

“Breeding Skywarriors”

by
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A passion is a flow of life. The will to succeed in any endeavor. To overcome obstacles and hardship. The toughness of spirit that no natural power can break. The will to survive.

A thoroughbred racehorse of the sky. A “skywarrior” that has the intelligence and tenacity to come home fast and fit and be ready for the next week’s grueling race. Finishing in the top position for 8-10 consecutive weeks of racing. A super athlete.

Shipping night SFR Club, Dino D’Ercole (San Mateo, Ca) once told me. “Your sending 0751 again”. I said, “Yes, Isn’t this what we breed for in a race bird, to be able to race week after week and still be a contender for a first place of honor every time a bird is entered in a race”. Dino did not reply but I knew I gave him something to ponder. After countermarking 0751 he almost lost his grip on 0751 when he was about to place her in the race basket. “I got her, I got her”, was Dino’s reassuring remarks, after all he is one of the best handler in the club. He knew all the eyes in the club was focused on him and “0751” was safely placed in her assigned race basket.

Breeding our race birds to produce a “super skywarrior” is a very complicated science. No one on earth can accurately predict that a certain pair of breeder can lay the golden eggs in every clutch. With the help of our “gut feeling”, coupled with the knowledge we have learned through our own experience and mentors (veteran masters of our beloved sport) and by reading valuable books, articles and watching CD/DVDs about our sport, we can have a better chance of breeding better “skywarriors” each year.

Below are some basic principles of selecting birds destined to the breeding loft that can increase our chances of breeding better “skywarriors”,

- a) The stock bird should have a history of winners through generations in its family tree. Breeding our “skywarriors” was never an exact mathematical equation that would give the same results every single time that we bred them. Winning performances in the pedigree through generation is more than good enough to put a bird in the stock loft.
- b) The intended breeders should have as minimal fault in their physical attributes. Their minor faults in their physical attributes can be easily corrected through compensation breeding. Example, Don’t breed two birds with questionable vent bones or two birds with no extended front keel bone. (The extended keel bone can help birds cut their way through the air during flight in a head wind and not blown away off their flight path.)

(c) Breeding a pair of race winners /or a pair of champions is not a guarantee that the winning birds will pass on their winning genes to their offsprings. But merely increasing our chances of producing race winners and nothing more. If luck is on our side their winning genes can be passed on to their grand children and great grand children.

(d) Birds directly bred for stock. I have seen a lot of foundation birds that have not seen the race basket. This contradicts most experienced fancier's advice to breed only from race winners or birds that have raced consistently through the race season. I firmly believe and have proven in my own breeding experience that a bird with minimal acceptable fault with excellent bloodline that wins through generations can no doubt be an excellent breeding stock even they are bred directly for stock. They are the birds you don't want to let go once you handled them. They are too valuable and irreplaceable to be lost in the race.

(e) Excellent health is mandatory. Frustrations arises when the breeding results were poor. At times it was not the pigeons to be blamed. But the breeder and handler Average loft management can lead to poor health conditions of your breeders and racers. The later is more important for I firmly believe that the quality of the racing team will be based on how well the breeders can breed healthy and vigorous young that can give them a big edge on their developing stage on their way of becoming a "sky warrior".



Some knowledgeable breeders would rather prefer to breed from a full brother of a champion than the champion himself. Especially if the full brother is perfect in all its

physical aspects even not flown and directly bred for stock. One great example is “Piet” a full brother of the “Witneus” of Gommaire Verbruggen ,bought at a hefty sum in the Marien-Meuleman auction .”Witneus” was not flown and directly bred for stock like his full brother “Piet” whom the legendary Piet Deweerdt had purchased from Karel Meulemans for the successful businessman “ Raymund Hermes”. Both birds were directly off the Marien-Meulemans “golden couple”, the dark check Van den Bosch cock and the blue Janssen hen. This golden pair have bred excellent racers like “Kadet”, Junior”,etc, and breeders that have been directly put to stock.

Our sport is always filled with uncertainty. That makes all breeders of “skywarriors’ at equal footing with the rich and famous fanciers. Good birds can be bought but not “LUCK”. How many times have we heard that a small backyard fancier is the current champion of his district. Breeding from a few pairs of unknown origin. But if we can only dissect the genetic portal of the said breeding pair. I won’t be surprised that their bloodlines comes from generations of champions.

