



**MARLA** 110 owners 1925 birds

Won by Gavin & Luke Harris of the Southern Vales club, Gavin and Luke's pigeon won this race by 8 seconds after 16 hours and 39 minutes on the wing. The winner was bred by D & B Cunningham of Port Pirie, who bred a small team for Gavin to fly the Alice Springs event in 2014. The winner was Gavin's clock bird from Lyndhurst YBC and her sister gained 17<sup>th</sup> from the Wilcannia Sires Produce. The sire has been a top stock cock breeding at least ten winners for David and Barbara Cunningham; he is a half brother to the sire of Grange. They share the same father which was bred by Freddy Smith and is of Goodger/Metcalf blood down from Bill

Walford's Goodger and Jack Metcalfe's Alice Springs bloodlines. The Fred Smith cock was mated to a hen bred by Greg Hodgins which was down from sons of Lots 53 and 60 at Goodger sale mated back to Greg's 2<sup>nd</sup> Alice Springs hen which also appears in Greg's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alice Springs result for 2013. The dam of the Marla winner was from a straight Port Pirie Pied cock which bred David and Barbara's Alice Springs winner 2013, mated to a hen which is predominantly Dordin blood that has bred at least seven winners in the last five years.

Gavin started racing pigeons as a junior at the Plympton club when he was 10 years old, then after a break started again at 21 years of age in 1984 with the Millswood club then the Southern Vales club when he moved to Kangarilla south of Adelaide. In 2013 he achieved 1st club Aggregate, 2nd Southern Fed, and 24<sup>th</sup> SAHPA points. When asked about his good season Gavin said he made a few changes, firstly he had Viv Allan who has recently retired come over and help a couple of times a week and he implemented a few of his ideas. Gavin then had more time to devote to training, watching and studying his birds.

Gavin breeds from 32 pair of stock and uses 60 pair of foster parents and aims to start the season with around 180 birds. Feeding during the breeding season is mainly peas plus small seed and some protein pellets and during the racing season Gavin uses a feeding formula given to him by the late Max Bird, comprising peas, wheat, maize, barley and small seed and the John Pryor mix for trapping. Once birds are working well around the loft, in between the hawk attacks, training starts second week in April with all the team, 2 by 25km then 2 by 40km, then Lower Light. One of the changes made this year was to train a North line and South Line team separately to assist in getting them to break for home. North birds were trained on the Association southern unit and south birds with a few southern flyers. One long toss and one short toss a week. Medical program is on a 3 week cycle using turbosole, other medication is only used if needed, and apple cider vinegar is used in the water on a regular basis.

For the future, Gavin would like to see a new unit with a better feed and watering system, which may help with better returns from races, which he believes would help keep new flyers in the sport and reduce the disappointment of losing birds. Ideally a tray top truck that would hold around 4000 birds and a trailer that could hold 1500 to 1800 birds.