

Back to the Future

Do you have pigeons in your loft with 10 first place career wins?

Do you have a pigeon in your loft that has more than 10 first place, 1 second place, and 1 third place wins all in the same season?

Keith and Linda Turner, of Colchester, England, can answer YES to both questions. 2014 was the first time the same pigeon won 10 first prizes in the same season.

Meet "Mister 900," as named by his competition, one of the Turner birds 100% descendant from Staf Van Reet. The blue cock, GB12N66900, won 10 1st prizes in a single season. His tenth 1st place win was achieved on the last race of the year.

A Page in History

Staf Van Reet created a breeding pair named "The Golden Pair." This pair of Janssen based pigeon produced winner after winner. To name a few: "Prins of 72" (32 first place wins), "Dikke Prins" of 1974 (26 first place wins), "Genopte of 76," and "Danial" 57. 1976 is the year in which the most spectacular son of the "Golden Pair" was born. "Daniel" (B766635973) won 57 first place prizes. He came out of the box as the best speed pigeon in Belgium. This was also the year Staf joined Fran Verbuggen. They earned the title "Champions of the East and Antwerp Area; second was Marion Raey, and then Gust Hofken.

The “Daniel” 57 is the great grandfather of champion “Red Danial” (1989). Champion “Red Danial” is the great grandfather of “Mister 900;” 10 times 1st place, once 2nd place, and one 3rd place to cap off the 2014 old bird race season.

As many as 22 times, Staf Van Reet’s birds have been the fastest in the entire province of Antwerp. According to Van Reet, more than 100,000 pigeons from the province are actually released from Quivrain each week. Van Reet loves the competition and his statement of “coming in first means nothing if there is no competition.”

In 1978, Jan Grondelaers purchased “Prins of 72” for a non-disclosed sum of money. “Prins” produced a son, “Stuka b795185502” who won 12 career first place prizes.

Almost a decade later, in 1988, Dean Pallatt entered the scene. He not only served as the agent for the Staf Van Reet family but also purchased the breeding stock. That same year, Keith and Linda Turner sought out a pair of Staf Van Reet young birds. All of Pallatt’s young birds were booked and the Turners were waitlisted. Pallatt promised to send them a pair of birds if any cancellations took place.

The following year, Pallatt received a cancellation and sent two birds to the Turners as promised. Keith is quoted as having said “Bloody hell! It’s a red pigeon!” They talked and Pallatt convinced him to at least give the bird a chance. The red pigeon was the patriarch of the “Red Danial” Dynasty. In addition, this “bloody red bird” earned the trophy of young bird in England in 1989. The “Red Danial” had 23 career races and won first prize in 19 of them. Six of those wins were federation wins with total birdage of 2,000 to 5,000. His last race and last victory was a 300 mile race from Berwick. “Red Danial” was then retired to the stock loft. His lineage is

credited with over 1000 first place prizes with national wins at every level of possible competition.

In 1990, 12 racers, known as the “A Team” due to their “A” bands, were purchased by Keith and Linda. That same year, they purchased one young bird from each of Pallatt’s breeders. Over time the 12 birds dwindled down to 8. Combined, the 8 birds had a total first prize winning recognition of 56 first place wins. All 8 were moved to the stock loft in 1997, then known as “the untouchables.”

In 1994, the Turners sold their long distance Cattryssee Family of birds as short to middle length races were gaining in popularity. The 20 Van Reet breeders were auctioned by Tony Cowen. All of the future birds from the Turners were bred from the Staf Van Reet “Red Danial” lines as nothing was beating them.

Tragedy struck in 1997. All of the stock birds, babies, and eggs were stolen. One male, Danial-Son 33 x 1st, was found in the bottom of the loft saving himself from the thief. He became the lone breeder. Still reeling from the horrific loss, the Turners realized that they had probably had tea in their home with the robber.

While listening to the evening news 300 miles away, a total stranger but fellow pigeon fancier named Richie Ryder called the Turners and offered a round of young birds to help replace their loss. They soon became partners.

Four months later, after a strong storm, one of the stolen birds first born returned home. Then followed Abbie's Choice and "Red Danial's" sister. The last bird to ever return from the theft was "Red Danial." Only these four birds ever returned.

So Mr. 900, What does your competition look like?

GB12N66900, aka "Mister 900", competes in 2 separate clubs: The Colchester Invitational Specialists Club and the Thames North and Eastern Counties Flying Clubs.

These are excellent clubs. The ladies and gentlemen in these clubs prepare to win and they expect to win! They compete with 30% or more of their membership weekly that have won national races. They are the real deal. London, England could be comparable to New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, or parts of Florida, to mention a few. All large cities with bigger clubs combined with smaller clubs are in outlying cities. The desire to win in all of these areas is vast, as it is in all cities.

