

Statistical Race Track in the Sky

Ken Easley – October 2018

I have been looking at the one loft race stats I have collected and those of others as well. I find them beneficial but I see some areas that bring up questions. For my own records I am trying to figure out a way to collect deeper into the list of entrants. I have heard sports used as a way to justify or rationalize using only certain levels of statistics as it is too much work to collect the smaller entries as in baseball. I can understand that analogy but at the same time in baseball they collect all the varsity high school stats for every player in the USA.

Some kids may have 11 at bats, with 5 RBI's and two home runs. That would put that particular child at double the national average. These stats were not a full season of hitting yet they tracked them. These stats were noticed by colleges and the phone calls started.

For me it is important to see the smaller entries of lofts that compete in one loft racing. If a fellow were to enter 5 races and send three pigeons to each one he would have sent out 15 pigeons. He would be under the threshold and not be tracked. If he were to win or be in the top 10 of four or five of those races on the final race that would be significant. These things can and do happen.

The biggest hurdle is guys collecting stats like myself do it for free and in their spare time. How can you possibly fault someone who

shares the stats for doing so much to give back to the sport? I certainly cannot. I still like to think about these things.

Recently something came to my attention. The terrible returns on some races this year started me to thinking. I have a hard time believing that all those birds were culls. One loft races starting with 1000 birds entered and ending up with none or less than 100 birds at the end. Other races have better returns. Maybe it's a tailwind course with flatland to fly over that makes the returns better? Maybe the mountains and headwinds reduce the returns? Maybe areas with falcons take a toll on the returns by splitting up the flock and some go the wrong way or to ground? Maybe it is sickness at the intake period of the race that the pigeons never fully recover?

Should there be some kind of tempered statistics measurement to get the full picture of what happened? How can you? If you temper the stats for disaster does that diminish the achievements of the winners?

I always say if one pigeon can make it why not the rest? But in some cases it just can't be explained that easy. Here is where it gets interesting. One solution is don't go back to that race. Is this what we want? All tough races going away? I understand the need to avoid bad managers but I would hate to lose headwind and rough terrain races? Should we turn our backs on a race that has a bad year? Is that fair?

It prompted me to think of a potential strategy that may be employed by entrants to gain an edge in statistical reporting.

If someone were trying to do well in the stats even though it pays nothing but may help sell pigeons, one could send only to the easy course flatland races and raise his percentages in the stats. In fact I believe it could get to a point where guys are sending to races with the best returns to raise their stats. I certainly am thinking of that myself. When a guy calls and says hey I hope you will be sending to my race this year. My first thought may be that I sent 10 to you the last two years and most were lost in overflies or sickness and it was a poor investment..... and it hurt my stats. Head winds are a great test for pigeons to asses their determination. Maybe there should be categories for headwind races? Mountain courses?

They have categories in boxing for weight because a 5'-6" and 100 pound man boxing a 6'-4" and 250 pound guy isn't fair. Same with women and men in golf. AU has categories for short middle and long distance. The digest awards have different categories based on the size of the competition. 5 - 20 lofts or 500-1000 lofts, etc... They understand it wouldn't be fair to give a guy the same amount of credit flying against 5 lofts when another guy is flying against 1,000 lofts. Sounds pretty smart to me.

Statistics are hard enough to keep up with as it is.....but it got me to thinking these races with poor returns may be doomed to fail and maybe they only needed time to learn or bad health hit them unfairly swaying the results. It would be unfortunate considering some of the investments made by these managers. The loft alone could be big expense.

Another potential strategy is to send our test pigeons to late races that are not being tracked, or overseas. One could also reduce

his entries in the USA spring/fall races to raise the return stats and to be more successful. If the threshold of entries being tracked is 25 then an entrant might decide to send out 5 pigeons to 5 races or 4 pigeons to 7 races. He would send his most proven pairings and what he feels is the very best of those youngsters to these tracked races. This will help the stats but it could hurt the races. Some guys can afford to send teams of 25 - 50 to have them tested at a race. They may refrain from doing so if they think it will hurt their stats. Some guys are incredibly competitive and believe me they will think of these things sooner or later.

Entrants may only fly in one loft races in their area to increase returns since their pigeons may have been selected through local club flying and will do better in the area. Some entrants may just not worry about their statistics and do what they like. In any case have a nice season. See you on the imaginary race track in the sky.