

BICC Falaise OB National 28th April 2019

The 2019 season got underway on Sunday the 28th April after a one day holdover for the British International Championship Club from Falaise. Just over 2500 pigeons were released in good conditions overhead, but with a stiff northerly headwind in the channel it was going to be one for the fittest birds to come to the fore.

The winning loft was Imran Malik and Atif Khan aka “Team Ace” were having their fourth race and indeed have enjoyed a dream start to their season. Their team is in super condition and many had predicted a good result for them in this first BICC National race. The first federation race they won the first **five** positions, the second federation race they won the first five positions again and in the third federation race they took the first six positions so the predictions were well justified.

They race a team of twelve cocks and twelve hens on a clever twist of the roundabout system. In December the cocks are paired to their widowhood hens at the same time as their small stock loft of ten pairs. The stock pairs eggs are then floated under the racers and allowed to go down for a second round, ensuring two rounds out of the stock birds within a very short period.

When the youngsters are about two weeks old and the racing cocks begin to drive the hen again, the widowhood hens are removed and here comes the clever twist, a month before racing begins the cocks are repaired to a second team of twelve hens which are all are trained for five tosses whilst going to nest and allowed sit for six days before being separated into their racing compartments.

This is not a big loft by modern standards and twelve pairs to race is not a big team, but they are happy, in great condition and once racing begins they do not go training again. The hens are in a small section with vee perches almost next to the cocks and exercise very well. When basketing for a race they send both cocks and hens with the original widowhood hen being placed in the nest box for their return. That way if a cock is first home from the race he has a hen waiting for him or if it is a hen who is first back, she has a stranger in her box! A great motivation for both cocks and hens but when the racing partner returns the widowhood hen is removed and the pair are allowed a few minutes together.

Their feed is a good basic racing mixture with extra “bits” added as they see fit and they will buy a few straights for this purpose. They do not feed by the measure as they are convinced the pigeons need as much food as they want to keep up with the racing program ahead. After just one weeks rest the team will be going to National races every week for the following five weeks so they will not be kept on a tight feeding regime. They are fed in their boxes in galley pots as much as they want twice per day.

Atif and Imran like to keep around forty young birds and will train them very hard indeed as they are looking for every opportunity to test them. They will go to every federation race available with two national races at the end of the season. They are raced on the darkness system so they are in good feather throughout and when moving them over to the race loft at the end of the season, they will be confident they will perform as yearlings having proven themselves. Sometimes small third round of about ten youngsters hatched in May, will be tried with plenty of work and some of their best prospects have come from these.

They go over to Belgium several times each year and have formed some great friendships. They will look to find proven breeders and as they only buy one or two each year, they are happy to pay for the best. They currently have birds from Koopman, Vandenamele with Jan Hoymans in the mix with

Van Dyke too. All very successful for top lofts up to and around the 400 mile mark as the partners agree Saintes at 370 miles is as far as they wish to race.

Their Grandfather kept pigeons, although he had show birds rather than racers, until their **four** Uncles, later known as the Khan Bros discovered racing pigeons as young boys, and the loft was turned over to racing. The Khan Brothers have built a huge reputation over the years in National racing and although they are now concentrating on the longer distance, they gave Imran and Atif every encouragement to race together. Both of them would go around to the Uncles loft and watch the racers arrive until they decided to form a new partnership as Milak & Khan, and live up to their reputation. I think it is fair to say they have done just that and more, it is great to see this third generation of pigeon fanciers winning regularly at the highest level from the same family. These two young men have the drive and enthusiasm to achieve anything they wish in the pigeon sport and I predict they will be at the top for many years to come.

As I said at the beginning of this article the wind in the channel was a tough headwind and Steve Appleby has sent me this report;

Sunday morning dawned bright and clear at the Falaise race point. The sun greeted our convayers Trevor and Steve providing an ideal liberation sky. On checking the flight path using the various satellite images it soon became clear that the race could go ahead. Camera pictures obtained from various locations also supported the overall good weather conditions. The one positioned at Carpiquet airport near Caen shows the sun in the sky. Early on from Falaise to the French coast winds were light and variable. The pigeons, on reaching the French coastline encountered a fresh north westerly wind. The wind socks adjacent to the beach seen on the image were fully out stretched clearly indicating the wind strength. This wind velocity was sustained across the channel at between force 4 and force 5 at about 20 mph but the visibility was very good up to 15 miles. After discussing the overall situation with Mark Gilbert it was agreed with the convayers to liberate at 07:00 hours.

It was also good to hear that the RPRA have taken the initiative and are making strategic random drug tests throughout the season. This weekend they went to two BICC marking stations and were made very welcome with every effort made to assist them in taking random samples away for testing. We should all applaud this and I am sure it will prove beneficial to our sport, if only to dispel the unfair rumours of foul play amongst our ranks and provide a strong deterrent against Performance Enhancing Drugs.

On a less positive note our new website server let the side down with a “bot” filter preventing some from logging on. This is used to prevent thousands of malicious emails being sent automatically over their servers and unknown to our Web Master it prevented our members logging on in large numbers. Of course, as with any new website there are teething problems which will be resolved but please bear in mind not to vent your frustrations on innocent representatives of the club who are working hard to put the race result together. Some of the language recorded on the verification line was vile and offensive which will not be tolerated in future. Keep calm in these situations and remember glitches happen even with the best will in the world.

I will of course be following up with a section report and if you were in the top three of your section please send details to biccpressofficer@gmail.com if you have not already done so. News and views to Chris Sutton 01530 242548.