THE INAUGURAL WESTERN OPEN OVERALL WINNER: LARRY WHITNEY, ID

SECTION WINNERS:

100-199 MI: DR. RANDY BEAN, ID

200-299 MI: DON CHAPIN, OR

300-399 MI: LARRY WHITNEY, ID

400-499 MI: DUSAN SMETANA, MT

500-599 MI: JERRY KING, WA

BY STEVE LAWLER
WASHINGTON

Background

Let's start with an idea; not necessarily a new idea, but a GOOD idea. Let's not re-invent the wheel. Let's borrow from the past. Let's model this effort after successful programs with a proven track record.

Before relating the details, it should noted that "open" style racing is not a new concept for the western states (as the Far Western Open ran in 1977, 1978, 1979 from Delta and Salt Lake City, Utah) and this effort is not unique in the USA overall (as the SE Open, New England Open, Midwest Classic, Ohio-Penn semi-national races have been earning credits for many years).

And, while it should come as no surprise that it really isn't possible to establish perfect conditions for each and every likely participant in the western USA (especially since this OPEN is available to flyers racing from 360 degrees of the releases site), it is evident that re-creating an opportunity for revitalizing long distance open-style racing in the region is considered by many to be a worthy goal in and of itself.

Additionally, such an endeavor provides an opportunity for various groups to work together on a project that strengthens local and regional racing communities simply by allowing them to be involved in an effort beyond the local concerns. It also offers an opportunity for racing groups to join together for stronger competition and possibly help share some long distance shipping costs.

And, probably most importantly, it is a concept whose time has come and can be implemented fairly easily into many existing OB schedules as a regular, average speed race (thereby insuring a club-wide involvement.)

The Process

The initial planning stages took a release station (Winnemucca, NV) already proven fairly reliable (no station is completely reliable!) and selected a weekend (Memorial) where birds could be shipped on Thursday night or Friday night and then released on Sunday, where two days were available for clocking and figuring results. Additionally, other releases could be orchestrated for that Saturday while on the way to Winnemucca.

Some serious thought also went into the release location. A release site had to be far enough to make for a race for biggest flying populations while not being too far from those same groups. A quick distance survey indicated that some very interesting possibilities existed. An initial breakout suggested:

Under 300 miles – Boise, ID (200), Redding/Red Bluff, CA (250), Bend, OR (285), Salt Lake City, UT (300+/-)

300 - 400 miles – Salt Lake City (300+/-), SF Bay area (340), Idaho Falls (340), Las Vegas (365), Alpine, WY (375), Portland, OR (400+/-)

400 - 500 miles – Portland, OR (400+/-), Spokane (465), Bozeman (470), Los Angeles (485), Seattle (500+/-)

500 - 600 miles – Seattle (500+/-), San Diego (570), Aspen, CO (580), Phoenix (600+/-)

Over 600 miles – Phoenix (600+/-), Denver (690).

After the interest inquiries and actual entries were surveyed, the groupings were further divided to an under 200 category with the longest division (over 600) being dropped with no takers for this first effort.

Another innovation was that this was an AU race, "OPEN" to AU members, flying AU birds under AU Race rules; "This is an AU race and we will follow the AU rules" was clearly stated in the rules on the website.

A list of the clubs flying the Western Open in 2010 included Spokane Club Washington, CAMP Club Lewiston, Idaho, BMT Club Bozeman, Montana, Snake River Valley Club of Idaho Falls, Idaho & Alpine, Wyoming, Tri Cities Club (Richland, Pasco, Kennewick) Washington, Central Oregon Racing Pigeon Club Oregon, Medford, OR RPC, Yakima Club Washington, Columbia Basin Flyers Club Washington, Columbia Basin Combine Washington, The Greater Seattle RPC Washington, Mt. Hood Inv Club Portland, OR, Western Idaho Invitational in Boise, ID and the Evergreen State Concourse, in northwestern WA.

