

GLADWIN, JARVIS & FAMILY

1st OPEN BICC ALENCON 2015 against 4,634 birds.

The 2015 BICC Alencon National attracted an entry of 4,634 birds for this 200+ mile race. The convoy was liberated by Chief convoyer Trevor Cracknell in excellent conditions at 7 am on Saturday 17th May. Given the excellent flying conditions, the pigeons made light of the task romping home with velocities in the low 1400's. Heading the list of timers was a..... racing to the Leigh on Sea lofts of Gladwin, Jarvis & family. The partners have an excellent record at club, Fed and National level flying into Essex and so, as is my practice as BICC Press Officer I asked John Gladwin if he would answer a few questions about his time in the sport, his pigeons and methods. I should point out that John is the son of Pam and John Gladwin senior. As many will know, Pam has been a hard working scribe for the fancy press for many years now and John senior is an RPRA councillor and former Vice President of the RPRA.



Alan Armstrong, Theresa & John Gladwin 1st BICC Alencon

The following are John [junior's] responses to the questions put to him.

1. When did you start in the sport.

I was born into pigeon racing with my Grandad and Mum & Dad all being involved in pigeons. However it was at the age of 7 or 8 that I really started to take an interest in the day to day activities around the loft.

2. Who was your first major influence.

Obviously my family but at that time we also had some exceptional fanciers in our club (Rayleigh) and I was very lucky that from a very early age I was encouraged to mark pigeons on a Friday and do the clocks on the Saturday by the members. This meant that I learnt a lot very quickly from some great fanciers.

3. Can you give brief details of your first loft, birds, management etc.

At the age of 21 I moved into my first house and straight away converted an old 6 ft x3ft garden shed into a loft by adding a sputnik trap and some y/b perches. At the same time I also bought two 12ft x 8ft pigeon lofts from a club mate who had to pack in due to ill health. However, with the garden being so overgrown and trees needing to be removed before the lofts could be erected, I had to use the little shed to house. Management of the birds was pretty simple with a form of roundabout flown, in that I used to race both the hens and cocks but the hens were exercised and trained all week to one section with just poles in and on a race day they trapped to the cocks section. Young birds were raced to the perch and at that time they were raced on the natural system although in the first couple of seasons they were on a form of darkness. This

was because the old birds were mated very early so that I had youngsters in the nest that were so old that I was just able to ring them. So with long nights and short days the young birds were in effect on a form of "natural" darkness if you will.

4. How long have you raced to your present location.

I moved to my present address in March/April 2008 I broke out a few old birds and missed the first couple of races but still managed to win my second ever race at the new address with the broken birds and to a new loft.

5. Can you give details of your present loft set up i.e. overall dimensions , orientation , number of sections etc.

6.

The present old bird racing loft was bought when I moved to my new house from in my opinion the best fancier in the UK if not Europe - Mark Gilbert with the view that Mark had won Nationals and the first of his International wins to the loft. The theory being it had to be a good, well designed loft that allowed the birds to come into form. The loft is 76 foot long and 6 foot wide and up until 2014 this housed all my race birds, both old and young, but after deciding to race North road and South road in 2013 it became apparent that the two roads needed housing in different sections. Trying to get the birds ready for a race with different marking days and different distances was very hard, with some birds on a two or three week race schedule and others going each week. So a new 24 ft x 8ft young bird loft was bought from Parkhall lofts at Blackpool in 2014.

We started the 2015 old bird season with 96 old birds split roughly half and half between North road and south road.

Around 120 y/bs were reared this year for our race team. Again these are split about half and half. We decided not to worry about inland sprinting on the south road with y/bs in 2014 or with old birds in 2015, so for the start of the season we switched all our long distance blood lines south road and all the sprint lines onto the North road.

In addition to the old bird and young bird lofts we also have 48 foot stock loft which is split into 4 sections and houses the stock birds which are part of Formula 1 lofts.

7. Do you use deep litter ,grids or clean daily/regularly.

The old bird race team have gridded floors with a big gap underneath the grills for the droppings to fall into. The y/b's are kept on a deep litter as we believe this helps them build up immunity to disease. Some of our old birds also have gridded floors in the nest boxes others don't I cannot say I have seen any difference in results either way. All the y/b's are on gridded boxes/perches. The lofts are kept clean and dry but never spotless as I like my birds to be exposed to a bit of dirt and germs etc as I think it helps keep their immunity levels high and I have found it is easier to keep them healthy. When I have cleaned out twice a day every day I always found the y/bs would be ill after one or two races. However since not cleaning the y/b floors from weaning until the y/bs are moved to the old bird section each year I have found I have had very little issues with illness. (touch wood as at the time of writing we have only had 3 y/b races) !!

