

Racing in Taiwan

By

Jason Lin

My name is Jason Lin, I have been exporting pigeons from USA to Taiwan for about 20 years, I have been breeding youngsters and sending them to money races, but I have never raced any of these pigeons myself. After a trip to Taiwan last year and, with encouragement and support from local fanciers in the Southern California area, I decided to attempt racing pigeons in the 500 member Chung-Cheng Club of the Racing Pigeon Association of Kaohsiung County. This club sells approximately 10,000 money bands each season.

In Taiwan, racing is limited to three young bird seasons each year and, at the beginning of the each series, the young birds must be less than 130 days old. Because Taiwan is a relatively small island, our birds must be released at sea at progressively longer distances from 160km to 310km. We fly two preliminary timed qualification races followed by up to five actual races. Qualification times are determined by the club and are essentially a time cutoff. This course often has strong winds from varying directions, heavy rain, or fog at release point, and after the third race, the pigeons are released regardless of the environmental conditions. Every pigeon must race every week or be disqualified. The goal is to reduce the number of qualified pigeons to less than 50. If that happens before the seven races are complete, then the races are discontinued and the prizes are paid out based on an individual pigeon average speed. If at the end of the seven races, there are more than 50 pigeons still qualified, then the prizes are paid out to the top 50 pigeons by individual pigeon average speed.

Again, our club started the spring season (February and March) with approximately 10,000 birds, and by the end of the fourth actual race there were only 42 birds still qualified. To give you some idea of how quickly pigeons are disqualified, 5941 of the 6798 pigeons entered in the first race (160km) made the allotted qualification time. On the second race (190km), 3161 out of 5882, on the third race (220km), 560 of 3129 on the fourth race(250km), 182 of 558 on the fifth race(270km), 162 of 182 and on the sixth race 42 of 160 pigeon met the qualification speed. With less than 50 remaining pigeons, the seventh race was canceled.

With a 26 pigeon race team, I qualified 20 of 23 on the first race, 8 of 20 on the second race, 3 of 8 on the third race, 2 out of 3 on the fourth race, 2 of 2 on the fifth race, and unfortunately the last race neither pigeon qualified but they did make it home. Some highlights for the season included a 12th place finish against 5582 pigeons in the second race, 22nd and 69th against 3129 pigeons in

the third race, 29th and 61st in individual average speed in the fourth race, and 22nd individual average speed in the 5th race.

Given that this was my first effort, I am quite proud of the above results, I want to state publicly that I owe much of this success to my friend Bill "The Book" Richardson. I first met Book approximately 10 years ago while he was conducting a seminar and an auction at the FVC Snowbird Race in Southern California. We have had the opportunity to talk on several occasions since then. While it sounded great to race in Taiwan, when I got there, I suddenly felt very alone and realized that I probably didn't have the skills to pull this off by myself, so I contacted Book for help. Over the last 3 months, Bill and I have exchanged many emails in which he has answered my questions and provided me with a great deal of valuable advices. Obviously, I wanted to do well, and I was willing to do whatever it took to win including the heavy flagging, road, and ocean training that they do very here. I was surprised how little Book wanted to work the pigeons. When my competitors laughed at this notion, I became concerned because after all, my competitors live here and Book does not. However, when I voiced these concerns, Book only said, "Relax and let your pigeons be pigeons." Although it was difficult to listen to at the time, I now understand better what he was talking about.

Based on articles written by Book's students about his racing techniques, I expected a great deal of loft training, but after a few weeks, he completely changed tactics to using a limited roadwork regiment. In that first couple of weeks, he seemed to be studying the situation, as he wanted to know every detail about the pigeons and how they were acting and reacting. At first, I was concerned about this sudden change in methods, especially since there hadn't been time to see if the first method was going to work or not. I must admit that I became concerned that maybe he didn't have a handle on the situation and that he was randomly searching for success, and truthfully, I felt that I could have done that much myself. However, after a radical change, we settled into a very nice pattern that we maintained for the rest of the season. Certainly, he saw something that I still don't quite understand, but it was almost like he had taken all of the information that I was providing and projecting an outcome, and for some reason he didn't like the outcome of the first method.

He had me road trained some, but that was pretty limited in the number of times (maybe 10 times) and because the island is pretty small, the tosses were limited in distance. For the most part, while people in my area were standing on their lofts flagging their pigeons, Book seemed quit happy if they just sat on the roof, which is pretty much all they did. At first, I felt stupid letting my pigeons out just so that they could sit on the roof. What made it seem sillier was that after I let them out to sit on the roof, my wife takes over and lets them in to eat. Sometimes I would look out outside and see my wife and the pigeons just sitting

there side by side. They seemed happy, and Book was happy, so over time, I got used to it.

Many of the pigeons that disqualified themselves did so because of a bad training toss in the week leading up to the first race. Unfortunately, there were some things that I didn't know about that particular toss, but they can be easily rectified on my next attempt. Had that toss not occurred, I believe that I could have gone into the last race with a few more pigeons and thereby increased my chances. Given what I have learned through Book over the course of this last season, and by avoiding mistakes made through inexperience, I think that I can do even better in the future because I now better understand what needs to be done. In the United States, I have heard people say, "Sometimes less is more," and Book has proven that to me.

There are a couple of side notes. As I write this, I am back in the US. While over in Taiwan, I never mentioned to Book that my wife was helping because, when you are working with Book, there is only one way, BOOK's WAY, and I was not sure how he would react to my wife helping. Funny thing is that when we talked to Book on the phone for the first time today, he was not in the least surprised that she was helping, in fact, he said, "I guessed it was something like that because you were clocking young cocks in a situation better suited for hens, and I guessed that somehow a woman was involved in the situation." He went on to explain that young pigeons tend to bond with women and teenagers much more readily than they do adult men. In his view, most adult male fanciers are more interested in ego building than building a bond with their pigeons, whereas most women fly or help out because they genuinely like and want to bond with the pigeons. Again, in his view, young male pigeons respond very well to women. I told Book that I hoped that my wife would help me with the pigeons in the future, and he said that I had better find a way to be sure she does.

In closing, another interesting point that I would like to make, involves Book's articles. As I have known Book for a while, I have been to his site and read a number of his articles. To be honest, when I first read them, there was a great deal that I thought I understood. Possibly, I may have understood the words, but certainly not their meaning. In fact, through a single reading, I doubt anyone could absorb the kind and amount of information he provides. However, after working with Book this past season, and then reread those same articles, I have come to realize that in one article or another, he has made his thinking available to us in a manner that no other fancier ever has. As you know there are a lot of articles, and sometimes they seem long and hard to understand, but I am half way through reading them a second time, and strongly believe that it is worth reading them again a third time, which I will do before my next season.

Book has helped me with every facet of the racing end of the sport, and I have come realize that I am quite lucky to have "The Book" helping me. Unless you have worked through emails with someone like Book for an entire season, you have no idea how much of his time he devotes to others in this sport, especially when you consider that he is working with several other fanciers at the same time and he still somehow finds time to write all of these articles. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP, BOOK!!!