

Haste Makes Waste

Ken Easley – May 2018

I, like many others are always on the look out for special pigeons. Break away pigeons are of high interest. In looking for them I have come to understand that circumstances play a role in how and why some pigeons come to the front. Hawk attacks and confusion can play a role. It is good to know if it is a true break away pigeon or a lucky pigeon. During a hawk attack which I have witnessed first hand after release, some of the pigeons may go one direction while the others go in the opposite direction. Some pigeons will go to ground and hide and come home at dark when it is safe. I have actually witnessed this after releasing the birds to see a falcon chase a bird to ground thinking it was dead only to have it arrive back home just before dark. The only true way to see if you are looking at a special pigeon is having multiple races to confirm it.

A fellow fancier in Canada, Bill Weima, and his partner Dan Horner decided to have a race that would determine a true top shelf pigeon. He named it the Silvercreek Quad. The word quad was used to describe having four races of similar distance to determine a true top shelf pigeon. It had a 251 mile race, two races of 307 miles, then a final race of 353 miles. He trained those pigeons like no other race I have entered. Head wind course which was difficult. I was happy to have one up top. Mine was not a break away pigeon but showed himself to be tough as nails which made me happy.

Most races only have one race at each distance so if there is a hawk attack or a bad weather pattern the best pigeon may not have the opportunity to do as well as it might have with no interruption. One thing I can say is a top pigeon will almost always be in the first 10 minutes if they are clean races with no hawk attacks that sent a bird to ground. Most of us understand that on a distance race pigeons begin to separate and the endurance pigeons begin to lead. They slowly move to the lead through attrition. After 350 miles only the very best navigators and fittest specimens will continue to lead.

I was talking to a good friend Jay Taylor, retired Sniper from the armed forces who was visiting and handling some of my Africa winners. He also has race horses and is very knowledgeable about them. He mentioned that in race horses there are different classes of horses. A horse that wins a Stakes race may disgrace itself in a race like the Kentucky Derby. I think it can be the same with pigeons. Small to large one loft races have begun to sort out the classes of pigeons. A race of 300 miles with tail winds and 100 pigeons going to the final race is not comparable to a 350 mile race with heat, headwinds, and 2000 plus entries. It takes another class of pigeon to win. An opportunity may be found in a small race by sending a higher class pigeon. This is becoming increasingly more difficult in the USA due to so many class pigeons being bred, many originating from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. Top class pigeons are being purchased from these races and imported to the USA as well.

Take for instance bringing in a pair of pigeons from a breeder who has won against the very best the world had to offer in a world class race and from his very best winning lines. Birds that have

won the million dollar race, the Canary Island race, The Carnival City race, The Ostsee Rennen race, Sofia Race, and the RV in Germany to name a few. Many times winning by as much as and even more than an hour out front. Imagine that you bring in 50 of such pigeons from this breeder. Then you breed through them and find several top producers. Imagine this top producing world class pair has youngsters flying in a small one loft race, or even better yet imagine it is in a small club with 5 or 6 members of little means of acquiring top class pigeons. Imagine then that these pigeons are flown to widowhood with youngsters in the nest as young birds. I wonder what might happen with such a circumstance.

This same pair of pigeons might produce high grade superstars when compared to the rest. How would they compare to a larger class race? Would they be competitive? How do we know they are high grade when they only flew against 5 or 6 club members? Just because they won against a small club is no sure indication they are of the same class as their ancestors. We send them out to one loft races with more birds and bigger prizes. What if they continue to win even with the big numbers in the larger races? What if they win against the biggest race in the world?

A pigeon that is able to be on the drop off every car race with 3 or 4 thousand pigeons and win Hot Spot Car Race champion against Germany, UK, Belgium, Africa, Kuwait, Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, Canada, Canary Islands, Spain, and many more countries. Is this really a good pigeon. I say yes, top class.

What do you think the result would be with such a youngster flying in a small club of 5 or 6 members? It would be interesting to say the least.

I heard a great pigeon man, more experienced than myself say, “bring on those imports”, meaning it would be much easier for him to win locally based on previous experience. He is right many times because not all pigeons are good ones regardless of where they come from. But I have a challenge for him. Send your home grown family to Africa against children from those same imports and see what happens. I watched as Mike Ganus purchased the winners of the SCMDPR. I sat right next to him in Africa in 2012 and purchased a couple of the top winners myself that day. He also went directly to the fancier and picked up the father of one of the winners of the 2012 SCMDPR. That same cock, a German bred producer of the SAMDPR winner bred another 1st prize SAMDPR winner for him. It’s not rocket science. It’s a different class of pigeon.

I had a pair of Wal Zoontjens pigeons from his very best. I sent two youngsters off them to Africa and guess what? They both came in the money on the final. In fact I flew in a syndicate called Team USA with Mike and guess what? Those were the only two to win money out of all birds sent from our group of top flyers. Mike is a competitive guy just like I am, and not to be outdone he got busy, and let me tell you something, he wasn’t playing around. I laugh when I think about Mike’s getting busy, he is the kind of guy that is always pushing the limits. I want a true test of my breeding abilities and the genetics I am working with so the better the competition the better my birds will become.

