

IRISH NATIONAL FLYING CLUB SKIBBEREEN OLD BIRD NATIONAL 2016

The first of the 6 races organized by the Irish National Flying Club was held on Tuesday 24th May from Skibbereen in Co Cork. 471 members sent 4,498 birds to compete for £15,758 in pools and prizemoney. This was slightly down on last year's entry of 4,712 birds; however the pools and prizemoney had slightly increased. The race was sponsored by Bamfords Top Flight and we are very grateful to them for their continued sponsorship. The race took the same format as last year with the Ronnie Johnston Challenge Cup and diploma awarded to the Overall winner and the Gerald Delaney Trophy awarded to the best velocity of the other two sections. The winner of the section with the lowest winning velocity will receive a coveted INFC diploma. There are no Open positions for the Skibbereen Nationals but prizes are allocated to the three sections. 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 10.30am in a light easterly wind, with the winning velocity recorded as 1346. This is the same velocity recorded by the winner of the North Section last year too.

1st North Section, 1st Open, I Parkes & Son Armagh, Vel 1346, Flying 218 miles, winning £863 and the Ronnie Johnstone Challenge Cup

The winners of this year's Skibbereen Old Bird National are Ivan & Stephen Parkes from Armagh. The father and son partnership have been having a wonderful season so far but this is really the fulfillment of one of their dreams to win a National. The pigeon timed is a three-year-old Soontjens cock racing on the widowhood system. The breeding of this cock is something special. The dam was bred by Jeff Greenaway Dromore and is a direct daughter of 'Back to Back', while the sire bred by Colin Gibson Dromara, is a direct daughter of 'Jethro' and 'Miss Henny'. This cock has always been a very consistent racer winning many club prizes and some section prizes in the NIPA. Ten days before this National he was 3rd club, 10th section and 110th Open NIPA from Rosscarbery. The National winner had all inland races this year with the NIPA and has never been across the water (and won't be now!!). Ivan and Stephen gave the birds three training tosses before the first race and since then the birds have just been flown around the house twice a day, weather permitting. Ivan has a bit more time on his hands these days and has obviously put that time to good use. Ivan would like to thank all those who phoned, text or called to congratulate him as he found it a very humbling experience.

2nd North section, B & A Beattie Bondhill, Vel 1324, Flying 228 miles, winning £580

2nd North section is Alan Beattie racing as B & A Beattie from Bondhill. When Alan's father passed away he decided to retain his late father Ben's name in the loft name. Ben had been a pigeon man all his life and was well known for breeding 'Donacloney Queen', Sam Topping's 1975 King's Cup winner. The Beattie family are all well involved in the pigeon sport – Alan's wife Sonia is secretary of both Bondhill and Loughall clubs while son Darren a highly rated golfer also likes to help around the loft. Alan's pigeon is a two-year-old hen racing on the roundabout. The breeding is half Hermans Ceusters from Ponderosa and is off a National winner, and half Soontjens from clubmates Capper Bros, and is from two Open winners. She was always a good steady hen and was 55th Section E from Rosscarbery 10 days before the National. The birds are trained Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from Ardee (45 miles) with Derek Parr. When not on the transporter the birds are flown an hour morning and evening, and when on the transporter they just get an hour in the evening.

3rd North section, J Connolly Ballymoney, Vel 1322, Flying 276 miles, winning £350

3rd North section is John Connolly from Ballymoney one of the longest flyers in the result. John had an impressive card on the day with his second bird taking 110th North section. Some of you may remember that John was 3rd Open in the yearling National in 2002 so is no stranger to National success. John's pigeon timed here is a yearling cock racing widowhood. Breeding is ¾ Lambrechts from A & R McAuley Ballymoney and ¼ Soontjens from Ian Gibb & Sons, Derriaghey. These were gift birds for which John is very grateful. John's loft is obviously in form right now as he was 1st club from 2nd Talbenny on the

Saturday after the National. John's birds were transporter trained with Harold Cubitt, Rasharkin at the beginning of the season but have been flown at home for the past three weeks.

