

Midwest Classic Race 2012

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The biggest race of the year for many centrally located flyers is the Midwest Classic Race. It is the ultimate in tough competition. Flyers view the Classic Race as a competition that truly demonstrates the success of their breeding programs. Fanciers race tried and true families or the newest import blood. Whatever the family of birds, everyone is in pursuit for taking a either an exciting section win or the prestigious overall title.

The Midwest Classic is one of the races that pigeon flyers anticipate all season long. Many share the same sentiment that the Classic race is set apart from the others in that the birds are required to break in completely different directions. In 2012, 354 lofts across the vast Midwest entered 4,354 pigeons. The birds were liberated in Topeka, Kansas on June 30th. One can only imagine the beauty of a few thousand birds circling at early dawn in the Kansas sky and then breaking off into groups destined for their homes in state such as Illinois, Minnesota, or Wisconsin.

The Midwest Homing Pigeon Association (HPA) sponsors this annual tradition. The race that is now known as the Midwest Classic began in 1948. In the early days of the association, which was originally known as the Midwest Racing Pigeon Organization, there were over 1000 members. In 1969, the name was changed to the current title of the Midwest HPA. Over the years, the Classic race has grown from 2000 birds to as many as 7000 birds and up to 17 states competing.

100 Mile Class and Overall Winner

Winning his section is not something new for 30 year pigeon veteran Dan Bowen of Manawa Loft. This was the fourth section win for him; however, winning the overall 2012 Midwest Classic race was a first for Dan. His big time winner was a two-year old pencil cock, appropriately banded AU #1 ENRP 2010. Dan must have had a peculiar feeling about the future of the youngster when he slipped on the band with the number 1! This cock is the last baby out of an excellent cock of Dan's own family. The father is a 500-600 mile winner. Bowen races on the natural system. Knowing when a pigeon is ready to perform, says Dan, is a large part of reaching success in pigeon flying. His

Midwest winner was flying home to youngsters, and as Bowen noted, “was the one to expect.” Even though he is in the 100 mile class for the Midwest, Dan’s favorite races are long distance. He feels that the breeding of the birds comes out in distance races that truly test a pigeon both physically and mentally, “It takes a special bird to break from the flock, especially in a big race like the Midwest.” For Dan, pigeons have to win at least three races before he thinks about retiring them. Despite #1 ENRP having won the Midwest Classic, he will have to return to the sky in 2013 for at least one more season. Feeding is one of the most important aspects of flying for Dan. Barley is his grain of choice, especially since he feels that he tends to overfeed his pigeons. Dan’s advice is to give pigeons a proper diet and “just let them be a pigeon,” meaning keep it natural.

200 Mile Class

The Classic race is an annual highpoint for Quentin Ellensohn since he and his club buddies have all enjoyed success in the past, the Siouxland club even boasting an overall Classic winner. Pigeon have been a part of Quentin Ellensohn’s life for over 30 years. Flying out of Le Mars, Iowa, Quentin sent 1236 SCIA 2010 AU to the Classic race with high expectations. This Janssen-Huysken Van Riel cross was Quentin’s first bird from the 2011 Classic in which it placed 13th in the section. Among #1236’s list of accomplishments is also the Champion Bird title of the Siouxland Racing Club. With this kind of history, it was no surprise to Quentin when this cock came in first at 1374 yards per minute (flying 253 miles). Like most of his club mates, Quentin flies on the natural system; He is different from a lot of guys in that he does not take the birds on the road very often. Most of their training is done with open loft flying. His birds are flown on a lot of races every season. Long distance is a genre that Quentin really enjoys to fly, but he waits for his birds to develop into mature three year olds before he tests them on the serious distance races. As far as what the future holds for #1236, Quentin will continue to fly him in hope of turning him into an AU Champion: winning the section and placing 5th overall is certainly a good start.