An excellent breeding pair can definitely skip a generation or two of breeding race winners. Once the genetic winning constituents interlocked They would have better chances of reproducing their ancestral winning genes. A small backyard fancier can be lucky enough to breed countless dependable and competitive racing machines that were true super warriors of the sky. Bringing years of glory for this fortunate and lucky fancier, who did nothing but to pair two pigeons that his “gut feeling” instructed him to breed.

There were instances that a certain bird was bought in a pet shop or a small pigeon market of one’s area for a minimal amount of money and the bird turned out to be a crack breeder. In countless cases, a special gift from a dear friend in the sport. Exchanging youngsters off our “best” have positive outcome in the sport. Friendship developed for life especially when both fancier did well in the races with the product of their gifts.

In some unforeseen circumstances we do commit serious mistakes of giving away a bird that did not breed well in our lofts. Just after trying the bird with a couple of mates. In a short period of time the lucky new owner have bred champion birds out of your generosity and continued to breed aces through generations.

A race winner in the loft gave us great glory and only to be disappointed that upon checking the breeding record , the sire and the dam was either culled, souped, sold or merely given away.

Another dilemma for a small backyard fancier was knowing that his precious breeding pair was killed by a cat, dog, raccoon, hawk or rather it is better to know that a two footed predator had stolen his precious feathered friends. Would it console our agony to know that the pair of excellent breeders flew off and escaped from the faulty wire mesh of the aviary.Or a calamity like a loft fire that have turned our beloved friends into ashes.

How fascinating that fanciers all over the globe were striving very hard to pair together a cock and a hen hoping it would be their “golden pair”. Every start of the breeding season would be filled with enthusiasm to pair up a breeding pair that would become the new hope for the days to come.

It was always said that “yearlings” had better chances of breeding our prospective “ACES”. Especially if the yearling hen was mated to an older cock. I prefer a healthy vigorous 5 year old cock with a fine pedigree of winning bloodline through generations or vice versa. Breeding a yearling cock to an older hen have positive results if not near excellent results to many fanciers around the globe. Genetic potency is the key.

A lot of older fanciers advices not to breed an older cock and an older hen together. They do have a good point but, as long as they come from excellent winning bloodlines and have proven to bred winners in the past. The chances of breeding the goods will always be a big possibility. One thing I do recommend was to foster the eggs if they are fertile, to a younger pair of birds in the loft. Younger pairs have a better quality and amount of pigeon milk essential in the early development of the youngsters. At this stage the squabs is also developing their immunity which is an essential factor for the birds to excel in the races and breeding during their later life.

Tom Foley (San Mateo, Ca.) once told me that if you don’t want to loose a fine youngster or a proven breeder in the loft. Do not let the bird out. And in my recent visit with Fenglin Lin (San Mateo, Ca.). He said he doesn’t let breeders fly out anymore. The risk nowadays was too high that the predators can pick up your precious breeder one after the other as time goes by. Eventually suffering for the great loss that is very hard to replace and in some circumstances would take years for the loft to recover.

There are times that a neighbor’s cat can also hunt a bird or two. In my recent conversation with Leo Gomez (Daly City, Ca) his 600 mile race bird was killed and taken by a neighbor’s cat. Before it can be scanned by his electronic race clocking system. It was “ bad luck” indeed. The bird could have placed a top position in the combine. Instances like this have prompted avid San Francisco pigeon breeders to breed better “skywarriors” each year. The unending quest for breeding super racers of the sky.

Inbreeding our best racers and breeders is also a key in producing better breeders to cross in order to produce the “supers”. A cross between two formidable proven family of “skywarriors” have been producing super racers through the test of time. The effect of hybrid vigor on the first cross is a stable genetic portal. They are called half-breeds in layman’s term. The supers among these half- breeds are stable in their genetic characteristics. The excellent specimen can be bred back to either the sire or dam’s bloodline.

