

SAHPA Moulamein Open



Bob Huff: Winning this year's SAHPA Moulamein Open was the highlight of my pigeon racing career. It was made even more special since my late Dad had tried for many years to win, and despite a number of second placings, he had never actually achieved a win. I must admit my first thought on winning was "this one is for Dad". I felt quite emotional about it.

Having raced with my father (also named Bob Huff) for many years before pursuing my teaching career in the country (York Peninsula, Karoonda and Eyre Peninsula) I returned to pigeon racing ironically when Dad became too sick to look after his birds. In 1992 I took his birds and loft up to my small farm five kilometres from Mylor in the Adelaide Hills. Regrettably Dad's birds were not suited to the hills (too falcon shy) and I had to look for birds better suited to the area.

Many thanks to Bronte Andrewartha, Ian Edwards, Rodney Howe and Michael Terreri who gave me a number of good birds and from then on my results started to improve. Bronte and the late Bob Pearson were very generous with their time and helpful advice. Even though Dad had taught me a great deal I have found pigeon racing in the hills very different and challenging.

Prior to winning Moulamein my birds had been having a very tough time during training as two resident falcons had been constantly and ferociously attacking them. I remembered Dad telling me that if you are having problems, it is ok to lock the birds up for a few days. I did this and it clearly must have helped. I started letting them out again four days before hampering for the race even though the weather was still very wet and windy.

The winner was a young blue bar hen that had only moulted eight flights. Her sire was a Goodger Metcalf cock that was bred off two birds Bronte Andrewartha had given me. Her



Bob Huff's blue bars

dam was an eight year old Dangerfield hen that Gavin Harris had bred and put in a squeaker sale. Bronte bought her, used her and kindly gave her to me.

The old bloodlines of Ron Eitzen, Goodger, Metcalf, Pryor and Dangerfield have worked well for me in the hills. I have not had much success with imported bloodlines although a cross of about one eighth to a quarter of Gabby, Delbar and or Busschaert bloodlines with the old families has been helpful at times.

In February of this year when it looked as though I wouldn't be able to race because of a serious lower back and sciatic nerve problem in my right leg, David Walker and Ray Linkevics made some crucial modifications to my loft which enabled me to far more easily manage my birds.

One of the things that always takes a great deal of time is educating the birds in preparation for racing. I have found it necessary to give the birds lots of little tosses - perhaps as many as fifteen before a Pt.Wakefield toss. At this time I would have the birds pretty lean as they often need to be able to fly for their lives when attacked by the falcons.

When mating up for breeding racers I like to line breed. I like to breed off cocks that have flown places like Canberra, Temora and Alice Springs. As long as the hen is in good condition and a proven producer (and there are not many), I will keep using them and likewise the cocks. My best breeding hen is now ten and her mother bred an Association winner on the south line when she was ten years old (not for me).

I have raced in my current location in Stirling near the golf course one hill away from Mt. Lofty for seven years. Apart from the falcons one of the challenges up here is the weather. It is often wet and very foggy which makes it difficult at times to get the young birds ready to race.

While in favour of the prepaid system, I would like flyers to pay for a team of birds rather than register all the birds. For example I am a small team flyer so I might pay for a race team of say 10 birds. Should I wish to race more I pay so much per bird (e.g. \$2 per bird per race).

I particularly like limited bird racing and am very pleased that the committee has been including a few in the programme. These races require flyers being able select their better birds and they dramatically reduce the impact of drag.

I would like to thank all the members on the Committee and in particular Gavin Harris and Paul Springett for their enormous efforts throughout the year.