300 Mile Class

Steve Hoffman has been enjoying racing success from his cross of Huysken Van Riels with the Golden Mattens blood line. His section winner, three year old cock banded 887 MEM, flew 322 miles at 1375 ypm, placing 4th overall. This pigeon, along with many of

its siblings, has been a consistent flyer for Steve. Hoffman flies on the widowhood system. Last year, he managed a small team of 22 cocks. Steve, a member of the Moline East Moline RPC, races all distances. A pigeon man since 1983, Steve says that health is the key to having a consistent race team that will perform every week. Lately, Steve has been experimenting with some new families. He recently brought in Koopman imports and also Raw-Sablons. When he gives young birds away, other flyers have also been successful with Steve's Huysken Van Riel/Golden Mattens cross. It is evidence of a good family when more than one fancier can win with the pigeons.

400 Mile Class

John Brodrick lives in the woods of Oregon, Illinois. His pigeons call Hickory Wing Loft home. John flew pigeons in the 1960's and '70s, but had to abandon the sport when his job interfered. Back into his hobby for just a few years, Brodrick has quickly become a very competitive racer as evidenced by winning the 400 mile class of the Midwest Classic. His blue cock flew 393 miles at 1369 ypm for a 6th overall finish. The bird, given to him by Al Porter of Wisconsin, was a pigeon for a special young bird race. John kept the bird around, despite it not having a pedigree. Racing on the natural system, John set up his cock with a young hen. The day of shipping, John noticed that the cock was especially attached to his hen and very defensive of his box. The fire the cock displayed caused John to pick him as the first bird for the club. He flies on the long end of his combine, the Rock River Valley Combine. Training his birds out to 65 miles is enough for John; he lets the shorter races act as training tosses in preparation for the long distance races: John's favorite genre of racing.

500 Mile Class

The 500 mile class win belongs to David Simington of Racine, Wisconsin. David has been breeding quality pigeons from his small loft for many years. He started racing at age 16. 50 years later, he now has several Midwest Classic section wins. His 2012 section winner, #3617 KEN 2009, was bred from a cock that won the Classic 500 mile section in 2008. #3617 is a two time section winner for the Midwest classic. His first win came as a yearling back in 2010. This section win is also a noteworthy 3rd place overall. David says that this has been a great bloodline for distance racing. The winning combination is a mix of Fabry, Van Loon, and Janssen. His widowhood cocks are always well-fed and are never sent to a race hungry. David only flies 20-24 cocks; He trains before the

season, but while the birds are racing, daily loft flying is the routine. From his years of experience, David has come to believe that the best pigeons will not easily get sick. Rarely will one of the top racers ever succumb to sickness. David loves racing old birds and the long distance Midwest Classic competition with thousands of pigeons is special as it truly shows what “a pigeon can do on its own because no matter what you do at the loft, it’s all up to the bird.”

600 Mile Class

Flying from Topeka to a town in the upper peninsula of Michigan, called Watersmeet, is 598 miles. Richard Pallin Jr.’s pigeons have quite a journey before they can rest in Shamrock Loft. Richard grew up with pigeons alongside his dad, Richard Sr; the two started racing in 1983. Just three years ago he began racing his own team under the name “Shamrock Loft”. Living up north in the Michigan peninsula places Richard on the long end of many races, including the Classic. It was his goal to win the 600 mile section in 2012. Each year since he started racing alone has shown improvement in the race results. Since 2010 in the 600 mile class, he has placed 24th, 3rd, and now his 1st place win. Richard credits a lot of his success to the methods of Mike Schmidt of Speed Shop Loft. The winning cock, 3370 NWC 2009, flew 734 yards per minute. The week before the Topeka race, his cock was shipped on a 170 mile race and returned with his first birds for an equal first. Racing on the natural system, the cock was returning to 16 day eggs. The family behind #3370 is Calia Janssen based. Many of his relatives have been winning since 2000.

Congratulations to all of the 2012 winners. The Midwest Homing Pigeon Association looks forward to continuing to sponsor one of the greatest old bird races. The 2013 Classic race is scheduled for June 29th. Also, be sure to join the Midwest HPA during October 10th-12th for the 2013 Midwest Convention and young bird race to be held in Omaha, Nebraska. Please visit www.midwesthpa.com for all the information on the convention and for everything relating to the Midwest Classic race.