MY BARCELONA DREAM

Part 4

By Michael Feeney

My Barcelona Dream-Part 4

Since my last article I have been making minor modifications to the loft. I intend to close it in completely over the next year or so. And getting the ventilation right over this time as well I hope. The stock section has been enlarged again after I made it smaller. I have yet to make the new boxes for it. This will be done when I'm finished breeding, I will not upset the birds breeding any more than necessary. All I have really done to date is to make section from 4ft wide back to over 6ft to accommodate the present stock numbers. There is also a 4ft section next to it in which I have built and placed a set of pipo boxes that are 300mm square. This will be used for birds allowed to pair naturally that are intended to be raced. There will be no breeding from birds that have not flown some races and come home in good time. In this way I hope in the future to retire only birds to stock that have flown from Barcelona or done something of note. This I think will take some time and hopefully will eventually happen.

I have been feeding all birds the same with 50/50 Breed and Wean and Start Plus from Versele Laga with Hormoform and garlic oil and minerals mixed together. I also have used G10 pellets as a hopper feed. This means that there is always food present for the birds. This will be the way I operate in the future from here on out. Hopper feeding the pellets with the mix fed at night to appetite. In this way I hope that with no rationing the birds will grow naturally and hopefully have no setbacks.

In the last article plans were to start breeding at the end of January. This slightly changed and I paired up on the first week in January and coincidently the day I paired up there was a full moon that night. I know some people pair up their birds to the phases of the moon but I never have. I don't know if it makes a difference or not but I did make note of it anyway. At this point the loft lights had been on for about 3 weeks from 6am to 10am and 3pm to 10pm. This gives a total of lighted time of 16 hours a day. The bulb strength I use always in the loft is 100 watts. This gives nearly the same brightness as daylight. It's just a different light source. So lights on birds in breeding condition, I hoped they certainly looked the part, and plans for pairing going on at this point for several weeks, it's now time for action. I have 10 pair of stock at this point in January and then by the end of January I had another 2 pairs compliments of Jim Emerton. So the stock is now made up of Emerton birds, Birds from Padfield's Invicible, some Invincible Spirit lines and also some Schlepphorst Stichelbauts. The last mentioned arriving at the end of January from Jim.

Planned pairings were as follows. The Emerton birds were mated getting the closest relationships possible judging on pedigree. 1 cock from the invincible spirit lines was bulled to 3 hens from the Padfield lines. This cock is used in this way because he is there great uncle 5 generations up to these birds, this was my start. All the Emerton pairs had laid within 10 days. The Padfield hens on the bull system I used laid within 12 days. I was happy with these results and timing of egg laying. This was the indication that everything was right in condition to get laying times right.

With this happiness of on time laying I had one setback. The bull system this time did not work as planned and I had 6 blind eggs. I put this down to me changing the system a little. A

mistake I will never repeat again. From all the other eggs, I had altogether 14 -12 were fertile. I was happy with this. I got a full 12 to hatch and lost 2 in the nest from fighting when they were 2 days old. So I got to wean 10.

With the hens that the eggs were blind I removed them from the section and allowed them a week break. Then I again bulled the same cock going back to my bull system that works. I got then 6 full eggs, again laid within 12 days of starting the process. I also had 2 pairs of Padfield birds mated at this time and so was expecting 9 babies from these birds. I had 9 filled eggs and from this 6 hatched, I think because I disturbed 2 nests at hatching time 1 of the eggs in each nest from the bulled cock didn't hatch. And then I disposed of 1 at 10 days because it had an illness. At the time of this laying the first birds were treading again and so eggs from these as a second round of these were laid within a week of the Padfield birds. So now there are approximately 15 youngsters to be weaned in the next week or 2 from now which is the 25 March.

The excitement of weaning youngsters always gives me a buzz. The first youngsters, all 10, hatched around the 2 February. So at time of writing this they are 7 weeks old approx. I weaned all these on the 28 February meaning they were about 26 days old. They were weaned into a section with 4 pairs on eggs that are flying out as they were planned breeding from last year but are now feeders. Funny enough 2 of these pairs began to feed the weaned youngsters. After 3 days placing these youngsters in the trap I then opened it for them to go in and out themselves. As the older birds went in and out this I feel encouraged the youngsters up. At 7 weeks I can say they are flying strong for an hour or more a day. I have lost 2 from the loft. They are on an open-hole system and will be left with the older birds indefinitely. I am enjoying the up and down and watching them flitting about. They have come on strong and I will maybe start training these shortly, maybe. I have not decided whether or not I will train the youngsters or not this year yet just because I want to see how they come on without it. I have never done it this way before. If I do decide it will be light training only and in honesty I think the will just be sent a good distance of about 50 miles. Whatever comes home comes. I'm not sure what I will do.

The next 15 birds to be weaned will be put with these and hopefully these will not be lost off the loft but on the open hole system will stay around. I don't think there will be any problems but you never know what will turn up in the future. I am I must say hopeful and optimistic about what will come about.

My next steps in breeding will be exciting. I have been lucky enough to be given, on loan, a cock that has flown Tarbes as a yearling into Taunton. A distance of just over 557miles I think. This bird has been given to me by Nic Harvey, himself having clocked the mother of this cock from the Barcelona International twice. I say lucky because as luck would have it this cock has been injured around the loft and my never race again for Nic. Even luckier for me I was talking to Nic a couple of weeks after it happened and the arrangements were made for him to come to my loft for some R&R (the second R is relaxing, I'll leave what the first R is to you all). As he is on loan I intend to bull him to all my stock hens for a round or 2. Whether this will produce the exceptional Barcelona International bird into Ireland or not, I don't know. Firstly this cock will be bulled to 4 hens at a time. This is simply because of my available time being limited. It is possible to do up to 12 hens at a time however. I will focus on the Emerton hens from booth Nic Harvey and Chris Booth with him first and later he will go with the Padfield hens. The Padfield hens are being bulled with the Invincible Spirit line that is also on loan from a friend of mine Pat McGloughlin. I will keep you all posted as to how the bulling goes in the next article and a little update on the current team of approx. 23 babies that should be training or flying extremely well at that time. Fingers crossed there is a champion in the mix somewhere, only time will tell!!!

Until next time.

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Some of the first youngsters weaned…

Now about 7 weeks old and flying strong.

Some of the second birds to be weened..

Again I am very happy with how these birds have turned out.