8. How many birds do you keep:- stock. racers, young birds.

As already mentioned we have the stud (Formula 1 lofts) side of things which means we have a lot more stock birds than most people would have or need. At the moment we have around 70 pair of stock birds which is high, even for us, but we have recently brought in two new families/strains of pigeons which we have not tried and tested yet. We started this season with 96 old birds to race and about 120 y/bs, which, as already mentioned, are split between our north road and south road teams.

9. What system do you use to race the birds e.g. widowhood, round about, natural etc.

Old birds are mainly raced on roundabout with a few cocks raced on celibate for the first time in 2015. We do tend to pair a few up for the longer races as I think sometimes hens on eggs handle the 3 or 4 days in the basket better.

10. When do you mate your stock birds, racers.

The stock birds are not paired on a particular date but tends to be when I have the time and it looks like there will be a few nice days of weather . The race birds are rarely bred from for myself so will be mated in line with stock birds to act as feeders for the eggs normally taking the second round of eggs from some of the main stock pairs.

11. Do you mate the birds you intend for the longer races at a different time to the other racers.

Yes - As we have started to switch our intensions towards the International racing we have delayed pairing these birds until late March/April time to try and delay form and the moult until as late as possible in the season.

12. What is the preparation of the racers prior to the first old bird race.

The birds are got fit at home by loft flying twice a day in the early season and once deemed to be fit enough are given a few training spins. For 2015, due to a combination of events the birds were trained a lot less than normal, especially the south road birds which only had 2 or 3 training chucks before racing. As a result we decided to put them into two inland races and then into BICC Alencon for half the team which we were lucky enough to win. The other half went to the Pithiviers joint venture race between Kent and Essex.

13. Do you force fly your birds during exercise or are they left to do as they please.

Old birds are left to fly as they please but y/b's are flagged if required at the start of the season until they are flying well around home.

14. How often do you exercise the race birds.

Old birds are let out twice a day., Young birds tend to be once a day until y/b racing is near and then they are let out twice a day or trained once and let out once.

15. How often do you train the race birds before and during racing. In an ideal world I like to give about 10/12 old bird training spins before the first race if I am racing them inland first. If they are going across the water for their first race then about 15 chucks would normally be ideal having said that as I have already said this year the birds had very little and when MAX won from Alencon that was only about his 6th or 7th time in a basket this year. Mind you my cocks did fly very well around home this season probably the best I have ever had them loft flying. The south road birds tend to be raced every other week so I like to give them a 20/30 mile toss on the week between races but this will depend on the previous week's race and the distance of the following week's race. The one thing we do not have around training is hard and fast rules as I think each week and certainly each year is different and you need to be able to adapt and amend the system in line with the bird's needs.

16. How far do you usually train.

This depends on the distance you want to do well at IMO, when we were aiming to do well sprinting on the south road, I used to take them twice a day to 5 mile and no loft flying after the first race. For the north road some of the best years we have had we have only trained to about 12-15 mile before the first race and no training after the first race. For the middle/long distance south road birds I like to give them a couple up to 40 miles before the first race and then the channel races and as mentioned the odd chuck in between races as required. I am not a believer in giving pigeons rests between races I think once it is fit and racing it should have some sort of race or training chuck most weeks for sprint to middle distance. The long distance birds are different and need a lot more rest between races to build their reserves up again. I like to train my y/b's throughout the season with them having 2 or 3 chucks a week. This year, apart from one toss when they went to the NFC marking station, my north road y/bs have not been trained above 15 miles.

17. Is there any specific preparation for the birds before National races.

No, not really, like all forms of racing the birds have to be of high quality, fit and healthy if you want to succeed and you need a bit of luck that the pigeons hit top form at the right time for the main races. This we try and bring on at the right time for the birds desired races by the pairing date, training/racing programme running up to the main races. The one thing I think differs from inland racing compared to National/channel racing is the rest between races required for the birds to hit top form. I think inland birds, even flying 300, 400, 500 mile races need to go week in week out but when birds are flying the channel they seem to need more of a rest between races to hit top form. The prime example being our yearling cock which won the Thurso (512 mile) Combine race this year on a very hard race. He flew the whole y/b programme and then the whole old bird programme including a 78 mile race 4 days before marking for Thurso. Incidentally he scored in this race as well.