I told my wife before the Victoria Falls race, “I hope Mike didn’t send those darn Mona Lisa’s”. Those pigeons win here in the USA on 300 mile races. Victoria Falls is a 250 mile final and it’s

tougher so about the equal of a 300 here in my opinion. Sure enough there they were like clockwork. The Red Monkey, what an appropriate name! I have heard they will increase the distance next year. I suspect the longer distance pigeons will make a better showing with this change. I enjoy good competition and we have some of the best here in the USA. When I think about all of the guys from the USA competing right now, I know it is going to be tough to win because it is stacked with talent.

Some genetics work better in South Africa than others. That is why I bid on the million dollar winner this year. Her name is Mix and she is just that. A mix of winning genetics in South Africa Million Dollar Race. Mike won the bidding war at 94k. I still have a little sticker shock with the prices on these top athletes. A fairly expensive pigeon and not to be taken lightly by an amateur. I am happy she is coming to the USA. This pigeon represents several generations of successful South African Racers. I had dreams of mating her to Puggle (also a break away male winner there that I purchased last year) and breeding the ultimate African racer.

I mated Puggle to Sunce, who was 2nd prize in the SAMDPR 2017. The youngsters are noticeably a different class. Anyone imagining that these pigeons were lucky to win a 325 mile race in Africa would have a completely different opinion if they handled these pigeons. They are remarkable specimens. I am very excited about the Hoosier Million Dollar Race. I have flown there several times and what I noticed is I always get a box of pigeons back when it's over and the health is excellent. This is a big deal for pigeon racing in the USA and I for one can't wait to see how I measure up. I had an equal 1st last year 2017 on the final 350, 7th to trap. What a thrill to be in the winning group. Not bragging

because one, when you brag you are going to get slapped hard and two, that's not what it's about. It's about admiration of a champion. I can give myself only this credit, I didn't do anything to mess it up! This pigeon is one classy fellow. His pedigree has the very best with 3 times birdy's proven sisters up close plus Konbird and his top son Easy Money. I know everyone will be pulling out all the stops this year to make a good showing. I'm still scratching my head and second guessing myself on my pairings. The biggest obstacle my birds face right now is me.

You rarely hear much about who bred Secretariat but everyone knows who Secretariat is. A champion race horse. Same applies to Man O' War or Seabiscuit. The breeder can gain some attention but it is the animal that does the work and is to be admired. I feel that way about our pigeons.

Some of these one loft races have different levels of exposure to sickness or accidents that happen. Birds hit wires and fences. There are hawks and falcons. If you can send several top prospects you might have a chance to get one in on the final. The odds are stacked against you so it will be difficult no matter what you send. But you can't have any fun sitting on the sidelines. To the point of the article name, Haste Makes Waste, buying all kinds of pigeons without a plan is like racing in the Le Mans with a Ford Pinto. I study the class of race, the distance, the conditions before I put my pairs together. Hasty decisions to purchase pigeons have almost always resulted in wasted money.

If you want to prove this in your mind as true look at the evidence. What evidence? Every break away or upfront pigeon has a story behind it. Super 73, Birdy, Kannibaal, Young Artist, and many

more have made a mark here in the US because they were a different class pigeon. People can laugh when you use the “world class” terminology and in some cases I agree with them but can anyone laugh about the impact of a Kannibaal on the racing pigeon world? You can't get out what you didn't put in. If you're breeding a horse and jackass you will always get mules.

I always want to start as high up the ladder as possible. I don't care about names or letters on band. If my competitor has the best pigeons I want some of them. When you buy youngsters you may get the best pigeon ever produced by the pair. It is the best way to purchase pigeons except maybe getting the proven producer which can be expensive.

99% will be culls but when you get that one good one you are on your way to lots of good results. It's undeniable that this is the way of it. A great breeding pigeon can make you look like a genius. If you purchase what turns out to be a Super 73 or Sun City, the bird begins to be known as a “Ganus” pigeon or “John the Greek” pigeon. Why? Because they discovered them and utilized them. They didn't create them but in stock breeding, recognizing and utilizing them is more important many times. They were able to build around these pigeons and showcase them where they could make an impact.

Some pigeons may make an impact in Sun City but may not make an impact anywhere else. It is rare to find a pigeon that has the class to make an impact anywhere it is raced. Kannibaal is the class of pigeon that has done this. You see them win in headwinds of Africa or in the tailwinds of the GHC. They can win in Portugal, Germany, Netherlands and anywhere else. This is a different level of class. The name Koopman became a household

name after the introduction of Golden Lady. Gunther Prange became well known after the introduction of Beatrixdoffer with Ringlose.

I myself have gained some level of competitiveness due to Konbird. Following the golden genetic is the obsession with stockmen that want to win. It is true a good trainer can have an impact on racing in club. A top trainer can take mediocre pigeons and beat your pants off in club racing. In a one loft race these same pigeons may fall short. In fact it is most likely they will. I have seen it many times. How do we overcome this? Study the race you want to be competitive in. Maybe it is a 350 mile final race with headwinds and heat. This can be accomplished by using a long distance pigeon mated to an early maturing speed pigeon. Or maybe purchasing some youngsters from someone who is winning regularly in this venue. Good luck out there! see you on the race track.