Inquiries were received from several other groups with promises to make some local 2011 OB schedule re-alignments to include the Western Open on Memorial Sunday. Some folks were heartbroken as their organizations were unable to mobilize quickly enough to make it happen in 2010.

Maybe with another year to work on making a one

week (in some cases) schedule adjustment can be accomplished for the 2011 race?

The Players

Tremendous credit needs to go to Dusan Smetana of Bozeman, Montana for resurrecting this idea by making enough noise about it that others jumped on board and made this race a reality in less than a calendar year. His website and informational communiqués were a model for others to appreciate and copy.

Additionally, John Hundrup of Clarkston, WA was a real trooper in digging through a wide variety of race report detail discrepancies that would have normally doomed any cumulative results effort. He struggled and persevered through the pigeon politics and dealt with local, state, independent, and national organizational agendas and ran and re-ran, and re-re-ran sheets by distance divisions and state sections. And, he did it with a smile on his face!

I to r; Larry Whitney (1st 300-399 section, 1st overall), Bruce Holmes (2nd 300-399 section, 2nd overall) and Cass Nykamp holding (3rd 300-399 section, 3rd overall) 28 lofts & 370 birds sectional, 80 lofts 812 birds overall of the Snake River Valley RPC of eastern Idaho and western Wyoming.

AU NW Zone Director and AU National Secretary Tom Coletti of Alpine, WY took the bull by the horns and not only coordinated the race release and oversaw the race conduct but jumped in his own rig with his trailer and trekked to Winnemucca himself with the Montana, Wyoming and eastern Idaho birds. (He also supplied a number of the release pictures. Is there no limit to this man's talents?)

Dr. Randy Bean (DVM) from the Western Idaho Invitational club also made the run to Winnemucca bringing those smoking Bean, John Lonkey, Dick Ensley, and Mike Hackney birds. My guess that they all beat him home!

Also rendezvousing with the eastern crews was the Columbia Basin Combine trailer carrying the CBC birds, and all the western WA and the western Oregon, and the Central Oregon (Bend, Redmond, Madras, Crooked River, Prineville, etc.) birds. A fabulous relay system was set-up to get the birds to the Yakima club and on to the CBC trailer to start the long SE run. Thanks to several diehard pigeon folks who made this happen, and especially to Roald Haugen, who made the mad dash to Yakima from northwestern WA to get the process rolling.

The Stateline Combine (Spokane and Lewiston/Clarkston – CAMP club) trailer joined the fray in Winnemucca after releasing a Seneca, OR race on Saturday morning.

Overall, the first year yielded a harvest of 80 lofts and 812 birds to cut open the skies at 6:50am on May 30, 2010.

The Winners

300-399 mi Section & Overall winner - Larry Whitney, Ammon, Idaho
from Bruce Nykamp

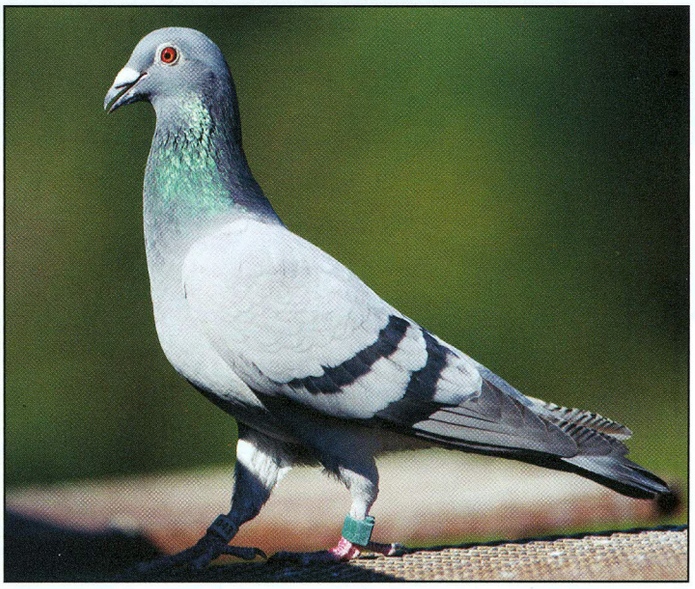
The overall (and 300-399m sectional) winner of the 2010 Western Open is AU 07 LW 7116, a blue pencil pied hen. She was bred and raced by Larry Whitney of Ammon, Idaho. She was on 12-14 day old eggs and flew 342 miles at 1675 ypm. Larry was attending church when she arrived. We did not expect the pigeons to arrive quite so early! Mother Nature provided a perfect race day for southeastern Idaho. The birds raced under cool temperatures and had a nice SW tailwind.

