

SIMON FERGUSON of BRIGHTON

1st OPEN BICC GUERNSEY YOUNG BIRDS

The recent Guernsey race organised by the BICC proved to be yet another success with more than 2,700 pigeons competing for top honours in the AFECO sponsored young bird and Any Age race. With a strong south westerly wind blowing along the whole course of the race, the birds were expected to record high velocities and one pigeon certainly did so, as Brighton fancier Simon Ferguson timed a young pencil blue cock on 2058 ypm to lead the field in both the Young Bird and Old Bird races. The following article gives a brief insight into Simon's time in the sport.



Simon Ferguson with his 1st Open BICC YB National winner

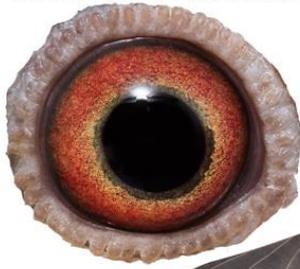
Simon Ferguson began in the sport as recently as 2013. Prior to 2013 Simon kept Birmingham Rollers and show birds and only started with these in 2011 as his first livestock interest was dogs. The first introductions came from Gary Jackson of the Lewes club who is Simon's next door neighbour. It was through his time watching Gary's

birds race home, that inspired Simon's interest in the racing side of the sport.

"Stan's Machine"

GB16B33354

**1st Sec CS 1st Open British International
Championship Club Guernsey Y/B 2016
Raced by S Ferguson, Brighton.**



©Chris Sutton



Since those first introductions from Gary, further introductions have come via Steve and Dave Cook from Wandsworth in London. The Cook brothers providing Simon with four pairs of their Gaby Vandenabeeles. Patrick Harris from Portsmouth also gifted Simon some good birds to set him off on the right foot so to speak. In 2016 Simon has also introduced some Van Dyke and Van Loon pigeons from some of the best racing lofts in the UK to supplement his foundation birds.

THE LOFT.

Simon's first loft was a small 7 foot garden shed with aviaries on front. The box perches in this loft were constructed from scaffold boards. This initial loft housed the gift birds from the various fanciers already mentioned and were a mixture of Vandenabeeles, Jan Aardens and Busschaerts

The present loft is made up of three main sections plus a corn store. One section has 24 box perches to house the hens. The next section measuring 14ft x 8ft is fitted out with 24 nest boxes of the German "Up and Over" style for the racing cocks. Stock birds are housed in a 7ft x 8ft section and finally there is a 15ft x 6ft section for the young birds fitted out with pipo boxes. The whole structure is constructed from two individual sheds and loads of scaffold boards. Young birds are kept on a dry droppings type of deep litter with the old bird racers and stock birds cleaned out regularly as time allows without Simon having to be a slave to the scraper.



MANAGEMENT.

The race team amounts to 24 racing cocks and around 80 young birds bred from the best of the racers and the 6 stock pairs that Simon keeps at his home plus 8 stock pairs housed at his friend Paul Gent's home. The young birds are raced on the darkness system with the old cocks raced exclusively on widowhood. All birds both racers and stock are mated at the same time – Boxing Day.

Once their domestic duties have been concluded Simon likes to get the widowers into the air with regular home exercise and once they are flying freely for 45 minutes or so during their twice daily exercise periods he gets them into training with up to ten training tosses out to 30 miles. Once this initial training is complete the old birds get no more during the season just home exercise twice per day.

However, Simon likes to give the young birds a good education and trains these regularly with as many as 30 trainers if time allows, so that they get plenty of experience to set them up for the next season's old bird campaign. The birds seem to exercise well voluntarily but if they look likely to drop before their 45 minutes is up then Simon isn't averse to hoisting a Spurs flag to keep them going!

FEEDING.

Widowhood cocks are fed in their boxes on a mixture made up of Versele Laga Gerry plus and Superstar plus with breeding mix added after racing and training. The young birds are fed on exactly the same mixtures as the old birds. As he is fairly new to the sport, Simon doesn't have any strong views on



breeding policy but he does like to study the birds' eyes but as he says he's no expert. Simon's mate, Paul Gent has helped a great deal with regard to sourcing new birds and breeding birds for Simon to race.



Simon Ferguson, Stanley and Paul Gent

Some might say that Paul is a silent partner as he can usually be found at the loft on race days. In his short time in the sport Simon has enjoyed a fair measure of success winning 7 x 1sts plus 2 x 2nds in his first season and took great pleasure in winning 1st club Messac. As Simon told me it was a great feeling knowing that he had bred a pigeon with the guts and determination to cross the English Channel. Any pigeon that does so will earn a perch in the Ferguson loft.

MEDICATION & SUPPLEMENTS.

Simon only treats the birds when needed and as such he regularly sends the birds' droppings and throat swabs for testing. Gemthepax Probiotic is used after any treatments to get the birds intestines back in good shape. Fresh garlic, Cider Vinegar and Metatone Iron Tonic are used on a regular basis and apart from grit and Matrix that's all the birds get to keep them fit and well.



There you have it then, the Simon Ferguson story of success after a very short time in the sport. From talking to Simon and reading his responses to my questions I have the feeling that with his level of enthusiasm and stock sense, it won't be long before we will be hearing a lot more from this fancier. Well done on your first National win Simon and good luck for the future.

An in depth article on the Micky Watts, whose pigeon won 1st Open in the Old Bird race on the same day, can be found on the BICC web site as Micky is a multiple winner of BICC Open races and as such has already been covered.

Gareth Watkins