

Ray Whitmore, Nick Kaparos, Jeff Jones.

***RESPONSIBILITIES/MANDATE***

Investigate/identify reasons or factors that could have contributed to the disastrous returns from the Galah race 2-10-10. Findings to be gleaned from past experiences, comparable tangibles, real or perceived logical reasons. Members in general.

***REPORT BACK***

Document any changes, amendments or protocol refinements that may or should improve racing conditions and as a consequence returns on race days.

***MEETINGS***

Central focal point of post season was to investigate possible causes in relation to unacceptable returns from the 800km race. In this area there are a number of reasons put forward by the subcommittee and members in general.

We as an investigating group concurred that a combination of several weather and atmospheric conditions in combination on the day of liberation caused the Galah super smash. The following were key factors that possibly played a major part in the Galah race.

***POSSIBLE CAUSES OF GALAH SMASH RACE***

***1. TAKING BIRDS OFF LINE OF FLIGHT***

***2 .HEAD WINDS***

***3. LACK OF LEAD UP RACES***

***4. POSSIBLY RAIN ON SECOND DAY***

***RECOVERY OF BIRDS***

Firstly, contrary to the most popular opinion, the main cause was not rain. Rain was never a factor on Saturday, the day of liberation. Rain could have been a contributing factor on the

second and subsequent following days. However it was never evident on Saturday, the first day of the race.

Forty eight pigeons were recovered from flyers in northern rural Victoria who had raced on that Saturday. They described the day as fine and sunny, and predominantly clear skies. They did in isolated areas experience a very light ten minute shower from a small cloud bank passing over. The pigeons gathered for us were mainly trapped on Saturday from a wide spread area that stretched from Shepperton to Albury. Comments from a couple of flyers that trapped our birds, was that they were not overly thirsty, spent or flown out. There was still daylight and flying time available when they were dropping in with their race birds. Other comments that could assist in forming a conclusion were that the birds looked confused and just gave up. The birds recovered from the pickup point had come in from over an area that covered roughly 300 kilometers X 150 kilometers. It was quite clear by night fall on Saturday birds had not cleared Victoria and were still 300 miles from home. No birds were reported in greater Melbourne. The race was a smash before birds encountered any rain. The Shepperton flyers and surrounding clubs only send a total of 200 to 300 pigeons per race and therefore would not have had an influence on the CCF birds.

### ***LINE OF FLIGHT***

Birds were taken a considerable distance off the line of flight. This may have had a huge influence in the disastrous smash. Birds were so far off line they were only a very short 60 kilometers south of being directly due west of Sydney. This meant the birds were homing on an almost direct easterly flight path and into the energy sapping easterly wind. They were a long way inland from the tracking waves and flight paths they had established and followed during the season. Gone were the ranges and the ocean that possibly created a corridor for them to track along. They were now on the other side of the ranges and open space and no recognizable terrain or land marks. The experiences during the year regarding flight paths, was now useless. We have not heeded warning from the other times we changed direction when flying the southern route. In the past we changed Welshpool to Bendigo after a holdover, this year from Sale to Carrathool and suffered less than reasonable results on each occasion. Taking birds away from established tracking and recognizable flight paths has never been a reliable success and it's not going to change.

### ***COMBINED FACTORS***

A combination of factors on the day caused the disaster. Some we are aware of and others we will probably never know about. However we should proceed with caution when we have several conditions in combination on any given day. Even though each factor may tick the box in isolation a situation could arise where all of the boxes are ticked on red light and green light

protocol assessments and liberate as per protocol and have a disaster. E.g. If birds were liberated from Galah in accordance with set down guide lines, as dictated in our protocols they failed us. They failed us in devastating fashion.

## **HEAD WINDS**

The other major factor that in conjunction with taking the birds off line, was of course the wind. Wind direction on the day had a lot of east content and this element was a major contributor in the disaster that decimated our flocks. Birds were liberated in wind conditions that satisfied protocol, and it was this protocol that let us down. There is a one size fits all rule, there is no sliding scale. Wind speed is the same for sprint and distance. It is not practical nor is it reasonable to expect the birds to fly the distance races into the upper limits of wind speed as set down in guide lines. Head winds are often mentioned in liberation guidelines but head winds need to be clearly defined. It is very vague and non descriptive. At what angle does a wind, coming on to the birds, cease to be or become a head wind? If birds are racing 1000klm and the breeze is on their shoulder, at some time during the race the birds will be pushed into a position where that shoulder wind becomes a head wind. With the winds that prevailed from Galah, birds were facing an insurmountable test. They failed the test because *the head winds were too consistent to overcome. Changes need to be made in this area.*

## **UNPREPARED**

Another key factor and major contributor, in conjunction with the head winds and change of direction was the birds lacked hard day condition. They were not match fit because of the fast velocities of most of our races this season. Fifteen to eighteen hundred meters per minute races dominated the race sheets. Hardly ideal preparation for our most testing staying events! They were always going to come up short when they faced the prevailing conditions on the day. In essence they may not have been prepared for it.

