

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB SKIBBEREEN YOUNG BIRD NATIONAL 2015

The curtain came down on the 2015 racing season when the Irish National Flying Club held their Young Bird Inland National from Skibbereen in Co Cork on Saturday 19th September. 385 members sent 3623 birds to compete for £14,897 in pools and prizemoney. This was well up on last year's entry which saw 352 members send 3075 birds. 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 8.45am in calm conditions and on route the wind was to turn variable. While there were some fog patches in and around the Cork area it turned out a lovely day and the birds romped home a lot faster than many expected.

1st Open, 1st Middle section, C Farrell Newbridge, Vel 1623, Flying 153 miles, winning £166 and the Tom Marshall Trophy

The winner of the 1st Open and 1st Middle section is Connie Farrell of the 'Rancho Rockets' lofts in the Newbridge club, and what a race he had with two other birds taking 9th and 20th Middle section. Connie's club mate Noel Cruise took the first three positions in this race last year and there are two other Newbridge birds in the top five this year again. Connie is a relative newcomer to the sport having only joined the club in 2007, while this is only his third year back on his own with the help of his loft manager, young son Dylan who Connie says is a great help to him. That is why the National winner is now called 'Dylan's Rocket'. He is a blue bar darkened cock racing on a semi roundabout system, which he has been on for the past 5 weeks. Breeding is Maris from Petron Lofts which were bought in 2008. The Grandsire was 4th club, 5th Fed, 15th Open Irish South Coast Classic. The young bird timed here raced the full young bird inland programme with the exception of the second race and always just been a steady racer. Training is twice a day from Carlow (28 miles), 3 days a week and one toss on Thursday for 4 weeks before the first race. During racing training is 3 times a week. Feeding is Versele Laga and Gerry Plus while Connie only treats the birds when the need it.

2nd Middle section Mr & Mrs J McMahon Balbriggan, Vel 1619, Flying 192 miles, winning £80

We go to the Balbriggan club to the lofts of Jackie and Moyra McMahon. I had the pleasure of sitting with the McMahons at the Irish National Flying Club Prize night in 1913 and we had a wonderful night. Jackie is a hard working official for the East Coast Federation and also at the clock station in Balbriggan for the Irish National Flying Club. This hen and her brother won three races between them but this must rank as the best win of all. How's this for a race record in a very competitive club; 1st Club 1st East Coast Fed, 2nd Middle section, 2nd Open INFC Skibbereen, 2nd club, Skibbereen, 11th club Skibbereen, 1st club Pilmore Beach, 12th club Tramore, 4th club Owenahincha, 10th club, Pilmore Beach. The bird is now known as 'Miss Chick Pea' and she had all the inland races with the East Coast Federation and has been the most consistent bird in the loft and the probable young bird of the year in the club. The parents are from Bill and Ger O'Mara and the dam is down from Ger's famous 'Rocket Ronnie', the sire and grandsire of many Fed and club winners for him and others. Jackie and Moyra asked me to congratulate Connie Farrell on winning the National and to thank all their club mates all others who congratulated them on their success. A special thanks to Gary and Ken Guildea for the photos and Greg McLynn for the write up on the internet, with a special thanks to Michael Gorman for all his work at the clock station.

3rd Middle section R McMahon Dublin North County, Vel 1546.4, Flying 181 miles, winning £113

Rory McMahon of the Dublin North County club is 3rd Middle section. Another relative newcomer to the sport this is only Rory's sixth year racing. The pigeon timed is a cheq pied hen now known as 'Maisie' after Rory's mother-in-law was sent to this race flying to the perch. This was Rory's first year racing on the darkness system but this hen and her nestmate moulted and she had only two flights to go but her body feathers were perfect going to the National. This was her fifth race having had Thurles, Pilmore Beach, Mallow and Castletown prior to the National. She had raced steadily although Rory was in the club positions every week with different birds. The grandsire, a Wily Jacobs was a gift from Billy Harris,

Malahide while the grand dam is from Denis Neary of the Northside & District club. Training is three times a week from 25 miles with Mark Byrne, plus they are flown at home for half an hour every evening. Rory feeds a PLX widowhood mix. Rory had another bird in the result here at 33rd Middle section.