Linebreeding can also be a big factor in creating inbred-linebred specimens that are capable of top notch racing. Take note that the pair started as a cross. Selection and culling is a necessary program in any competitive racing and breeding loft. Although it is very hard at times to cull. This process is a must for putting a higher standard of birds in your racing and breeding loft. My good friend , William Brissenden, a California

Humane Officer. In one of our very interesting conversation about the Columbia Livia (rock dove) in general. Told me that our way of culling our pigeons is another humane alternative form of euthanasia. Thus, a humane way of removing unwanted pigeons in our lofts. He warns that it should always be done in a very discreet manner.

Health is a big factor in order to breed the “super skywarrior”. Without excellent health among our breeders it would be impossible to attain a successful breeding season that could produce our elusive champion during the racing season.

In my recent observation about giving grits, vita-minerals and pro-biotic (friendly gut bacteria). I switched to Ideal block, Nature block, Columbine pick stones white and red, Natural grits mixed them together and added the vita-mineral (pink minerals) to the breeders. The result was outstanding. I was able to breed healthier robust youngsters. I also gave “pro-biotic” in the water. I tried 3-4 days a week and extended it to almost everyday with a positive outcome. Pro-biotic mixed in the food grains with wheat germ oil is also being given together with brewer’s yeas and vita-minerals at least 2 times a week.

The breeders are given 75% of 15.5% protein Winner’s Cup breeder mix and 25% safflower day in day out. All they can eat 365 days a year. Make sure that nothing is left in the feeder at night for sanitary reasons.

The biggest mistake a fancier can make is not to be a keen observer in the nest conditions in the loft. We should be very observant to our breeders specially their eggs or youngsters in the nest. Nipping health problems early had positive effect in controlling disastrous health issues before reaching its chronic stage.

Culling starts from the nest. After the second egg was layed. I will check the eggs making sure they are of perfect shape and no crust built up in the egg shell. Throwing away any egg with imperfection. When the eggs hatched at 18 days . I will check the youngster’s navel. Making sure there is no redness or inflammation indicating infection. Banding will be at 5-7 days of age. The youngsters will be thoroughly examined for any imperfection before banding. When the youngsters are 2-3 weeks of age. I would definitely remove any squab that gives a sign of any retarded growth in the nest. Both squeakers should thrive equally well in their nest bowl. I will wean the youngsters at about one month of age. They would be meticulously examined for any abnormalities in their physical attributes before a youngster with an obvious defect be discarded. Example, weak back (tail feathers always going up or pointing upwards all the time when the young bird is being handled) a very weak or fluffy vent bones. Young birds continue to develop their vent bones till they are three months of age. At three months of age the young birds should have improved their minor flaws. Any bird that did not improve physically at this time will be culled.

The best birds specially in the longer races in the SFR Club are buoyant small to medium built birds. Most of them with an apple shaped body. But on the other hand, the

larger long cast birds which were mainly bones as you handle them. These ugly birds will at times amaze you as they win out of turn in the longer races.

A bird with a solid stool sample is a good indication that all is well in the birds intestinal flora but it does not prove anything. Such bird that we think is healthy can still fail in the races. Even our best dependable racers can fail. I did noticed in most Ace flyers and breeders. They do have a tight vent bones and would give you a feeling as if it was a single vent bone structure specially the cocks. I will give a lee-way on the hens, for a simple reason that they are the one passing out the eggs. I will also definitely breed birds with a very high level of pupil movements. Moving in extreme positions. Extreme front, back, dorsal and ventral. Birds with extended keel bone structure upfront is definitely a must have in excellent breeding specimen. The silkiness of the feathers should not be left behind either. Specially the suppleness of the flight feathers is highly put in consideration. The overall skeletal structure of our “skywarriors “ should be sturdy and their musculature should feel like a solid rubber ball. (The feeling of indestructibility). The pupil should be situated in the line of the beak or above the beak is preferable. Their throat should not be red and inflamed. The line between the throat’s curtain should not be wider than one hair pin with a neatly structured curtain lace. The sad truth was even with all these features there is no guarantee they can produce the winners come race day. Health is still the prime factor for a successful race season.

I also believe in “LUCK”. A fancier can be lucky to be successful in breeding for the first time. When asked what pair of breeders bred the champion it would not be surprising to know that an egg in the young bird loft was fostered and turn out to be a “super skywarrior”. A foster pair can at times be discovered as the best breeding pair in the loft.

