

SIMPLY THE BEST AUSSIE LOFTS

By Tony Price

What a 2005 season it was for Vince Cannizzo racing as Aussie Lofts, having a record year and dominating in the Victorian Racing Pigeon Union (VRPU). He had a record season with five old bird series Federation winners a new record of winners in an organization that has been running for 65 years. He also gained three seconds among a total of 14 positions overall from a possible twenty old bird Federation races. He was not out of a Fed position for 11 consecutive weeks, what a streak of hot form. Vince also picked up a Fed winner in the young bird series and open winners from Wonthaggi pre season and Deniliquin mid season. He won both the Old Bird and combined Old and Young bird aggregates. Vince races in a central northerly position and as such is quite a short flyer. The winds this season were predominantly north north westerly giving the flyers in the east and south a decided advantage but this didn't effect his results because his birds were out in front.

Vince started out as a junior member in the strong Fawkner club, he lived in Fawkner with a small backyard loft. He later moved to Preston where he won the VRPU aggregate in the eighties racing a blend of birds from the lofts of Keven Price, David Finerty, Wally Stock. which he developed in to his own multi purpose strain through a focused breeding program based on shape, type and proven performance. Vince was like a sponge in these years as he gleaned information from the old masters. He would continually quiz the greats of the past Keven Price, Frank Ballinger, Wally Stock, George Rayner, Leo Fyffe, Ernie Lawry and Martin O'Shannassy. Vince says "I visited Keith Wickham in the eighties over in Adelaide and this was one of the highlights off my life. He was the master, and I learnt so much." Vince is an excellent listener and picked up many leading edge ideas. Vince left the sport due to business pressures as he had developed a multi million dollar transport business whilst in Preston. He did try to mix the business and pigeon flying and business, on one occasion leaving a loaded truck in Sydney while he flew back to Melbourne to clock in the Derby, but he finished last.

He returned to his old club at Fawkner in the nineties back at his old loft in Fawkner, and later he shifted his birds to his business premises in Craigieburn, 25 klms north of Melbourne. Vince had a successful number of years in these locations with a blend of O'Shannassy's, Wickhams and Godfrey Steven's blood lines. Through in depth study of pedigrees and bloodlines and stringent culling he developed a consistently good performing loft. He noted however that during his time out of the sport that the racing had improved and that the birds were performing at faster velocities. By studying the bloodlines of the winning lofts he realized that the imported birds had given the old Australian lines an incredible lift.

He then set about finding the best, and as luck would have it he was able to compare the stock from several of the pigeon studs at an open convention day at the VHA rooms at the end of 2001. After comparing the conformation, feathering, quality and shape of the birds he discovered what he considered to be the best of the best, the Janssen's from the

Ponderosa stud on display by John Hoffman. Vince was very impressed, he told John he had to have all of birds John had left on display. He experimented with these birds as well as his old families in the 2002 season. Due to ill health and major surgery in 2003 Vince decided to cut back on his birds and had a reduction sale retaining only his recent Janssen purchases. This created a whole new focus for Vince. Short and middle distance became his new challenge.

Janssen's

When Vince first acquired the Janssen's he was very disappointed, they are big boned and have a big structure and he made the mistake of feeding them like his old Aussie families. He found they quickly put on condition and became so heavy they couldn't even fly up to their perches. He learnt a valuable lesson, these birds need to be carefully managed to keep the weight off. He also found they are prolific breeders, love nesting and are fantastic rearers and feeders. The youngsters are nice in the nest, but become awkward and mean after weaning. Vince says "don't judge them until they are through the moult and flying the roof." The initial disappointment over their size was quickly forgotten when it came to racing as the birds proved to be outstanding racers in head, side and tail winds at all distances.