4th Middle section B Cully Newbridge, Vel 1546.0, Flying 158 miles, winning £68

We go back to the Newbridge club to the lofts of Brian Cully who I had the pleasure of reporting on from the Old Bird National from Skibbereen in 2013 when he was 4th and 5th Middle section. The pigeon timed here is a blue cock flying to the perch. The sire is Embregts – Theunis from Holland while the dam is Karel Boeckx x Cooremans from Derek Parr, Portadown. The grandsire on the dam's side had eight firsts so definitely a good line. The young cock timed here was always a steady racer and this was his eighth race as Brian missed the first two races. The birds were trained up to their first race and then just flown at home due to the hawk situation. Brian said it didn't matter if he trained north, south, east or west the birds were frequently subject to hawk attacks. Feeding is Marimans Variamax. Brian just got the better of his brother-in-law Tristan McLoughlin who was 5th Middle section here.

5th Middle section T McLoughlin Newbridge, Vel 1539, Flying 158 miles, winning £102

5th Middle section goes to Tristan McLoughlin. Now this is a name I have noticed over the past few years climbing further and further up the result in National races. He attended the INFC prize night last year and we had a good chat and he promised that I would be doing a report on him this year. The pigeon timed is a dark cheq cock sent to this race flying to the perch. The sire is Lambrecht from Steve Foster in Preston. Tristan brought these birds in, in 2014. The dam was a gift bird, called 'Rosaleen' from club mate Frankie Kavanagh from his Van Loon lines. Tristan keeps the young birds on the dark until 27th June and then they are put on a 'Light' system from then until the last race with lights on from 7.30pm to 10.30pm and then from 4.30am to 7.30am. Tristan has had a great season so far racing in the Mid Leinster Fed with 1 x 1st Fed, 3 x 2nd Fed and 3 x 3rd Fed plus numerous other positions. The pigeon timed here was 11th club, 13th Fed the week before from Macroon (130 miles), and he had all inland races except one. Tristan trains with Connie Farrell and the training is as mentioned above under Connie. The birds are fed Gerry Plus and an energy mix in the mornings while the evening feed consists of 5 different mixes.

1st North Section, Bingham & Seaton Ligoniel, Vel 1602, Flying 251 miles, winning £354

The winners of the North section are Lee Bingham & Billy Seaton of the Ligoniel club in Belfast. This is one of the top lofts in the country at the moment and they are the winners of the Gloria Hunniford Trophy for best average Old Bird and Young Bird Skibbereen Nationals (North section), having been 8th North section in the Old Bird National. The pigeon timed here is a blue pied cock sent to this race just starting to show to a hen. He has had all the inland races and has some great results along the way, including 31st section, 71st Open Roscarberry with the NIPA the week prior to the National, 11th section, 44th Open Fermoy 5- Bird, 10th section, 27th Open Roscrea and 129th Open Roscrea. The sire was new blood brought in from Belgium while the dam won the RPRA Irish Region award for Young Bird of The Year in 2014. The grandsire, 'John Boy' was 1st Open NIPA Young Bird Roscarberry in 2011. This is a great line as a brother of the Section winner here has just been announced as the winner of the NIPA Young Bird of the Year for 2015, having taken 7 Open positions in 8 races. They had 6 youngsters out of the sire last year; one was lost training from Hillsborough, 2 others were winners, 2 picked up 2nd prizes and the other was 1st Section in the Fermoy 5 Bird. A brother of the bird timed here was 15th Open Roscarberry Young Bird National with NIPA and a cousin was 4th Open in the same race. Lee and Billy train three times a week with Ron Williamson and John Abernethy and towards the end of the season the birds were privately trained from Newry (35 miles). They mix their own feeding from corn bought from both Frazers and Robert Kirkwood.

2nd North section, M Laffin Lisburn & Dist, Vel 1590, Flying 244 miles, winning £1015

We move to the Lisburn & District club for 2nd North section to the lofts of Mark Laffin. In addition to the £1015 pools and prizemoney Mark also won £100 for the INFC sponsored free ring nomination and 2 bags of corn. Mark is ably assisted by his wife Jo who helps out with feeding, scraping and training when Mark

is at work. The pigeon timed here is a medium sized blue chequer darkness cock racing on the natural system and is now named 'The Highlander'. Her dam was a gift from the G & B Hunter partnership of Dunfermline, Scotland, and arrived home from the 2015 King's Cup from St Allouestre just outside of race time. His sire is bred down from Mariette Van de Weyer cock purchased in 2012 at the Dublin Show from Jos and Theo Ceulemans. The sire himself was a steady racer winning 2nd club, 12th section D, 42nd Open NIPA (17,824 birds) from Fermoy as a young bird in 2014. In the weeks preceding the National 'The Highlander' started to show some form as he was 1st club Lisburn & Dist, 9th section D, 22nd Open in the NIPA Roscarberry National, when driving his hen to the nest. Upon his return the hen laid and he was sent to the Skibbereen National sitting 3 days on eggs. In fact you could say that the complete team showed form at this stage of the season as Mark had 2 other birds in the result from Roscarberry at 2nd and 4th club, 26th and 128th Open, and had 4 more in the Skibbereen result at 30th, 59th, 96th and 175th North section. Feeding is Gem Breed and Wean from Robert & June Kirkwood. Training is a combination of flying at home and roadwork as weather permits. Mark would like to thank all who sent congratulatory messages and he wanted to especially thank his mentors Sammy Briggs, and Billy & David McElhone.

