

# **Mallee Classic Race Attracts Pigeon Devotees**

By Wendy Hersey

**Pigeon enthusiasts from across Australia and an international visitor from Thailand were among spectators at the third race in the Mallee Classic series at Sea Lake on Sunday.**

They were awaiting the return of the Classic pigeons from Cobar, but with moderate headwinds, the pigeons arrived nearly two and a half hours later than last year.

Expectant onlookers agreed that, "It's anyone's race and the pigeons will have to work hard today."

There were a few false sightings and hopes were raised when some of the local feral pigeons circled overhead. An occasional joke of "Look, here they are," drew the crowd to its feet, but they quickly returned to reminiscing about recent races, race records, debate about the best breeds and their general adoration of pigeons for their quiet natures and homing abilities.

Finally, at 5.51 p.m., just short of ten hours in the air, a pigeon owned by Leigh Arnott of Horsham took the honours and the owner \$6,800 in cash and other prizes. By 7.45 p.m., 15 pigeons were home with the others expected in at any time.

Spectators agreed it had been a relaxing day and the race well organised and executed.

Race Coordinator, Barry Trewin said, "The race went very well and exceeded my expectations. We had flyers from around Australia in attendance and they were very impressed with the facilities. The headwinds on Sunday tested the pigeons and we've seen some quality pigeons take the prizes."

Mr Trewin said \$25,110 in prizes was paid on the day.

## **Pigeon Profiles**

Among spectators on the day, were some leading fanciers and promoters from around Australia and overseas. Their profiles follow:

**Name:** Tna Dharmajiva

**Lives:** Thailand

**Involvement with the Mallee Classic:** Consultancy advice and promotions. I have been promoting pigeons for Australians in Thailand for many, many years. I went to Albury Grammar and thirty years ago I took some birds back from Australia, from the Albury Wodonga area and some from Sydney to breed. The results were good, tough pigeons, but it's hard to beat a Euro.

**Occupation:** Land Developer.

**Best Racing Record:** Won Queen's Cup in Thailand.

**Favourite Breeds:** Cattryse, Janssen and Desmet Mattese.

**Comment on the Classic:** It's a very good event. If Government would relax quarantine laws, there would be tourism opportunities for Australia, which is a fairly isolated country. To help promote big races in Australia it would help if birds could be sent over. In Asia, racing pigeon events have been happening for many years. They are huge events, with an auction, a

conference and a big party. When the Thailand World Championships are on, our hotels are full for one week, with people coming from Belgium, the Netherlands and all around. There are 1841 entries in the race, with first prize \$200,000 US and betting on the pools. You can do the same thing in Australia.

**Name:** Ian McKay

**Lives:** Burwood

**Involvement with the Mallee Classic:** Competitor and sponsor. Last year we had the quickest pigeon here over 600 miles. The race gives you the opportunity to meet new people from around Australia. Racing is a challenge, it's relaxing and takes you away from work. It gives you a break and becomes a way of life. It doesn't matter whether you're a pauper or prince, come race day, you're all equal. There's nothing like the joy of people coming and congratulating you when you win.

**Occupation:** Stockfood supplier, we've become specialists in supplying food for racing pigeons.

**Favourite Breeds:** Winners, because winners breed winners. When I go to sales I look at whether there has been a winner in each generation. You've then got an even chance of success. The "basket" (race day) is the only answer.

**Best Race Record:** In 1999, a syndicate in the South African \$1million race (US \$200,000 first prize) came 24<sup>th</sup> out of 1100. It was the best performed pigeon to leave Australia and compete in an international race. Ace Bird in the Adelaide \$10,000 race, 1999.

**Comment on the Classic:** Barry's done a top job. It's all part of the training techniques and general care. When you introduce birds from all different lofts, it's often difficult to get the majority to race day. For Barry to be able to do this, he's done a fantastic job. There seems to be a high percentage left here on actual race day. Looking at this race, it would have to be one of the few that seems to have the town involved in it in one way or another. A lot of the other races have mainly pigeon people in it, but this race has non-flyers in it.

**Name:** Tony Sofra

**Lives:** Shepparton

**Involvement with the Mallee Classic:** Conferring with Barry Trewin on handling and loft advice. I've been involved with pigeons for 35 years and have my own racing lofts. I have an affinity with pigeons and love their natural ability to be able to get home. I could spend hours with them all day!

**Occupation:** LP gas distributor.

**Favourite Breeds:** Any birds with a strong constitution.

**Best Race Record:** The Asia Pacific Race, second Australian bird in out of 2,500 pigeons; 12<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> overall.

**Comment on the Classic:** I'm very pleased to be a part of it. It's been very well put together. You can see it's been quite successful just by looking at the number of people here and the actual ranking of the people. The organisation's been very good and people have been very happy with the results, especially about the pigeons that have been left to race. In other races, the pigeons tend to peter out and don't have a long existence, that is they're not there on the actual race day.