Most of my best birds for breeding or racing were off a pair of young breeders directly put to stock. But lets us not underestimate the genetic package of proven old cocks and hens. I recently put a lot of time trying to breed out off two older proven hens. With the help of modern pigeon remedies to enhance the fertility and breeding performance of older pigeons. We can have a better chance of getting even the last clutch of eggs from aging proven hen or cock.

To enhance our chances of success in breeding proven older cocks or hens was not to pair both of them together. Mating them to a younger vigorous specimens can give a higher chance of breeding and rearing healthy youngsters to continue their bloodlines. Fertibol by Comed ,Belgium so far had a positive outcome.

In the spring of 2008, I experimented with two older foundation quality hens from Dan Severns (Relax Loft, French Camp, Ca.) through my good friend Nelson Elgarico (Lodi, Ca.). They are both mother and daughter, 12 and 11 years old respectively. “Fertibol” was a great help in getting them fertile once again. Although with my amazement the daughter which is a year younger than the dam only layed a single egg in it’s first clutch. After hatching and rearing a vigorous healthy young. She layed another single egg. It was better than none at all. For the second time the single egg hatched and

grew into a handsome red check cock which is directly put to stock. I later named him "VOS 38".

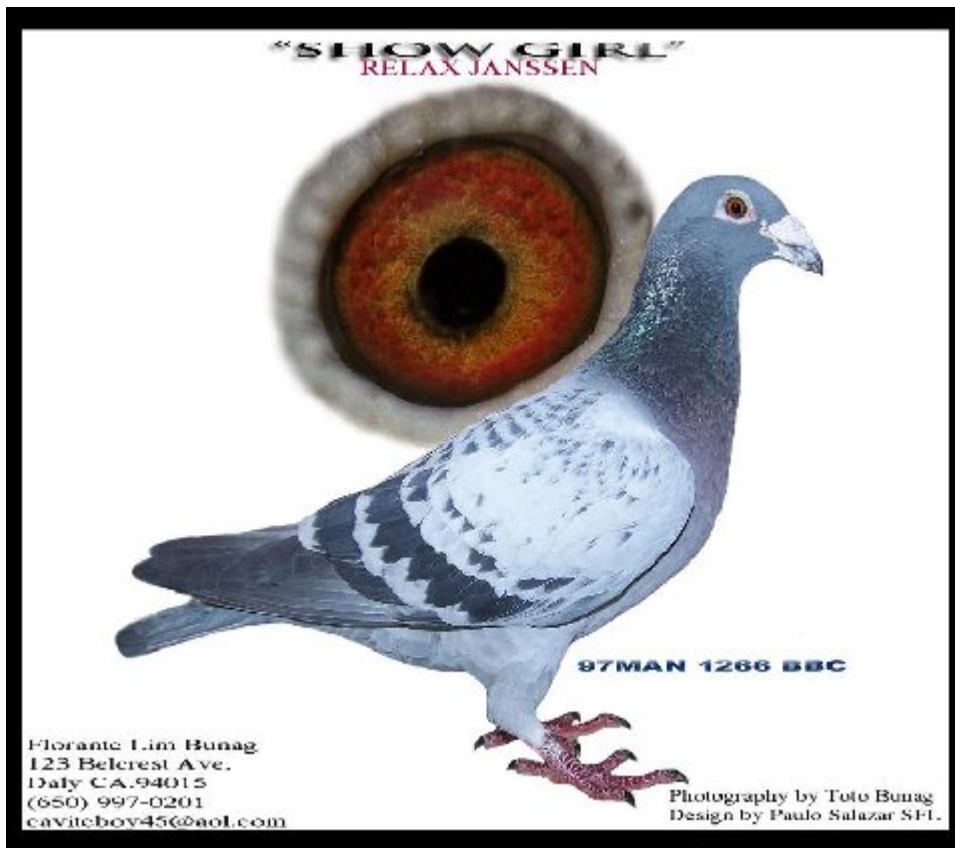


"VOS 38"
08SFR-2438 RCC JANSSEN



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The dam 1266 “Showgirl” layed two clutches of eggs and reared them all into four fine youngsters. Two of which I send to the Philippines and the other two I kept for stock. The “98EJN HEN” as I named her was a half sister of Dan Severns “Best of the Best” Vegas Clsssic 2008. Both have “Wiseguy” as their sire. Together with “Mr.Wiseguy” a direct son of “Wiseguy” with another hen. Now mated with “Cookie” a Bordeaux hen I got from CBS. With the help of Fertibol, Wheat germ oil, vitaminerals, vitamins and my own mixed grits of Ideal bloc, Natur bloc, Columbine white and red pick stones, grits from Natural, Belgium. After giving me gorgeous youngsters in their first clutch. The two old hens layed their second clutch. Although the “98EJN HEN” the daughter of 98MAN 1266 “Showgirl” as I named her, layed only one egg in both clutches. It just amazes me that the dam “Showgirl” was a better breeder than her daughter even she was one year older.