Breeding

Vince has several pigeon videos and has read up all the literature he can find on the great European families. He decided several years ago that the Janssen's are the best and has gone to great lengths to study the pedigrees of his stock. He has found that birds that he traces back to the world famous Merx of 67 (a double grandson of the Blue of 48) on both sides are bringing him the most success. He has been able to ensure that he can link all his breeding stock by pedigree back to arguably the best pigeon the world has ever seen "the blue of 48."

The Ponderosa Janssens are the backbone of the loft and prolific breeders. Vince has introduced Emiel Deweert, Rene Demans, Jos Sootjens, Van Loons, De Klak, Desmet Matthys and Flor Engles as a blend/cross in his efforts to produce the best. He has bred to a type with all his team now medium sized, balanced, buoyant and all have an impeccable soft feathering.

The above bloodlines have brought Vince unprecedented success at all race points up to 400 miles. Vince will introduce some O'Shannassy, Pryor and Wickham lines next season to enhance his marathon distance birds for the 500 and 600 mile events.

Tossing

During the 2004 season Vince found that the Jansen's left the other breeds of birds behind. Vince says, "they don't bother circling when you toss they just go for it, they all land together at home. They are gone out of sight before I can get the baskets tied down on the ute. They always beat me to the loft" "Always handle the birds prior to a toss, never toss them if they have food in the crop as they are not well."

Vince prefers to toss on his own to ensure they leave straight away and race to the loft. Straight line flying is the key.

Racing

Vince says "Racing the Jansen's is incredible. Often I don't see them coming, I hear them go swoosh over my head. They always come in groups and all land on the board without circling, they are like machines. I don't need fantails they would be a waste of time as the birds don't circle." "They love racing and win in all shapes and sizes, hens and cocks. They are very intelligent, break early and are faster than any other breeds of birds I have raced." This year Vince continually had other flyers birds landing at his lofts with his birds, they are dragged by his batches and land disorientated before leaving later. Vince invites club members to watch him clock and they all report he is the perfect host and gets terribly over excited on race day. Two of his club mates watched him clock from Cobar 440miles, after 10 hours on the wing three birds homed together, followed a minute later by three more. All six of these birds were in time to win the Federation. His club mates enthused, "did you see them come they were like missiles bombing the joint."

On reviewing Vince's result's it became obvious, that as Vince is a short flyer, that if the birds circled excessively at the liberation point, and then his results seem to drop away. However Vince has a view on this, "The Jansen's love to leave straight away and race for home, if they are held back by the milling mob it seems to distract them from performing at their best."

Extraordinary results

During the 2004 season Vince race two crack hens and both had triple fed positions. VPU 03 14019 5th Fed Mildura produce (300 miles), 16th Fed Coombah (360 miles) and 5th Fed Coombah. These positions were gained in consecutive weeks!! VPU 03 14043 3rd Fed Birchip Young bird Derby, 1st Fed Wedderburn and 2nd Fed Coombah. Both these hens bred Federation winners in the 2005 season.

I believe Vince's best result in the 2005 season was on the day of his son Johns wedding. He arranged for his club mate Mick Doria to clock for him in the "George Whaley" event from Mt Hope, which is NNE of Melbourne. Vince continually snuck out of the wedding ceremony to ring Mick to see if the birds were home. The wind was at times gale force from the West, a true side wind that the bird had to shoulder all the way. The birds homed in just over 7 hours from the 360 mile journey. Vince finished second to David Finerty who lives almost 13 kilometers due east of Vince. David's distance is 5 kilometers shorter from this point but he only led Vince by 4 minutes 42 seconds, just pipping him by two metres at a velocity of 1224 metres per minute (Vince 1222 mpm). Mick said Vince homed two together, they had to be well out in front of the other birds to achieve this remarkable result. The membership of the Federation realized what a remarkable feat of brilliance was displayed by Vince's birds, but Vince was far from disappointed he turned up at the rooms after the ceremony in his wedding suit and was the first to shake the winners hand.

