early in the morning. After they have had four tosses they get 2 x 50 miles, then back to 20 miles for the rest of the year. Feeding is Versele Laga and Beares from Henry Byrne.

1st and 3rd South section L Conran Kilkenny, Vel 1394 and 1348, Flying 118 miles, winning £153

The winner of the South section and a coveted Irish National Flying Club Diploma is Leo Conran from Kilkenny who is also 3rd South section. Leo has only been racing for five years but in that short time he has had 32 Fed wins. The South section winner is a grizzle hen sent sitting on chipping eggs. Her sire is a Walter de Ricjk from Watty Cullen, Kilkenny while the dam was a gift bird from Pat Ronan from New Ross, Co Wexford. Leo has won 5 x Feds with youngsters out of this hen to three different cocks. The pigeon taking 3rd South section is a Van Reet hen sent sitting four days on eggs. The sire of this one is from Andrew McAuley, Co Antrim, while the dam is from L & A Painter in the West Midlands. The nest mate of this young Van Reet was 1st South Road Central Fed from Tralee (121 miles) three weeks ago. The hen herself was 2nd Fed from Tralee the following week. Leo's young birds had only six races this year and he won four of them. Leo trains privately up to 42 miles before racing starts and trains then five days a week. When racing starts he stops training and they fly around home for an hour and a half to two hours in the morning and then an hour in the evening. Feeding for the young birds starts with Versele Laga Breed & Wean, then UK Junior no maize, and before racing they are given a mix of UK Junior and Geryplus. Leo would like to thank Jimmy Hamilton for his help with the young birds this year and his wife Yvonne who looks after the birds when his job as a firefighter takes him away from the birds.

2nd South section, G Large Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1374, Flying 173 miles, winning £78

2nd South Section was won by Gregory Large Newtown-Kilpeddar, who races with the East Coast Fed. Greg originally from South Africa came to Ireland some 12 years ago and has been racing here for the last 6 years having previously raced for 5 or 6 years in his native South Africa. While Greg only races 30 young birds due to limited space he had three more birds in the result here at 9th, 10th and 28th South section. The bird taking 2nd South section is a blue bar cock sent sitting two days on eggs. This young cock was actually a gift bird from Jos Heylen in Belgium and is from the old Hereman-Ceusters pigeons Jos got in 2003. Greg and Stephen Homan from Bray travelled over to Belgium to collect four young birds. Stephen has this bird's nest mate and it flew well for him this year. Greg's bird raced the full inland race programme with the East Coast Fed but this was his first major win. Greg's birds have 3 x 25 mile tosses with Eric Kennedy every week but they had no training for the two weeks before this race. Feeding is Vanrobaeys Caysert, Super Starplus and Beyer's energy mix, with Beyers Zoontjens mix at the beginning of the week.

4th South section JJ Hurley Barrow Valley, Vel 1343, Flying 133 miles, winning £53

JJ Hurley from the Barrow Valley club is 4th South section here in his first ever race with the Irish National Flying Club and it has certainly whetted his appetite for the future. JJ has been instrumental in the formation of the Mid Leinster Fed which came into existence this year. JJ is both the President and the Race Controller. Pigeon racing is certainly in his blood with both his father Jimmy and his brother Davy all

racing as individual lofts. All three have won Nationals racing on the North Road this year. The pigeon timed is a blue cock that was sent to this race just racing to the perch. There are ten cocks racing in this section but they aren't on either widowhood or roundabout. The breeding is Hofkens x Maris on the sire's side and Hofkens on the dam's side. His sire was 4th Irish North Road National from Thurso (420 miles) last year and the dam was 6th in the same race. This was a good year for JJ as he has also won the North Road National from Frazerburgh (390 miles) and was 3rd in the same race. All training is done privately with the three Hurley lofts training together. Feeding is Natural Sublime from Sheldon Leonard.

5th South section A Duffy Wicklow, Vel 1336, Flying 168 miles, winning £53

5th South section goes to Alan Duffy, Wicklow. Alan has been racing pigeons for 34 years and was 6th Open in this race when it was a full Open race. The pigeon timed here is a white hen racing on the darkness system. The sire is Van Reet from Lyn Griffith, Wexford while the dam is a Mardon Van Reet x Roland Janssen. She had a few minor positions in the club and flew the full inland programme with the South Leinster Fed. She was shown an old cock for a few days before the race which seems to have motivated her well as she was 1st South Leinster Fed here. Alan trains privately from Arklow twice a week as he can't fly the birds too much at home due to the peregrines. Feeding is a Natural Young mix from Sheldon Leonard. Alan was also 14th and 27th section here for a good day's racing.

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 all who helped with photographs for this report.

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