There are different ways of breeding our “super skywarriors”. There is Inbreeding, line breeding, crossbreeding (out breeding). The combination of these breeding techniques have given fanciers across the globe success in their quest for breeding super birds. My definition of a “super skywarrior” is a bird that can be raced week after week of hazardous and strenuous racing and the bird is still capable of winning first place or placing in the top of the race sheet in the entire duration of the race season.

Inbreeding is the mating of pigeons that is closely related especially to preserve and fix desirable traits and to eliminate unfavorable traits. Like , father-daughter , mother –son , aunt-nephew, uncle- niece and brother-sister mating. In some cases one can still be successful in racing their progeny. But I believe they can be more useful in the breeding loft than putting them up as racers.

Line breeding is a grandfather-grand daughter/great granddaughter, grandmother-grandson/great grandson mating. Line bred to a certain cock or hen not deviating through successive generations to come. It is also a form of inbreeding. This type of breeding is used when the pigeon is mated back to a certain ancestor to lock in the winning genes of that specific ancestor.

Cross breeding is basically breeding two breeds of pigeons. For example, when we breed a Racing pigeon with a Tumbler, or when we breed a racing pigeon with a Fantail , or a Racing pigeon with a Modena, etc. The mating of such would be fertile and their progeny should also be capable of producing fertile offspring with the exemptions of some progeny being sterile in some crosses.

Cross breeding is commonly misused as a correct term for “out breeding”. Out crossing on the other hand is the mating of two pigeons of the same breed. For example, mating a male and a female Racing pigeons , mating a male and a female White kings, or mating a male and a female tumblers together., etc.

I will refer to the term “cross breeding” when we out cross our “skywarriors” (Racing pigeons). Since it is now widely accepted term by many fanciers who are breeding our beloved feathered friend ,the Racing pigeon.

Fanciers all over the world had been selecting and breeding Racing pigeons for hundred of years for the sole purpose of winning the pigeon race. By crossing the Racing pigeons with other non-racing breeds would be a disastrous experiment and waste of one’s time. Valuable time will be lost in putting one’s time and effort to a backward way of breeding our “skywarriors”. Serious fanciers with competition at heart will breed forward to enhance his family of “skywarriors” one painstakingly molded through the years. To competitively tackle the race course they are bred for and win the race.

Some meticulous fanciers wanted to breed winners and breeders of winners. Such family of birds were molded through inbreeding and line-breeding. Crossing their family of inbreeds in a very selective way when the right time comes.

