

Ross Chapman

1st, 2nd & 3rd FARINA OPEN, 1st & 2nd MORUNDAH 2. 1st SIRE'S PRODUCE PLUS BIRD OF THE YEAR & POINTS WINNER (CHAMPION FLYER) 2004

Where do you start to describe Ross Chapman's 2004 season.

Win, win, win..... the list grows and grows.

Ross Chapman, of the Port Adelaide North club had been the star flyer of the beachside area for almost 10 years now. The Port was once the strongest pigeon flying area of SA, back when the flew the hard South-East line. Now it is only a shadow of those golden years, except for the fact that Chapman is SA's best flyer.

Ross Chapman has always been successful in sport. In table tennis and training greyhound he was always a winner, suggesting it has more to do with his single-minded determination (others might say obsession) than any strain of birds.

when he's in pigeon mode Ross thinks and talks about nothing else.

Like John Pryor before him, he's living proof that winning comes to those who want it the most and are prepared to make the sacrifices.

Ross has some golden rules. Never have too many birds (120 maximum), and don't carry many stock birds. Never accept a bird from anyone unless it's from an outstanding flyer or performance.

Some will tell you that the strength comes from a pair of Peter Matthew's pigeons purchased in the nineties blended with the birds from Wally Gertig, Reg Muller and one or two others.

But others suspect Ross would win with anything. He's meticulous (he's been seen cutting his lawn with household scissors) and nothing is left to chance. He trains regularly but not far.

Most of his winners are closely related and although he says he's got only four good pairs, his worst would be the best for many other lofts.

His club season gave no hint for what was to follow. Leading into the main part of the season, he was happy with his birds.

But after race three on the Association program he was ecstatic. Ross admits from Farina Open they came

over his loft. He stopped clocking after six birds- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th and 8th. He could have had a dozen in the first 20.

In the Sires Produce it was a sister to his best pigeons who led them home. It was a loft in top form and you can do no wrong. Placing followed placing and with four races to go Ross was heading the points.

Then he struck a hurdle. He missed out from Coober Pedy, finishing second last in his group and panic set in. "What's gone wrong. Are they tired? Are they sick? Is it all over?"

Ross looked at the feed and then decided to toss daily leading up to the last weekend. On the Tuesday he sent his whole team with the Hampstead toss - Web Beach (40 kms).

Ross got 15 home togetherthen nothing. A check with the Hampstead crew found there was only a few home. When the rest finally came home before mid-day on Wednesday, they had flown hundreds of miles and were finished.

So Ross sent his team with little faith, knowing he'd have to clock a good one to hold onto the points.

No good from Temora so it was all down to Morundah on the Sunday.

Just when the front markets were starting to get a little nervous, news came that the back-marker Ross Chapman had already clocked to be 1st and 2nd.

This capped off one of the best seasons anyone has ever had.

Ross' best pair are a blend of the Matthew's pair, a black Gertig hen, a Marchant/Eitzen cock and Reg Muller's Janssens with a slate Sheer Elegance cock.

His no. 1 has now bred 13 SAHPA place getters (not unusual in Ross' Loft). Chapman has now won 5 SAHPA races plus several Sires Produces races. In the next decade he could emulate the feats of Pryor, Goodger and Wickham.

On the lighter side, Ross looks back on two sales in Melbourne and Sydney where his best birds sold for \$30 and \$40 each. Some people have got a bargain.

Pigeon home after New York detour

A racing pigeon who took a wrong turn on his way from France to Merseyside and ended up in New York has finally come home to roost. Billy the pigeon was only due to fly the 425 miles from Calais to his home in Merseyside in the race three weeks ago. But he took a remarkable 3,321 mile detour and ended up on New York pigeon fancier Joseph Ida's terrace among his flock of 100 racing birds. Billy now has to spend a month in quarantine before getting back to his creature comforts. "You could see that he had been out," said Mr Ida,

who added that Billy looked a little tired, thin and run down. The pigeon touched down at Manchester Airport on Wednesday morning following a six-hour flight from JFK International Airport, and was reunited with his owner John Warren, of Bootle, Merseyside. Billy will have to spend 31 days in quarantine before returning home. A British Airways spokesman said: "He had a pleasant flight. It was a pleasure to have a VIP - a very important pigeon - on board." The spokesman said Billy was "very perky" following the flight in a pressurised hold.