

The Bryan Mair Story

By Len Vanderlinde November 2020

Bryan Mair flying with the Ipswich Racing Pigeon Association club won the Qld Racing Pigeon Federation Overall and Open Fed Championship in 2020.

With some consistent and wonderful results flying the South West Route out to Noccundra it was for Bryan a season to remember.

His best results were:

- 1st Fed Bollon 560klms @ 1155mpm,
- 2nd Fed Moonie 270klms @ 1291mpm,
- 2nd Fed Bollon 560klms @ 1410mpm,
- 2nd Fed Eulo 800klms @ 1100mpm,
- 3rd Fed Millmerran 180klms @ 1309mpm,
- 3rd Fed Bollon 560klms @ 1342mpm
- 4th Fed Westmar @ 1173mpm

Also, Bryan scored Fed points 13 times out of the 18 races flown (a reduced season due to COVID 19 restrictions). An outstanding result in anyone's book!



Figure 1 Old chicken pen and river in background

69-year-old Bryan lives with his wife Gladys in Coalfalls, an outer suburb of Ipswich, about 30 klms south-west of the Brisbane CBD. They live in a high-set Queenslander backing onto the Bremer River, which has been known to cause major flooding in the past, which is why Bryan has raised the house a couple of feet above the

previous major flood level back in the well-remembered 1974 floods.

Bryan has been interested in pigeons from childhood. Way back in his early youth, when living on the family dairy farm in the Moggill area and visiting his grandfather, who's neighbour was the well-known Sir Douglas Wadley, a top racing pigeon fancier of his day, who just happened to be visiting and had a crate of racing pigeons with him, Bryan was

immediately attracted to them, the big white wattles and overall appearance was mesmerizing to the young Bryan.

Later while attending school in the Rosalie area, he, along with some other school friends caught some feral pigeons off the church roof and young Bryan took his home on the bus in a paper bag. His father was not impressed but the bug had well and truly bitten and pigeons were now part of his life.

Bryan was given a mealy cock back then, that became so tame it used to follow Bryan while he was riding his horse around the family farm, landing on his shoulder whenever he stopped. The mealy found a grizzle hen, a stray with a QHS ring on its leg, the two birds set about raising a family but to Bryan's great disappointment they all died, he was devastated.

Bryan started an apprenticeship in the Ipswich area where he met and eventually married Gladys when 25 years old. He settled in the Ipswich area and purchased his current property 37 years ago from a former pigeon fancier, so pigeons have been part of the property for over 60 years.

The racing loft is a two-story affair with the race birds in the upper level



Figure 2 Two story Race Loft

and rooms downstairs for breeding, although the main breeding takes place in a large number of single pens built as units.

There is currently no handrail around the decking on the top level of the race loft and falling off is certainly on your mind when walking on it. Bryan

has fallen off a couple of times already, luckily without any major injuries.

Benzing electronic timing is used and just as well because Bryan stated the birds often land in the top section without being noticed, which happened from the Eulo 800km race this year. The birds had been released at 6.30 am and the sun had gone down at 5.39 pm with no birds home, but a little after 6



Figure 3 Bryan and the breeding units



Figure 4 Bryan and the breeding units

pm, in the gloom, Bryan's friend and neighbour Ben Elliott rang to say he had just clocked, Bryan congratulated him and was walking around kicking stones because he didn't get one, but on checking upstairs, there was a pigeon timed at 6 pm, turned out to be the 2nd of only 4 birds timed in the Fed that evening, with Ben being placed 3rd after Bryan had rung him and

apologized for not knowing he had clocked before Ben.

The imports have replaced the old Brisbane pigeons that he used to race, although some of the old blood does remain. He recalled being given some very good Van Cutsum hens from Geoff Cowen to replace those that he lost when a fox killed a number of his stock hens many years back.

The Marilyn Janssens crossed with the Balfe's have been very good pigeons for him, but lately, the Red Janssens and Gaby Vandabeele's from Rod Hatherly are taking over the winning. Two nestmate brother cocks bred from Rod's National hen have been particularly good. A Houben he purchased for quite a large sum has also blended in well and breeding good race birds for Bryan.

Long-distance bloodlines have dropped off over the years, but as these races count towards the championship he is now making an effort to strengthen that part of his family. A couple of Jurions from Alvin Richardson South Australia are being tried at the moment, along with some local distance birds.

Bryan starts the season with about 140 birds, mainly young birds, bred from three rounds in the breeding units.



Figure 5 Upstairs trapping section of the race loft

He races his hens and cocks together and only to the perch. He did say, like most of us he has too many stock birds and a lot of beautiful birds are going to waste by not being used. He recalled one lovely pied hen that he

never used until she was 5 years old only to find out her young were terrific birds.

He makes his own feed mixes with grain obtained from the silos at Gehrke Grain and Transport, mainly wheat and corn with some milo, safflower, groats, linseed and a few sinkers (peas) added.

The biggest change to the feed this year was the addition of barley, which he hadn't used previously, but will be using more often from now on, believing it played a big part in his successful season. He also mentioned that the quality of the grain available this year had been exceptionally good for a change.

Hemp oil was also added to the grain this year for the first time with good results.

Vitamins are rarely used and medication was kept to a minimum, which he thought he may have over-done in the past. Although he did admit he gave them some Baycox one week this season and his results went out the door the following weekend. Sani-Chick (iodine) is one product that he does use and likes to "clean" the crop.

The birds worked very well around the loft this year and he puts this down to the barley that he added to lighten his mix, also he does add additional maize as the distance increases.

With more time on his hands now that he is retired, a big effort was put in to get the birds fit for the 2020 SW route, which he favours out of the 3 directions flown by the QRPF and it certainly paid dividends.



Figure 6 Stock birds in one of the breeding pen

The birds were given a lot of pre-season tosses, mostly over the range with Ben and the West Section, but admits the falcon

problem is getting worse anywhere near those ranges. Two tosses per week were maintained during the season, one mid-week and the other on Saturday but he is wary of tossing on race day in case something goes wrong and the returning toss birds interfere with the returning race birds.

Bryan recalled how much racing and the QRPF have changed over the years, the competitiveness that use to be generated by the money

involved in some of the racing many years ago caused many a flare-up among the members. He remembered being fined \$20 (a lot of money back then) because he had changed the colour on one of his birds on the second call of the ring race nomination sheet.

With a settled married life of 44 years and now retired, with all those years of experience behind him, I suspect we will be seeing Bryan's name on the result sheet a lot more in the future.

Thanks for the interview, the cuppa tea and biscuits, and on behalf of all the QRPF members a big congratulations on a great achievement.