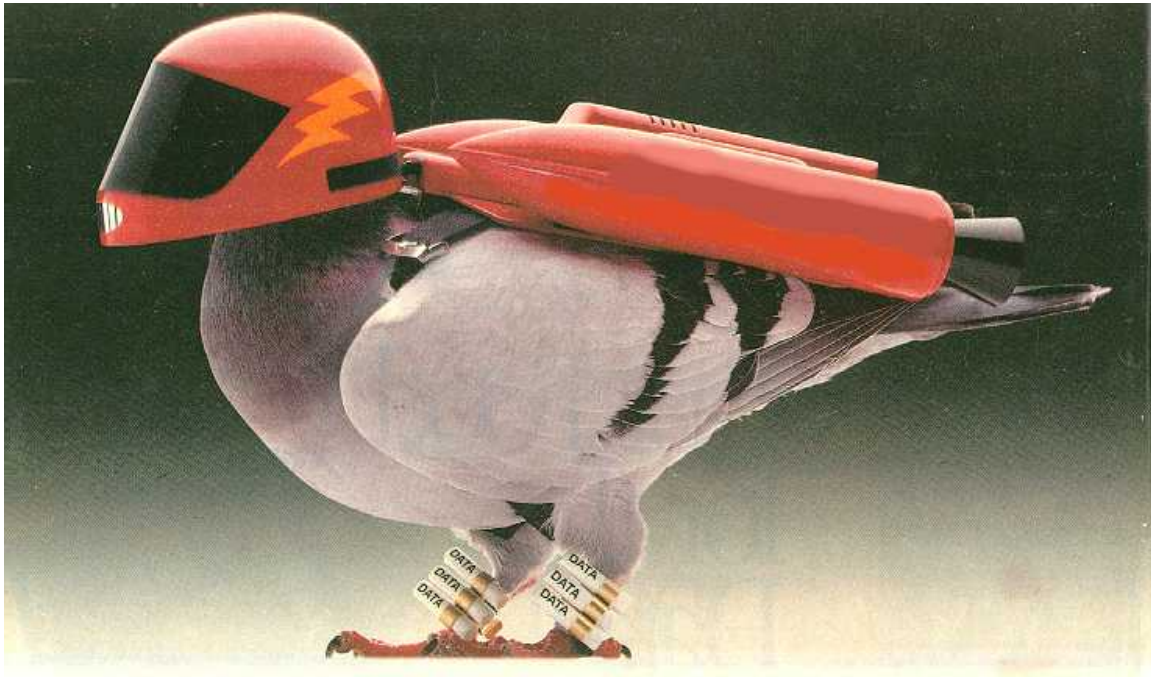
A family of inbred/linebred pigeons that are capable of winning races or better yet contender for Champion bird/ Ace bird are scarce and are suitable for a positive cross to many families of birds. Especially those families that have also been molded as winning inbreeds. Although we all believe in the scientific aspects of breeding our feathered friends, “LUCK” is still a big factor in breeding our “super skywarriors”.

If one believes that breeding the “supers” is just a plain mathematical equation where in one gets the same answer by adding $1 + 1 = 2$ or just by simply breeding champion x

another champion = super champion, one is greatly mistaken. You can increase your chances of getting a champion, nothing more. And that is a hard true fact.

Speaking of Genetics. There is the dominant gene and the recessive gene. The gene is a carrier of hereditary traits. Crossing of two “skywarriors” of different families can produce a “super skywarrior”. In this scenario both good or rather excellent qualities of the sire and dam fused together and their excellent good genes were concentrated in a particular youngster that they have produced. But, not all of their F1 can inherit all the excellent genes. Some can only have inherited the average genes. The worst scenario a worthless youngster inheriting all the bad genes. Such scenario we tried not to occur or rather hope not to be produced in our undying will to breed such a “Crack”, an “Ace”, a “Champion”, a “Super duivin” and finally a “Super skywarrior”.

A yellow eye and its shades of color (orange, green, etc.) is dominant over the white eye and its shades of color.(gray, blue-gray, violet, etc.). Speaking of the plumage color and pattern, the grizzle, checker, ash-red and gray are dominant color. The blue bar is a neutral color and the chocolate and slates are recessive colors. The quality of the plumage is a dominant trait like the bone structure, muscle quality, feathered leg, split tail, stupidity and timidity. On the other hand intelligence, single tail feather, frill, crested head and clean-legged are all recessive traits. Breeding to compensate the faults is the key to breed better “skywarriors”.



When one get hold of a “super skywarrior”, Inbreeding is highly inevitable to follow. Breeding back the daughter, grand daughter or great grand daughter to our coveted

“super skywarrior” and hope to” lock in “ the excellent gene combination to their offspring. A sort of “cloning” the super skywarrior’s excellent gene combination. Line breeding is a form of inbreeding. Breeding further back the family tree has been a successful breeding practice among the champions. But, again you have to be a destined “Champion” to be one. And to be blessed to have a winning family of gorgeous “skywarriors”.

