

Selecting Breeders - Rick Mardis

Seldom does a day go by that someone doesn't ask me to select breeders. The primary consideration in selecting breeders is choosing the birds that will breed the best racers. Over the years I have studied the pedigrees of champions throughout Europe and the United States. There are some common factors I see. Most champions have champions in their own pedigree. Most are bred from hens less than four years old. In addition, very few of these are inbred.

Let me tell you how I go about selecting breeders for the Continental Breeding Station. As I travel around Europe, I look for superior pigeons that come from families of superior pigeons. When I visit a loft the first time, I ask to see the best racers. When I am shown the best racing cock, I ask if there are any brothers or sisters that have raced well. If the loft can show several outstanding pigeons from the same pair or several grandchildren of the same foundation cock that are top racers, I know I am in the right place. When a pair of pigeons, or a pigeon, passes on his top racing qualities to his or their offspring, this is what is important. Sure I want a champion, but more importantly, I want a champion that comes from a family of champions. These pigeons have the potential to breed a loft full of champions.

This is one of the reasons why I don't necessarily buy National Ace Pigeons. National Ace Pigeons command a very high price. The money can be well spent, of course, if the pigeon comes from a outstanding family, but I prefer to buy superstars that are from superstars.

A National Ace Pigeon has won an award recognized by the national organizations of the various countries. As you see in the accompanying charts, these birds have to perform well in just a few races to qualify. I think it is unique that the Ace Pigeon of the Antwerp Union has more qualifying races than the Ace Pigeon of Holland or Belgium. The Ace Pigeon of the national organization must be submitted for the award just as we have to submit our pigeons for the Hall of Fame awards given by the A.U. or the I.F. I often find superstars from small fanciers that have superior records to national ace pigeons, but were not submitted. But, this is not the factor when looking for super breeders.

So the pigeons that I bring to the Continental Breeding Station are excellent specimens and racers from families that produce many champions. I will give a few examples of this.

The Merckx Janssens pictured in this catalog from the Diamond, Ruby and Emerald pairs are extremely inbred to Oude Merckx. The Oude Merckx won 18 X 1sts, his son, the "019" won 20 x 1st and his other son, the Jonge Merckx , won 15 X 1sts. There is no line in history that has been more prepotent than that of the Merckx of the Janssen Brothers.

Serge Van Elsacker is currently one of Europe's top flyers and our partner. His foundation cock was Wezel. The Wezel produced De "23". De "23" produced Schalie and Lange Blauwe, both Olympiad pigeons. This family continues to breed winners and Ace Pigeons generation after generation.

I would be remiss without mentioning our famous Keizer. This super cock won 3 X 1sts vs. over 20,000 pigeons per race. His brother, the King, was first National Ace Pigeon of Holland. He had a son that won first against 28,900 pigeons. His sire was first Ace Pigeon of the Club. His uncle had a first against 11,500 pigeons. His granddam was first against 8,825 pigeons. The story keeps going on and on. Keizer descends from the Oude Merckx and inherited all the significant characteristics necessary to be a champion. But, more importantly, has passed this ability to offspring two and three generations away. For example, our excellent breeding grandson of Keizer, Count Keizer. This cock is a super breeder and produced a first National Orleans winner against more than 17,000 pigeons. We have won numerous futurities with children and great in the Vredesduif competition. This hen had an unbelievable season scoring nine times in the first six places in major competition. This bloodline is creating winners generation after generation.

Throughout the catalog you will find many examples of this, but the point is our selections at the Continental Breeding Station are based on performance loaded families. We find that when you breed from prepotent lines, you will produce lots of winners and champions. The pigeons to buy are the pigeons that have the genetic package to reproduce champions. You find these by doing your homework or buying pigeons from the Continental Breeding Station.