4th North section, J & M Milliken Rasharkin & Dist, Vel 1320, Flying 266 miles, winning £276

4th North section are John and Mark Milliken of Rasharkin and District club. This is a grandfather / grandson partnership, Mark being the grandson. The pigeon timed here is a yearling cock racing on total widowhood. They race both cocks and hens on this system. The sire is Lambrechts bought in Blackpool in 2015 from Richard Whiteside Exeter. The dam is a direct daughter of the Foundation Hen, Wittpenneke 98. John and Mark had 4 youngsters out of this pair last year and three have them have won the Mid Antrim Combine (MAC). This cock's full brother won 4 club races and one MAC, while a latebred hen was 1st MAC from the first race this year. John and Mark's birds have been in fantastic form all season and they have been in the top 10 of the NIPA Open four times this year. The birds are trained with Harold Cubitt twice week, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

5th North section G & A Campbell Armagh, Vel 1318, Flying 220 miles, winning £789

Gerard Campbell and his son Aaron racing as G & A Campbell from Armagh are 5th North Section with a two-year-old hen racing widowhood. This is another loft in top form as they were 5th and 6th Open NIPA from 2nd Talbenny. They ended up with 5 birds in the North section result with other birds taking 7th, 104th, 126th and 295th North section. The pigeon timed is a two-year-old hen racing widowhood. This pigeon was 1st Section E, 28th Open NIPA Rosscarbery 10 days previous to the National and this was only her fourth race this year. Breeding is Luc, Bart and Jurgen Geeriinckx. The dam is a daughter of 'Stitches', winner of the Penzance Classic in 2012. She is also closely related to 'Postmaster' and 'Postmistress', winners of the INFC OB and Young Bird Nationals in 2012 (YB) and 2014 (OB) from Skibbereen for E & M Curran. The hens get two tosses per week from 30 miles and are also flown in the mornings.

1st Middle Section B Corley Monaghan, Vel 1340, Flying 204 miles, winning £86 and the Gerard Delaney Trophy for the best Velocity in the Sections not winning the Open

Winner of the Middle section and the Gerald Delaney Trophy is Brendan Corley, Monaghan. Brendan's birds have been in terrific form this year and he was 1st Club 38th Open Talbenny on the Saturday following the National. Brendan had two other birds in the top 20 of the Middle section result at 6th and 14th. The Middle Section winner is a yearling cock racing on the widowhood. The sire is on loan from Alan McDonald Portadown while the dam is on loan from Gerry Swift of Monaghan. Brendan is very grateful to Alan and Gerry for the loan of these two pigeons. This yearling cock was 2nd club Talbenny YB last year when beaten by only one minute. He has been particularly consistent this year and was Brendan's first bird from three races. He had all the Inland races prior to the National. The birds are trained up until the first race then flown at home twice a day.

2nd Middle Section K Allister & M Kruger Monaghan, Vel 1315, Flying 208miles, winning £72

2nd Middle section are Keith Allister and Martin Kruger from Monaghan who are only racing together for their third season. Keith had previously raced in Harrow in London, while Martin is originally from South Africa. Their first pigeon is a Blue yearling cock racing widowhood with the breeding from GWP MacAloney, Coatbridge in Lanarkshire. The sire is from 'Mr Magic' while the dam is from 'The Green pair'. This yearling cock was a consistent racer both as a young bird and this year too. He had all the Inland races this year and four days after the National he was 3rd club from the Fermoy 5 Bird race. Keith and Martin train their birds up to the first race and then they are flown round the loft once only in the mornings every day.

3rd Middle Section P Coughlan Monaghan, Vel 1313, Flying 208 miles, winning £72

3rd Middle section is Packy Coughlan Monaghan, a previous winner of the Middle Section from the Young Bird Skibbereen in 2012. The yearling hen timed here is a full sister of their section winner in 2012. The sire is off pigeons from Danny Gallagher Armagh and Davy Mawhinney Beach Park, while the dam is a

Henry McLaughlin Harthog through Pat Breen of Portadown. The 3rd Middle Section pigeon was hawked early in the young bird season last year so only had a couple of races. Similarly this year she was again hawked early in the season and had only two races prior to the National. The pigeons were given a few training tosses with Maurice Weir but the hens have been flying well round home.

4th Middle Section K Allister & M Kruger Monaghan, Vel 1304.67, Flying 208 miles, winning €85

We go back to Keith Allister and Martin Kruger for 4th Middle section. Another yearling racing on widowhood, this one is a Blue White Flight cock from Wall Green and Lunt of Manchester stock. Breeding is Koopman x Verkerk. This bird was another steady racer without winning any major prizes before this race. He too was sent to the Fermoy 5 Bird four days after the National when he was timed 10 minutes after the winner. Keith and Martin had a third bird in the result at 20th Middle Section so a good days racing for them.