3rd North section, M Johnston & Son West Belfast, Vel 1586.97, Flying 252 miles, winning £250

Mark Johnston & Son from the West Belfast club are 3rd North section with a blue cheq cock; a darkened youngster sent sitting a week overdue on eggs. He dropped his first flight on the night that he came home from the race, but he had raced the whole year with a gap in his wing as he had two broken flights. The dam is a Soontjens x Van de Weyer from Timmy Mawhinney, while the sire was 2nd Open in the Fermoy 5-Bird and then 4th Open in Fermoy again the following week in 2011. The grandsire got out at the beginning of the year so this cock was put to stock to replace him with instant success. A full sister to the bird timed here was 2nd Open Ulster Fed, while a half brother won the Penzance Classic and the Penzance Open in the Ulster Fed in 2010, having been 2nd Open Bude the previous week. The young cock had just 6 races including Talbenny and had been a steady racer with a couple of minor prizes. He had just missed put on a Fed position the previous week from Skibbereen. Training is from Ardee (60 miles) on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday weather permitting. Mark tends to mix his own grain from various sources.

4th North section J & D Coburn & Sons Lagan Valley, Vel 1586.90, Flying 244 miles, winning £673

We go back to the Lisburn area to the Lagan Valley club to the lofts of J & D Coburn & Sons. The partnership consists of the late Jim and the late Davy, their sons Davy Jnr, Jim Jnr, Mervyn, Trevor and Thomas. This partnership have a great record from this race with 4th, 58th, 91st, 155th North section this year, 22nd North section last year, 9th 32nd, 116th and 160th North section 2013, 18th, 27th, 92nd, 93rd North section in 2012, 16th, 36th, 60th, 129th, 151st North section 2011 and 36th, 61st, 106th and 184th North section in 2010. The pigeon timed here was a blue darkened hen sent flying to the perch. Breeding is Vandenebee with both parents coming from Mark Sherwood, Sheffield. The sire is a brother of that pigeon that was 9th North section in 2013. That cock also won the Ulster Fed from Fermoy and picked up £50 in the Grosvenor Gold Ring race. The dam was 22nd North section last year. This young hen had six inland races and was 2nd in the Hillsborough & The Maze club from Fermoy. The birds are flown at home at no set time, with the occasional mid week toss, depending on the weather and on whether the partners think they need it.

5th North section A Cooke Ballycarry, Vel 1584, Flying 265 miles, winning £315

5th North section goes to Andy Cooke of the Ballycarry club north of Belfast and one of the longest flyers in this result. Andy is a very small team man rearing only 20 young birds for racing and still managed another two birds in the result here at 27th and 85th North section. The pigeon timed here is a blue white flight hen on the darkness and flying to the perch. Sent to the race half way up her first flight she was timed at 13:40 for the 265 miles flight. Her dam is Van de Huueal bred by Mike Ganus and is a direct sister of 'The Aviator'. The sire is a direct Wily Jacobs through Gerard Delaney, Dromore. This young hen was 1st club, 34th Open from Roscarberry the previous week with the NIPA. She had every race except the two channel races. Andy trains them every day, weather permitting, from either Loughbrickland (35 miles) or Hillsborough (28 miles) depending on his work shift. Feeding is Gem from Robert & June Kirkwood. In concluding Andy asked me to thank Gerard Delaney for all his help and guidance.

1st South section G Large Newtownkilpeddar, Vel 1580, Flying 173 miles, winning £90

The winner of the South section and a coveted Irish National Flying Club Diploma is Gregory Large from Newtownkilpeddar. Gregory was 2nd South section in this race last year and 4th South section in 2012 so has been building up to a section win. This young cock was sent to the race unpaired and racing to the perch. He had just started chasing hens and had started showing to form from the week prior as he was always last in from loft flying. He had been racing consistently prior to the National and had dropped with the first birds in previous weeks. He was bred by T & K Garman, West Midlands and like many of Greg's good birds they have been sent over by this partnership. His origins are from Uncle Jos in Belgium. His sire has Leo Heremans in the breeding and the dam would be Uncle Jos' own breeding. All road work is stopped after race four. Prior to this they are trained every day on Eric Kennedy's transporter. . Up to this time they are fed heavy and trained to match. Then the feed is lightened and the flown 30 minutes morning and night around the lofts and road work stops. Feeding is from Sandyhill and is a mix of barley, Gerryplus, Beyers Wally and Versele Sports Mix. Greg said the young birds have been very healthy this year and thanks Niall Murphy for building a new loft in December last year.