7116 had been racing very well all year. The week previous she placed 2nd from 370 miles; 4 weeks earlier she was 2nd from 250 miles, both times arriving with the race winners (equal 1st). She is a Van Loon down from Campbell Strange's champions. Her father was a double grandson of "Verona" and "Louisa" and her dam was bred by Ken Christopher off a son of National Ace "Senna" and a full sister to "Senna." Larry has had several top flyers from this pair.

400-499 mi Section Winner - Dusan Smetana, Bozeman, Montana

Dusan Smetana's section winner is "AU 1043 BMT 2007 BBH, which is also the champion old bird in BMT club for 2010. She's a Widowhood hen. Her sire is 2005 SK 2513 63 BB cock. "I got him as an egg from Peter Matalik, one of the best fanciers in Slovakia, from two villages past my village where I grew up. I wanted to try some of my old village pigeons here and they are flying great. The dam is

Larry Whitney's AU 07 LW 7116 BCH First Overall Western Open winner. (343 miles; 1675ypm; 28 lofts & 370 birds)



"Western Open Hen" Dusan Smetana's AU 1043 BMT 2007 BB hen (465m; 1574ypm; 26 lofts & 299 birds)

AU 02 TCW 2320 BB hen, I got her from Dave Rewitz when he stopped flying. She was bred by Drew Lesofski formerly of Montana, Spokane, and now Washington, DC."

500-599 mi Section Winner (also the WSRPO NW sectional): Jerry King, Everett, Washington

Jerry King, of Everett, WA, says "My bird is AU 09 Everett 4061 BBSPC and I named him High 'N Dry. He is a cross of Janssen X Hofkens X Fabry and was a YB gift to me from Terry Dry, of Marysville, WA last year. His sire is a bird bred for Terry by the Vegas Connection Loft from Mike Ganus pigeons. On his sire's side, "High 'N Dry" is a great grandson of "Hollywood" (1st Nat. Ace OB all Holland in 1997) and

Jerry King's "High 'N Dry" AU 09 Everett 4061 BBSPC, winner of the 500-599 section (526m; 535ypm; 10 lofts & 59 birds)

of "Millennium" (1st Nat. Ace middle dist. N.P.O. of 1998). "High 'N Dry's" dam is a Fabry bred by Roger Revenaugh, now living in the Bay Area, linebred to Roger's old foundation breeder hen, AU 92 VIK 2014 BBsp, from Langenberger & Belka loft. "2014" has been responsible for many winning pigeons for Roger over the years.

"High 'N Dry" was flown to races out to 345 mi. as a YB and was flying on the widowhood system when he flew the Winnemucca, NV race."

100-199 mi Section Winner: Dr. Randy Bean, Homedale, Idaho

"I fly in the newly formed Western Idaho Invitational Racing Pigeon Club with my partner DeWayne Ensley. I have raced pigeons for 20 years and DeWayne grew up in the pigeon loft of his father, Dick Ensley," says Randy.