5th Middle Section P McFadden Monaghan Vel 1304.60, Flying 205 miles, winning €112

5th Middle section is Patrick McFadden winner of the Middle section from this race in 2014. The pigeon timed here is from a pair bought from Alun Jones' Red Star Lofts from Denbighshire. The sire is a direct Gaby Vandenabeele down from 'Wittenburg', while the dam is a 'Vanden Brecht', (1/2 Vandenabeele and 1/2 Lambrechts). The sire himself was a 1st Fed prizewinner for Alun Jones. The yearling hen timed here has been racing well all year, picking up the following prizes, 4th Club Tullamore, 5th Club Tullamore, 6th Club Clonmel and she was 5th Club 5 Bird Fermoy on the Saturday following the National. Patrick had a great race here with seven pigeons in the Middle Section result at 5th, 9th, 10th, 15th, 31st, 34th and 37th. The birds were given two tosses before racing started and then flown an hour at home morning and evenings.

1st South Section J J Hurley Barrow Valley, Vel 1256, Flying 133 miles, winning €74

1st South Section and winner of a Framed Diploma is the Barrow Valley lofts of JJ Hurley. JJ had a great race here with 5 birds in the South section result taking 1st, 4th, 5th, 9th and 11th South Section. JJ was previously 4th South section from the Skibbereen Young Bird National in 2014. His first pigeon here is a three-year-old Blue Pied cock racing widowhood. The breeding is Hofkens and he has a terrific racing record, racing both north and south roads. He was 1st Leinster North Fed from Larne (145 miles) as a young bird, he was then 1st Mid Leinster Fed from Macroom in 2014, and in 2015 he was 1st Mid Leinster Fed from Barleycove (153 miles) and also 1st Section of the IHU National from Barleycove. His sire won the North Road National from Coleraine as a Young Bird in 2011. JJ told me that all his main birds are down from a cock that he bought at the Dublin Show in 2006 from Gibb & Byrne. He has bred over 40 Fed winners, and is sire to 2 x 1st IHU Nationals, and grandsire to 5 x 1st IHU National winners.

2nd South Section R Fewings Rathnew, Vel 1222, Flying 167 miles, winning €80

2nd South section this year goes to Rathnew's Ron Fewings winner of the Yearling National in 2014. This is actually the third time that Ron has been 2nd South Section from Skibbereen to show a lot of consistency. The pigeon timed here is a yearling hen racing roundabout. She is a half sister to the Yearling National winner. 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 in 2014. The dam is Andre Roodhooft from Sheldon Leonard. Ron took 6 youngsters from this pair last year and they all have raced and are still all there. Ron's loft has been in great form this year taking 5 x 1sts and 2 x 2nds in the strong Rathnew club. His brother Glenn still helps out around the loft and Ron's daughter Amber just loves the pigeons.

3rd South Section Gregory Bros Rathnew, Vel 1210, flying 167 miles, winning €45

3rd South section are Gregory Bros Rathnew. I don't think that there has been a year that I haven't had to report on Gregory Bros since I became Press Officer in 2011. They are very consistent racers at all distances and they are full of enthusiasm for the Irish National Flying Club. The pigeon timed here is a yearling hen sent sitting 7 days on eggs. She is 1/4 Soontjens from Jeff Greenaway Dromore and 3/4 from

their own 'Hercules' cock, a winner of 10 x 1st clubs, 4 Fed wins and 2 x 1st Open East Coast Feds. 'Hercules' is responsible for most of their main winners. His breeding is Jan Arden/Delbar/Soontjens. She has been a very consistent racer without taking any prizes prior to the National. Training is 2 x 12- 15 mile tosses north and south per week plus every second week they transporter trained with Eric Kennedy from Cortown (20/25 miles)

4th South Section J J Hurley Barrow Valley, Vel 1196, Flying 133 miles, Winning £98

We go back to JJ Hurley Barrow Valley for our 4th South section pigeon. This one is another three-year-old cock on the widowhood. Breeding is Hofkens x Andre Roodhooft. Like JJ's first pigeon this cock was raced North Road as a Young Bird then switched to the South Road as a yearling. He has been 1st Fed three times and was Bird of the Year in the Mid Leinster Fed last year. He is a son of 'Blue Bob', the Gibb and Byrne pigeon bought the 2006 Dublin Show and mentioned above.

5th South Section J J Hurley Barrow Valley, Vel 1159, Flying 133 miles, winning £25

We stay with JJ Hurley for the 5th South section pigeon. Another three-year-old widowhood cock, the breeding of this one is Frans Zwols. JJ together with his father bought a pair at Blackpool in 2013 from Stuart Wilcox Auctions. The Blue cock timed here has also had a 1st Mid Leinster Fed to his name. The Old Birds had no training whatsoever this year. They are flown twice a day when possible at home. All feeding is from Sheldon Leonard Arklow.

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.

Brendan McLoughlin
INFC Press Officer