2nd South section, G & M Doyle Arklow, Vel 1552, Flying 155 miles, winning £96

2nd South Section was won by Gary and Mark Doyle from the Arklow club. The pigeon timed is a blue hen racing on the roundabout. The sire is Roland Janssen from P, T & L Cunningham Dublin from their 'Blue Bingo' lines while the dam is a Moldart from Seamus Neary, Gorey. Gary and Mark have had a great year with 10 x 1sts in the club, with seven of these in the young birds. The pigeon timed here was a very steady racer and had all inland races. While she hadn't won prior to this race her brothers and sisters had picked up club wins. Gary and Mark had a great race here with two more birds in the result at 17th and 24th South section. Before racing begins the birds are given 10 x 15 miles tosses and after the first race they are only given an odd toss during racing. However they are flown around the loft twice a day. Feeding is Natural from Sheldon Leonard with hemp and sunflower heart added.

3rd South section Hunter & O'Neill Rathnew, Vel 1533, Flying 168 miles, winning £45

3rd South section is the Hunter & O'Neill partnership from the Rathnew club. The partnership is made up of Billy Hunter and his son-in-law Philip O'Neill who have been racing together for the past six years and the lofts are located at Billy's house. They had both raced as individuals prior to that. The pigeon timed at 3rd South section is a blue cock sent to this race driving an old hen. The breeding is Vandenebeele from M & D Evans and these birds have done particularly well for them. The blue cock had every inland race and only came into form coming up to this race when he started to show to the old hen. Philip was disappointed with the pigeons this year as they had only won three races all year (all young bird races), but this was a great way to end the season. The birds were trained three times a week in the three weeks prior to the National and before that they were flown at home. Feeding is a mixture of Natural Finesse and Natural Start mixed together.

4th South section Dempsey Bros Wexford North & South, Vel 1525, Flying 132 miles, winning £45

Dempsey Bros Wexford are 4th South section for another terrific result. The partnership was originally Francis and Geoffrey but Francis retained the partnership's name when Geoffrey passed away. They were second South section in the Old Bird Skibbereen National this year and were 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th in the Old Bird National in 2012. The pigeon timed here is a chequer hen sent flying to the perch. Breeding is Karel Boeckx from Dave and Ann Beswick from Yorkshire. This youngster is a half sister of the pigeon that was 2nd South section Old Bird National Skibbereen in May. She had eight races altogether this year and picked up a couple of minor prizes. Francis has had a great young bird season with 4 x 1sts, 6 x 2nds, and numerous other positions. Francis trains hard with the youngsters given a 12 mile toss every day for a month before racing starts, and then during racing they get 2 x 15 mile tosses every week. Feeding is Versele Laga Super Diet and Super Widowhood.

5th South section Gregory Bros Rathnew, Vel 1524, Flying 1167 miles, winning £69

5th South section goes to Gregory Bros of the Rathnew club. This is another great result for Tommy and Roger following on their impressive 1st South section, 4th Open Penzance Young Bird National a couple of weeks previous. Indeed they have had a superb season all round with 16 x 1sts in the strong Rathnew club this year. The pigeon timed here is a blue bar cock sent to this race calling his hen to the nest. Two weeks prior to this race this young cock was 1st club 1st East Coast Fed from Skibbereen, in a northerly wind with a velocity of 1166. The sire is a Heremans-Ceusters from Stickers Donkers while the dam is from their own old lines containing Soontjens, Van Reet, Delbar and Jan Arden. The sire is a grandsire of the pigeon that was 1st Open NIPA Penzance Classic for Jeff Greenaway. The birds are fed the Natural range of corn mainly 'Professional mix' and 'Fitness Energy Corn' from Direct Pigeon Supplies, Arklow. They also use the full range of Dr Brockamp from Sheldon Leonard. The birds have three 12 mile tosses most weeks when they are released in batches of ten with a 50 mile toss with Eric Kennedy every 2/3 weeks.

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 and throughout the year.

Brendan McLoughlin
INFC Press Officer