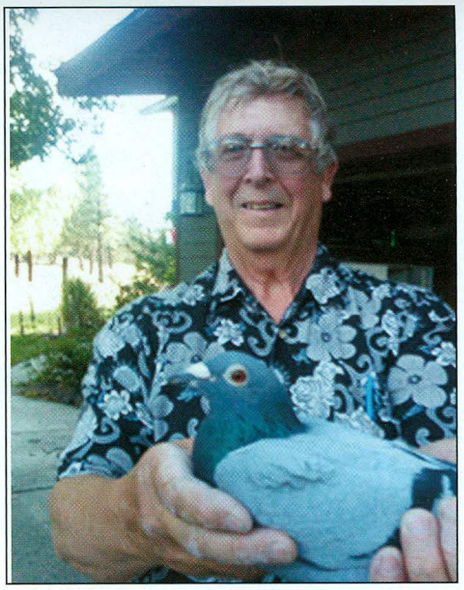
Their section winner is IDA 5771 07 BCWF Cock Sire: CBS 1940 '04 (a grandson of the Star Pair X CBS 3141 '03, a full sister to two AU champions and an only day bird one loft winner - Keizer X Ruby Merckx) Dam: UCA 0885 '00 is a Keizer granddaughter X Vanderflaes and has been an exceptional pigeon," says . Dr. Randy Bean of Homedale, Idaho. "Thank you CBS for 1940. Thank you Larry Christensen for providing me with UCA 0885."

"Thank you Dusan Smetana, Tom Coletti, John Hundrup, Steve Lawler, all of the participants and the many I've forgotten for giving us the opportunity to fly in this race. Let's do it again!" he ends.

200-299 mile section winner: Don Chapin, Redmond, OR

Don Chapin of the Juniper Hills Loft, Redmond, OR tells us, "My bird is AU 08 CORP 2912 BB C. On the hen side, he is out of a CBS Merckx Janssen. I purchased the dam as part of a

Dr. Randy Bean, DVM and DeWayne Ensley holding 100-199m champ IDA 5771 07 BCWFC (186m; 1614 ypm; 4 lofts & 38 birds)



Don Chapin of Juniper Hills Loft, Oregon with AU 08 CORP 2912 BBC, 1st 200-299 Western Open Section winner (292m; 1395ypm; 12 lofts & 46 birds)

flying kit and retired her at the end of young birds in 2007. On the sire's side, this bird is out of a Leen Boers/Vernazza Janssen. The sire won the 500 and 400 and was 2nd at the 500 in 2005.

2912 has been a very consistent bird this year and will have the honor of being CORP club Bird-of-the-Year. 2912 flew in 9 races as a widowhood cock, winning two of those races, and finishing with points in every contest."

Sponsors & Prizes

Here are the WO 2010 prize winners –

Larry Whitney: 16x24 photo canvas, Racing Pigeon Digest Subscription and $150 from Ganus' Vita King Company

Randy Bean: Racing Pigeon Digest Subscription and Jim Jenner Secret of Champions all four disks

1st overall prize: 16x24 canvas print from Dusan Smetana

Jerry King Racing Pigeon Digest Subscription and Jim Jenner Dark & Light video

Don Chapin Racing Pigeon Digest Subscription and Best of British video

Bruce Holmes and Bruce Nykamp: got 4 DVD's from Jim Jenner to share.

John Hundrup: one Jim Jenner video for all his help and winning the Washington State race.

Dusan Smetana: Racing Pigeon Digest Subscription (and, as he said, "got to fly biggest race of my life!")

A BIG thank you to Jim Jenner's PACCOM films, Ganus' Vita-King and The Racing Pigeon Digest for their prize donations. Please visit them on-line and support these sponsors.

Western Open website

Additional information and plans for 2011 can be accessed at westernopen.org

Group Picture at Winnemucca, NV release, May 30, 2010: DeWight Pritchett in sweats, far left, James and Erieka Edwards, Dr. Randy Bean, (Columbia Basin hauler), Tom Coletti, and Sharon Berger. (Marlene Bean was taking the photo.)