## **RAIN**

As mentioned earlier rain was never a direct contributor on Saturday when good pigeons were beaten and surrendered to the elements from Galah. However there is a lesson learned here. It tells us that we judge the conditions in each category collectively, not in isolation. For races expected to go into a second or even third day, conditions predicted for those days must also be analyzed and considered in distance races, even if there is a sniff of a chance of rain we need to proceed with caution. If that chance of rain has easterly head winds, don't proceed at all.

## **ANOTHER CONSIDERATION**

The final part of the postmortem involves the current practice of having a set date inked permanently in our race schedules for our marathon events. There is no flexibility. You get what you get with weather for that weekend. If the birds are brought home we lose the race, there is no provision to re schedule. We need some scope in this area. We need to be more selective when looking for favorable conditions for our distance races. A band width time frame gives us a greater chance of having a race in favorable conditions that would equate to better returns. With a movable date, we only basket if we have a good chance to race in favorable conditions. If the birds had their own trailer, lead up races for the 800klm and 1000klm in isolation to the main stream racing program could be arranged. Custom and practice has been basket and take what you get. With a system as recommended above in place, Galah may not have happened.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS. Line of flight**

Keeping race birds on the general direction of the route being flown with maximum deviation of 20 degrees, is not a great problem under normal circumstances on all routes except the southern route. The changing coastline creates its own unique set of problems. We have to make a great directional change to increase distance and have to go too far off line to achieve this. When flying south we recommend an extra Welshpool and Tasmania replace the 800 and 1000klm races. We could go a bit further on the coast and gain a bit more distance but that is not the preferred option. Welshpool is geographically a safer liberation point. If birds were taken to say Wonthaggi, and they happen to plot a straight line for home, it would put them over the risky snow country resorts and the towering Mt Kosciuszko. They could also be on the opposite side of the ranges to what they have been flying. Welshpool should keep them on the flight paths established during the season.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS. Head Winds**

Reduce head wind speeds from 29 kilometers per hour to a maximum of 15 kilometers per hour for races in excess of 500 kilometers on western routes.

Reduce head wind speeds from 29 kilometers per hour to a maximum of 15 kilometers per hour for races in excess of 750 kilometers and above on coastal routes.

### **Definition of Routes**

Western Routes = North West – West -- South West

Coastal Routes = North -- South

### **Definition of Head Winds**

It is not possible, practical or sensible to cover all routes and distances with a blanket wind speed or direction rule. There is no one size fits all rule that can be applied here. We recommend that each route have protocols that allow flexibility to judge each route on its merits regarding head winds. Establishing western and coastal routes will allow each route to have its own set of circumstances pertaining to wind direction verses flight direction. Easterly wind causes more concern than most and was the element that was most destructive in the Galah race. A rule that totally bans racing, in easterly winds on the western routes at any distance is not advisable. If we do we will evolve lofts full of fair weather pigeons. You could have east in the wind of a particular velocity and race at 500klm but would not liberate in the same wind from 1000klm.

Clearly defining and determining a head wind is a difficult assignment. There are many variables that become part of the equation. Wind direction can vary considerably during the course of the event. Change can be minimal or in the extreme to the opposite direction. Birds are not aeroplanes. They do not charter the shortest distance between liberation and home, then fly that direct line. However we need to define head winds in our protocols as best we can for those charged with the responsibility of liberation. We would suggest that a wind coming onto the birds' nose or onto the shoulder from (1) 20 degrees up to (2) 45 degrees be deemed as head winds after 500 kilometers on western routes and from 750 kilometers on the coastal routes. Using this as a definition for head winds and using the above as guide, protocol to be reduced from 29 kilometers per hour to 15 kilometers per hour for races in excess of 550klm on western lines and 750klm on north and south lines.

## **WEATHER INFORMATION**

To make an accurate assessment in relation to holding or liberating, we need up to date, accurate and comprehensive information from the professionals from the weather bureau. The management committee of the federation has already ratified, purchasing written weather reports from the bureau of meteorology prior to basketing for the long races.

## **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Race rule: 6-6. Be changed from maximum wind speed from 49 kilometers per hour to 55 kilometers per hour.

Race rule: 6-9. Be changed from maximum temperature from 30 degrees to 25 degrees for the longer races. Considering that liberation times for the longer races are early in the mornings a 30 degree temperature at that time would suggest that a very hot day was imminent.