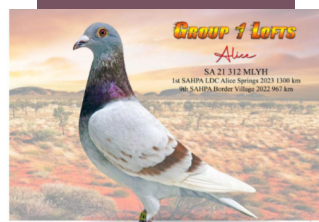


result of a pigeon named "AussieMaid". This Blue Chequer hen was to fly this race over four consecutive years 1936 as a yearling, but not in race time, in 1937 where she finished in 4th place, 1938 when she finished in 2nd place and 1st place in 1939. What an exceptional achievement, one that no doubt will never be repeated over this distance anywhere in the world.

Another interesting note is that the 2000 winner, raced by W & K Moyle, was the dam of the 2004 winner, and she in turn has bred 10 birds that have performed exceptional well in the Alice Springs race since this time. Go to show "That Blood Will Tell".

The 2023 winner was a beautiful Mealy hen (refer to photo) aptly named "Alice" that as a yearling was to also win 9th place from a distance of 967km. All her sire's side contain nothing but the bloodline of the Pryor/Goodger birds, with the pedigree supplied to me regarding this hen only going back four generations to 1990, while her dam contains the bloodline of one other well-known Sth. Australian long distance family being that of Dangerfield. Her dam also includes a small amount of the European bloodline being that from imported Dordin lines.

In saying that "Blood Will Tell", the G/mother of the 2023 winner is that of another Alice winner belonging to Gavin Harris that won this race in 2020, furthermore the 2018 winner named "Black



Onyx" that belonged to Russell Somerville is a G/Granddaughter of the 1996 winner belonging to Brian Donovan.

Another Mealy coloured hen, more a Strawberry Mealy, named "Grange" after a famous Sth. Australian red wine vintage, while not a winner of the event, she managed to take 3 prizes in three consecutive years 19th in 2007, 4th in 2008 and 3rd in 2009. What's interesting to note is that her parents, G/parents and G/G/parents are all of the Pryor/Goodger bloodline going back to 1976.

It's also interesting to note that John Pryor and Allen Goodger were club mates and much of John Pryor's modern success, from the 1980's onward can be attributed to the introduction of Allen Goodger birds that had a profound impact, one that contributed more than any other to John Pryor's pigeons continued success, right up to the present day. Hence today these birds are referred to as Pryor/Goodger's.

(For those readers wishing further information, the SAHPA has a wonderful webpage that I would recommend to any fancier, one that includes not only the history of the SAHPA, but many other topics of interest). It's also interesting to note, that many of the birds that have performed well in the Alice Springs race are Red Checkers and/or Mealies. Could this colour go back to the early UK imports as there was a Mealy Cock in the first shipment, and a Red Chequer Cock in the second shipment?

As a matter of interest for European fanciers, what Australians call yearlings are babies for want of another term, and these young birds are expected to race the whole season. Now in saying this in respect of the Alice Springs race the governing body, the SAHPA LDC in recent years have stipulated that birds entered into this race be 2 year olds or older, that for Australians mean these birds need to be at least 12 months of age (true yearlings).

There is no doubt in the world that "Alice" birds are a special breed, and these birds would not be out of place competing in Europe from the classic long distance races that include Barcelona, St. Vincent and Bergerac.

In closing this article, I would like to use the following quote where the origin I believe was first used in the 1950's by an American football team, and that is:

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going"

(This certainly applies to these Long Distance Athletes of the Sky).

Results for the 2024 Alice Springs Race

How time flies. I had not long finished an article regarding the history of the "South Australian Premier Long Distance Race" when the 2024 race was conducted and is now done and dusted. The 2024 race from Alice Springs was held on the 17th August and from all accounts was hugely successful.

Adelaide for those not familiar with this city is Australia's 5th largest of 6 capital cities with a population of just 1.42 million people that are spread throughout the various suburbs, with the SAHPA having a membership of around 184. Of interest to readers I have included the "Conveyor's Report" that covers in detail the journey taken in transporting these birds to the liberation site.

Day 1: Adelaide to Pimba (483km - 5hrs to drive.)

Departed SAHPA on Wednesday 14/8/24 at 9am. Stopped for fuel and a short rest at Port Augusta before moving on to Pimba arriving there at 3pm. Fuelling again before parking under one of the few trees available, settling down for the evening, feeding until dusk and watering continuously throughout the night.

Day 2: Pimba to Marla (601km - 5hrs - 45min to drive)

Departed Pimba at 7:30am arriving at Glendambo for fuel and a short rest before moving on to Cooper Pedy to stop again for fuel and to water and rest the birds for approximately 1hr. Temperature at the time was around the mid 20's with a very strong Nth. West wind blowing. Departed for Marla arriving there at 4:30pm where the unit was parked under a shady tree and the birds were once again fed until dusk with water made available throughout the night.

Day 3: Marla to Alice (453km - 4hrs, 15min to drive.)

Departed Marla at 8am stopping at Eridunda for fuel and a short rest for the birds before completing the journey to Alice Springs at approximately 12:30pm. Fortunately having a nephew Matt and his wife Mel living in Alice, the birds were parked in their very secure yard under a very cool shaded area that he erected before my arrival giving the birds a perfect place to get a great drink and rest before their arduous race in the morning. The birds were settled and watched over by Mel while Matt took me to see some nearby cattle yards approximately 15kms south of Alice that was absolutely perfect for a release point for in the morning.

Day 4: Race Day: 17th August 2024

Rising at 5am the birds were moved to the liberation site, put back on water and allowing them to watch the sunrise, they began to become very restless and excited in anticipation. The birds were released not long after at 7:15am clearing within a minute in very still conditions.



Winners Rick & Len Drew

Final comments:

It had taken 3 days by road to reach Alice Springs, travelling a combined return trip of some 3,074km along with having to drive over 15hrs to reach "Alice" and then to have to drive back to Adelaide. The landscape is pretty barren with no superhighway or Autobahn, mainly one lane in both directions, no curb and gutting and if you run off the road you end up in red dirt and you always need to look out for the wildlife, mainly kangaroos.

The effort put in by these birds I believe is exceptional, especially when you consider the small amount of birds liberated (generally around 300) and the distance that they have to travel, many having to complete the last few hundred km on their own.

As I said earlier, long distance racing is not for everyone including myself, but I do admire pigeons that gain results and even those that arrive home and are never placed among the winners.

In closing, the following quote, briefly sums up great pigeons is:

"You don't get good apples from a bad tree"

The winner of this year's event was the partnership of Rick and Len Drew, with these two fanciers really starting to make a great name for themselves having now won this race twice in the last three years.

Their winning pigeon (refer to photo) was a Blue Bar Hen rung SA-22-6148. This hen covering the distance of 1297.456km to her home loft in 20hrs, 3min and 17sec. with a velocity of 1078.263mpm along with a winning margin of 23min. Long distance races are not for everyone, or for the faint hearted, and you definitely have to have birds specially bred for this type of event. In all there were 51 fanciers that entered 266 birds selected to compete in this marathon race, a race that surely tests the skill of the fancier in being able not only to prepare their birds, but to have bred and selected birds that are genetically bred for this race.