Many of you know folks in the Thames North and Eastern Counties Flying Club. You know that they are very competitive. The Colchester Invitational Specialists club has 21 members, 6 of which have won national races.

In 2014, Thames North and Eastern Counties Flying Club results were competition levels of 86 members competing in an area 60 miles wide by 70 miles deep. Not every member competes every week.

Mister 900's Flying Record

Although “Mister 900” was born in 2012, there were no races that year due to young bird sickness.

2013 Yearling Results: 1st club, 1st club, 2nd club, 3rd club

2013 TENC Yearling Results: top 1% 551P, top 5% 235P, top 3% 755P, top 3% 734P

2014 Results: 1st Club won 9 times

2014 TENC Results: 1st with 736P, never finished out of the top 4%, top 2% 845P, top 3% 989P, top 1% 829P, top 3% 777P, top 3% 489P, top 2% 350P, top 4% 380P, top 1% 512P

If, and I say if, this were test score results in the academic world, these results exceed 97%, equaling a letter grade of “A.”

While researching the history and results of the 2014 Turner/Staf Van Reet 10 times first winner, a concept was developed to compare champions and competition in other sporting events.

The Fastest Man in the World

Roger Bannister, the 26 year old Oxford medical student who broke the track and field’s notorious barrier of the 4 minute mile, earning the title “fastest man in the world” with a time of 3:59:4 on May 6th, 1954.

One race seldom makes a championship season. A race season has set dates and places for the next race. As with all races, every participant wants to win the next race with the hope of knocking out the champion. Champions are champions because of the adjustments they make in the time between races.

After his record setting race, Bannister lost his next two races. He was rebuilt to race his toughest competition at the Empire Games in Vancouver, Canada.

The race, titled the "Miracle Mile," pitted Bannister against John Landy on August 7th, 1954. Landy had already beaten the world record set by Bannister. The race was set as 35,000 spectators witnessed the start of the race that would determine the fastest man in the world.

Landy led most of the race to nearly the finish line. He turned to see where his competitor was and amazingly Bannister passed him to win the race. A statue remains in Vancouver of Landy turning to see Bannister pass him and win.

This was the first time two runners had beaten the four minute mile mark in the same race; Bannister at 3:58:8 and Landy at 3:59:6. Bannister said that he was "pushed" and "inspired" by Landy's ability and competitive spirit and that John Landy had shown him "what a race could really be at its greatest." Bannister's Miracle Mile was the lead story in the very first issue of Sports Illustrated Magazine and he was named 1954 Sports Illustrated Sportsman of the Year.

The Best of the Best

Every race or event has their victors, but not every one has amazing world record holders. Take Mario Andretti of the USA. He is the only racer to have won the Indianapolis 500 (1969), the Daytona 500 (1967), and a Formula 1 world title (1978). No American has won a Formula One race since Andretti did over 36 years ago.

To equal Mister 900's winning record in old bird season, they require an 83% winning record in a 12 week streak. How many teams are achieving that percentage; how many college teams are achieving 83%? Not many!

Things that effect our sport: airlines-long or short, wind, fog, weather, the basic numerical make-up of a concentrated number of members flying to a similar point (creating drag), high wires, heat, hold-overs, clocking, and level of overall competition. This is only a partial list of hurdles to overcome to win in our sport. This changes in some force every week.

The "Golden Pair" started the winning line and then passed it to "Daniel 57" in 1976, and again down to "Red Danial" in 1989. "Mister 900", 10 first place wins in 2014, is an 8th generation winner. The "Daniel" 57 won 12 first place wins in one season, with three wins in one week. "Red Danial" had 2 seasons with 8 first place wins in each season.

Please join me in honoring the spirit of our champions and recognizing that we stay in our loft or pigeon mode to beat the champions! Thank you for showing us what is possible.

Very well done! Keith and Linda, you are in the company of the best! Thank you for taking the risk of leadership. Racing the same 19 widowhood cocks every week with "Mister 900" showing 10 times first to your loft and first to your club. Many of us never race against 500-900 birds in a week. Many one loft races do not send 900 birds to a race. Amazing!

Questioning the statement of once lucky, twice good...if that's true, it begs the question "How do you define 10 wins in a single season?" By one single pigeon?

The beat goes on! It is hard to define championship but it is easy to recognize. Please contact me if you know of others that have as many or more season victories at:
574-532-1291.

All the best,

Dick Mellinger

McKnight.Mellinger loft