18. How much racing do your young birds receive and how many training tosses do they have in the year of their birth.

Again this depends on which road they race as babies my north road y/b's get every race if fit which is 9 races ranging between 78 miles and steps up each week and we have two Combine races at 197 miles to

me. Our south road birds last year had one club race in which we were first and second club and then into the NFC or BICC race. On the other hand the 2 two year olds we sent and clocked from NFC Tarbes and BICC Agen this year were October 2013 weaned latebreds, which were not raced until May 2014 before having BICC Alencon, Tours and Poitiers. This year they had 2 inland races before doing BICC Alencon, Tours and Poitiers plus Agen and Tarbes NFC. So, at 21 months old, these 2 cocks have flown 6 national races between 200 -350 miles and 2 races at 500+ miles. The aim for at least one of these cocks will be Barcelona either in 2016 or 2017 if he is still here.

19. Do you race your young birds on the Natural system or Darkness/light system.

All y/bs go on the Dark system I do not think you can win races through the programme unless your y/bs are on dark or light system these days. I have not seen any ill effects for them as yearlings, in fact my yearlings this year have flown very well winning right through to 512 miles.

20. How do you feed the racers, stock birds, young birds – hopper /by hand. How do you gauge how much they need at each feed. All birds are fed in the hopper on the floors but they are not left with food in front of them they are allowed to eat as much as they like each meal time but once they stop eating the food is removed.

21. What mixtures do you feed.

I have used many different mixes over the years but have to say Bamfords and Versele Laga are my preferred mixes.

22. Do you feed any differently in the build up to National races.

No Base feed this year has been Gerry Plus for all races with some fat mix added in run up to the main races

23. What are the main bloodlines that you house now and which lines have proved the most successful.

At Formula 1 lofts we have 3 main families at the moment. The Frans Zwols which we first raced in 2011, the Louis Thijs which we first raced in 2014 and the Long distance pigeons from Rutz & Sons of Germany again which we first raced in 2014 . In addition, we have a few exceptionally well bred birds from some of the best fanciers and pigeons in Europe. All 3 main families are doing well for us and others but the Frans Zwols are winning out of turn in all races North and South road both long and short distances at National, Combine and Amalgamation level - even in 1 loft races.

24. Do you line breed, in breed outcross when breeding. Which method has been most successful for you.

We do inbreed with some and some we have found crossing produces the best results. The Frans Zwols work very well crossed as they are a family built around four or five pigeons. A cross can give super results and though it is early days I think the same will be true of the Rutz pigeons having crossed some ourselves with good early signs. When talking to some other top fanciers who also race the Rutz bloodlines they are finding the same.

25. Is there any fancier who has helped you more than any other.

I am very lucky that I have some great friends and family in the sport or interested enough to help out when required, people like my wife (Theresa) who is always running about for me. My partner in Formula 1 lofts, John Cowlin, my Mum & Dad and even my brother in law who does not race pigeons, but has been known to take pigeons training and pick up lost birds for me etc as well as building bases for lofts at short notice. Last but not least is Alan Armstrong who is a very knowledgeable fancier who has a great stock sense around pigeons who has been helping me for the last 3 seasons by doing a big chunk of the day to day work with the birds. Without Allen I would not have been able to race, let alone compete in the last 3 years due to my work and family commitments. I guess Allen is in a small group of people who has won Nationals in different parts of the country having won the Midland National twice and now the BICC.

26. Can you give an outline of your many top class performances and those that have given you most pleasure.

I have been lucky enough over the years to have had quite a few good performances though until this year the top prize at national level had alluded us, despite breeding two National winners for others we seemed to be stuck at 2^{nds} & 3^{rds} as our best result at National/Combine level. One example of a top result in which we did not manage a win was from Ripon y/b Combine on the north road in 2013 when we took 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,15,16,17,19 21st, these 13 birds were clocked over a 10 minute period with 105 members sending 1361 birds flying 197 miles. The first bird's velocity was 1208 ypm. In total we had 21 birds in the

top 100 of the result. (I think this was one of our best results) We also won 1st open NFC gold ring race in 2012. The 2015 season has been a bit of dream season as we started the old bird season off with a win from 78 miles and the season has gone from strength to strength with club wins along the way. However, the first big win of the season came when winning 1st Open BICC Alencon with our pigeon MAX on the anniversary of my mother in-law (Maxine) passing away. This was followed up with a good club win on the north road with our yearling cock from Stonehaven 390 miles in the 2nd longest race on the north road and then 1st club 1st fed 1st Combine from the very hard Thurso race flying 512 miles again with a yearling Frans Zwol cock.

