

KEEP IT SIMPLE

A LOFT REPORT ON JOHN UNDERDOWN

1ST OPEN BICC PAU INTERNATIONAL 2015.

The subject of this report is one of the unsung heroes of British long distance pigeon racing. John Underdown of Basildon in Essex has been quietly going about his business of developing and testing his team of long distance racers over a period of years. During that time he has achieved a number of top positions with the BICC in International races and in 2015 he hit the top spot in the BICC Pau International race when his pigeon, named Danny came out in front winning 1st East section and 1st Open BICC against 526 British pigeons. The following is John's story of his time in pigeons.

John started with pigeons in 1968 at the age of 13. His early mentors were Fred Cleverley and son along with Phil Wood of Laindon. The first loft took the form of a converted chicken shed measuring 6ft x 5ft x 4ft. However, things have changed in the intervening years and John's present loft measures 35ft in length with three sections. In addition he has a 15ft x 5ft two section stock loft and a small 8ft x 3ft young bird loft.

The race birds and young bird lofts are cleaned twice daily with the stock loft getting a good going over every other day

The race team amounts to around 40 old birds and from the best of these and the 15 pairs of stock birds John aims to rear around 25 young birds each season.

MANAGEMENT.

All birds are mated on 1st April as John has no interest whatsoever in sprint racing as he was successfully cured of "red card fever" many years ago.

Once the racers young birds are weaned then training begins with a few short tosses to start just to flex their muscles and then gradually working out to Hastings on the Kent coast at around 50 to 60 miles depending on the weather in the early part of the season.

The only additives to the drinking water are glucose and honey at the appropriate times – otherwise just plain water.

The birds are never forced to fly around home and are allowed their liberty twice daily. The normal routine at the Underdown loft is home exercise during the week with private training only on weekends.

Young birds are unraced in their first year but are trained extensively.

FEEDING.

The old bird racers are hopper fed twice a day whilst the young birds are tray fed as much as they want. The stock birds are hand fed until young have hatched and then they receive all that they require in order to ensure that they rear strong sound babies.

The old bird racers and stock birds are fed on Bamfords Breeding mixture with the young birds fed the same company's high protein mixture with no maize.

In the build up to the long International races John introduces some Extreme Energy into the racers daily diet thus bulking up the fat content in their feed.

BLOODLINES.

The present team is made up from a mixture of the German partnership of Kipp & son bloodlines crossed with the old English strain of Southwells. John has also crossed the Southwells with birds obtained from Eric Fox & son of Bakewell in Derbyshire and likes to inbreed within these various lines.

David Fox has been a great help with advice over the years with regard to breeding.

John has also had some good pigeons from the late George Bates of Gravesend from the TJ lines and has crossed these with the Southwells to produce his three times Barcelona cock.

The 2015 winner of the BICC Pau International race is a magnificent red of Kipp & son x Southwell breeding. He had previously won 18th Open Tarbes for John. This is the second time that John has won 1st Open BICC Pau International as his first success was with a chequer hen from the George Bates lines.

THOUGHTS ON THE SPORT.

This is what John has to say about the future of the sport:-

"In an ideal world I would like to limit the number of pigeons one person can send but I know that is not feasible. The sport has gone from being a working class man's sport to a sport motivated by money. A sign of the times I know but this prevents young fanciers from joining the sport. The cost of everything has gone sky

high - fuel, food, etc, a lot is out of ordinary working people's reach.”

MEDICATION.

The only medication used is the mandatory paramyxovirus vaccine and a treatment for Coci, worms and canker. Other than that the birds only have glucose and honey plus the occasional herb infusion plus John's homemade elderberry juice supplement and very occasionally some Oregano Stim.

These simple ,basic common sense methods when applied to John's favoured type of pigeon which has silky feathering with bright eyes ,and good body has brought John consistent success at the distance....., but as John says” winners come in all shapes and sizes.”

Congratulations John on your second BICC success. Here's wishing you many more.

Gareth Watkins



Mr-&-Mrs-John-Underdown 1st Open BICC Pau International 2015



John Underdown's racing loft



NestBoxesin John's racing loft



ThreeTimesBarcelona Cock

"Danny"

GB08L74957

**1st Sec E 1st Open British International
Championship Club Pau 2015
Raced by J Underdown, Basildon**



@Chris Sutton

1st Open BICC Pau International 2015 for John Underdown