Environment

Vince believes that the key to modern racing is loft environment. "High humidity and draughts are the main enemy and cause of poor loft form." "Melbourne weather has

changed with higher humidity and more frosts causing damp lofts.” “These conditions cause E coli which leads to wet canker and other ailments.”

Vince has installed a hydrometer and heater to control his loft environment. He keeps the loft at 60-65% humidity level. Vince says “although humidity is the enemy, you can’t have the loft too dry either. A heater without the hydrometer is of no use.”

Feeding

Vince is a supporter of Wingpower feed mixes. The depurative early in the week and the racing mix later in the week closer to basketing. He also adds additional barley and wheat to lighten the feed if the birds are not working well enough. He decides on the daily feed mix after handling his birds first thing in the morning to check their condition, prior to their early exercise.

Approximately 5 years ago, whilst attending the Sydney pigeon convention, Vince was lucky enough to visit the legendary Graham Davidson (Davo), and observe his loft and methods. Vince learnt the importance of Barley to the pigeon’s diet. Barley satisfies the pigeons hunger but does not add condition, a very important grain; he now uses to get his team in peak racing form.

Medication

Vince does not leave anything to chance. Whenever his team is basketed with other birds for racing or tossing, they are isolated on their return and medicated for wet canker and respiratory disease for two days before returning to the flock. He carries a veritable chemist shop of medications, although most of these are kept for any emerging health problem, and are rarely used. Vince says “I worm the birds regularly weather they need it or not, I find the worming medication gives them a boost.” He also flock treats for Coccidiosis once a month.

Losses

Vince says “Unfortunately I lose most birds from tossing. Since the VRPU cut the bird limit to 30 entries in Federation races I have been unable to give the birds enough races to get them fit and I am forced to toss regularly. “I would much prefer to race the birds more regularly as the majority of my losses are from tosses. It’s too time consuming and wears out my car”.

“I had high losses in the two day races (500 and 600 miles) this year and sacrificed many good pigeons. Next season I will breed some birds specifically for these two events, it was shame to lose such good birds.”

Race Results

2004

4 th Fed Axedale YB	(620 birds)	1018mpm
2 nd Fed Axedale YB	(544 birds)	1009mpm
1 st Fed Wedderburn YB	(393 birds)	1062mpm
3 rd Fed Birchip Derby YB	(400 birds)	1167mpm
1 st Wonthaggi Open event run by Ivanhoe club VHA		

5 th Fed Mildura Produce	(1489 birds)	1060mpm
7 th Fed Coombah	(1374 birds)	1159mpm
16 th Fed Coombah Whaley	(1198 birds)	1213mpm
7 th Fed Launceston	(586 birds)	1046mpm
2 nd Fed Coombah	(1291 birds)	1425mpm
11 th Fed Langwell	(1115 birds)	1167mpm

2005

4 th Fed Avenel YB	(874 birds)	1354mpm
1 st Fed Tocumwal YB	(700 birds)	1271mpm
1 st Wonthaggi Open event run by Ivanhoe club VHA		
2 nd Fed Shepparton	(2050 birds)	1003mpm
2 nd Fed Deniliquin	(2000 birds)	1805mpm
1 st Fed Hay	(1700 birds)	1633mpm
16 th Fed Hay	(2109 birds)	1415mpm
1 st Fed Hay	(2019 birds)	1396mpm
1 st Fed Hillston	(1604 birds)	1306mpm
4 th Fed Hillston	(1926 birds)	1912mpm
15 th Fed Hillston Produce	(1550 birds)	1396mpm
1 st Fed Mt. Hope	(1510 birds)	2189mpm
2 nd Fed Mt Hope Whaley	(1247 birds)	1222mpm
5 th Fed Mt Hope	(1553 birds)	1051 mpm
6 th Fed Launceston	(607 birds)	1323 mpm
12 th Fed Cobar	(1348 birds)	1694mpm
1 st Fed Cobar	(1362 birds)	1150mpm
1 st and 6 th Deniliquin Open events run by the Fawknor club during old birds.		

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