We also won 5th 12th and 19th Combine when only 39 birds made it in race time. At the time of doing this write up I have just had last week's Fed result for the 2nd y/b race where we managed to have 14 birds in the first 28 in the Fed against 1,451 birds. I have also heard we have won the 3rd hotspot race in the North coast classic one 1 loft race in Ireland.

27. Can you give details of some of the top pigeons that you have raced.

I have been lucky enough to own and breed quite a few good pigeons over the years but I guess at present the stars are "24" or the Agen hen as she has become known. She is a Frans Zwols hen from 2012 and has won inland on the south road but she also as a yearling came 6th section 18th open Agen 514 miles clocked the 2nd morning. As a two year old she won 2nd section 8th open Agen clocked on the day, she also scored in other National races and Fed inland races. In addition to being a top racer, she also bred two ace hens for John & Gaynor Ashenden which have won lots of good positions including 1st Amal against 5,500 birds.

Obviously MAX himself who has won 1st, 112th and 167th open BICC in only 4 channel races he has been entered in. The 4th one he came back injured after what looked like a hawk attack. Then there's "416" winner of 6x1sts, 3x2nds 3x3rds plus many other positions.

The "L ring" cock only a Yearling but a winner of 1st club 15th fed and 17th Combine 490 miles 92 members sent 1,088 birds and 3rd club, 12th Combine 512 miles beaten by 2 loft mates, plus other positions.

"559" winner of 1st Combine Thurso 512 miles and despite only being a yearling has won at least 10 top positions already racing.

28. Do you have any views on how the sport can be improved and how we can attract new members into the sport.

I think the sport needs to evolve with the times. ETS was a big step in the right direction but I think a more major overhaul is required with the RPRA taking the lead. Parcels of land should be bought up and down the country and these should be the only official lib sites that can be used. This will help stop clashing as lib sites will be well spaced out and in contact with each other. Long term it will be an investment as parcels of land have a habit of becoming building plots over time.

I also think only 2 organisations should be allowed in each area for North road and south road racing.

These should still go together on the same lorry (s) to the race points but have a league system in which the best flyers from league 2 go up to league 1 and the bottom of league 1 go down to league 2. This should have two effects in that it will hopefully get people to support more races in the Feds as they want to stay in or move up a league and will give everyone a chance to compete at their own or a similar level each week. As pigeon racing is about the only sport when from race one a novice has to compete against the very best. You could not see a new player at darts having to compete against Phil Taylor or a new snooker player having to play Ronnie O'Sullivan each week. Any results should then state which league you were in to give more transparency as to what competition level the fancier is flying against.

29. Do you have a specific programme of medication.

No, birds are treated only if we think they are off colour in some way or a Vet says there is something wrong. Our aim over the last few years is to treat as little as possible.

30. Do you use any supplements such as vitamins etc.

Not on a routine basis but may do if they have been treated for anything. After a hard race or on very warm days they get electrolytes in the water on return from the race.

31. Do you feed any supplements in the build up to long distance / National races.

For the longer races we add more fats to the mix and will use some oils on the food from time to time.

32. How does your ideal pigeon look/ handle.

I have learnt over the years winners come in all shapes and sizes so I am never put off by the look or feel of a pigeon and the basket is always the decider either as a racer itself or how its children race if it is a stock bird. In fact I have often found that the more ugly or bad handling birds often seem to make the better pigeons and the nice ones you pick out are often the first lost.

33. If you could only use one product / supplement what would it be. Matrix – I think it is a great product which gives the birds all the grit and minerals they need in one go without having loads of little pots around the lofts. I am a great believer these days, having tried most supplements, that most have little or no positive effect on the birds performance, beyond Grit, minerals, vitamins, cider vinegar, electrolytes and oils.

Thank you John for taking the time to answer the questions in such a detailed manner. Good luck for the future.

Gareth Watkins



@Chris Sutton

MAX 1st BICC Alencon for Gladwin, Jarvis & Family



View of garden with OB and YB lofts



124_YB loft



OB section



YB section



Yb loft with deep litter