

North Road Combine



A Well-Run Club is The Key to a Successful Club.

We all hated the disagreement that recently occurred in our club that ended in ill-feelings, lost friendships and due to the uncertainty and lack of direction, loss of members elsewhere. It even triggered a number of flyers to leave our sport. Dissatisfaction from conflicts is one of the top reasons that members quit the sport or fly elsewhere. It has caused a major setback to our clubs membership, credibility and finances. We have to constantly remind ourselves the reason we got into this Sport in the first place was to enjoy our birds and have some friendly competition and camaraderie. In short, **to just have Fun!**

I was surprised by the lack of transparency, operating procedures, common sense and “protocol” that we seemed to try and operate under. Most of the conflicts and problems that have arisen within our club emerged simply because of a lack of collaborative engagement, poor communication and a grasp of how the club should operate. Sometimes even the office bearers didn’t seem to be informed.

One thing that stands out with stronger clubs is leadership and that the members all have a clear understanding of their purpose as a club and how they have agreed to treat their members and themselves. This is more than just camaraderie and friendship. It’s the understanding by all the members that the club operates with fairness, sympathetic awareness and has a purpose and plan: The club’s **Constitution, Rules and Race Terms and Conditions** establish basic principles, agreement, a clear understanding and a change management process that will reduce dissatisfaction, the formation of cliques within the club and encourages a growing membership.

Our club’s Constitution and Terms and Conditions is after all, the guidelines, policies and rules that the associateship has agreed (by democratic majority) to use and live by. It is the agreement the club has made with its members that defines how it will be organised, how competitions will be run and what responsibilities the clubs’ elected officers have. Most importantly, it describes how the club will deal with problems or disputes when they arise.

Here is a brief outline of some of the main elements that our club’s Constitution and rules encompass.

A preamble or statement of purpose which describes the objective and purpose of why the club exists. This is a simple sentence or two which helps “set the stage” and can be used to re-focus the club on its true objective, such as: *“The Purpose of this club is to promote the hobby of breeding and engage in the friendly competition of racing Pigeons and to foster a positive social environment for members and their families. **Competition is for Testing Pigeons, not Relationships**”*

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What is a member? Who can be a member and what, if any, requirements need to be met. Our club has different levels of membership such as 'Flying' and 'Social' members. A *Flying* member, for instance, might be described as *"Any member who has participated in at least one race during the prior year, are current in all dues and fees of the club, agree to abide by certain conditions and are of good character."*

One of the most important areas of our club's Constitution and rules is that of how and when members elect officer bearers, what officers are elected and what their duties and responsibilities are. Far too many times a member is elected to a position with very little idea as to what the office requires. Our club needs a well-informed "team" of office bearers to be effective and keep the club viable. Every office bearer or secretarial position is important and time should be spent to ensure an understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the office. Here are the traditional ones.

President: The President presides over all meetings and business transactions. In many cases he is the spokesman for the club, and may be the one to meet the public should the need arise. The President will break all tie votes and is automatically on all committees in an advisory capacity. The President is your leader and the "cheerleader" for creating enthusiasm and participation.

Vice-President: The Vice-President will preside at all meetings in the absence of the President. They are the back up for the President.

Secretary: The Secretary is the cornerstone of the club. He or she will send notices of all club meetings, keep minutes and conduct the general correspondence of the club. The Secretary is responsible for keeping the bylaws and race rules current and issues all revisions to the members. Essentially they are the one that keeps the records, writes them down and distributes so there are no misunderstandings down the road.

Treasurer. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial assets of the club. They will submit a timely financial account to the membership and keeps the president informed as to any delinquent (member) accounts. They are responsible to pay the club's bills, with a co-signature on checks. The Treasurer keeps in his custody the receipts, books and records pertaining to the club (for 5 yrs.) and deposits all monies received for dues, bands, surplus received from shipping or any other sources into the Club's official bank account.

To protect the integrity of this position and avoid problems it is recommended that at the end of office and to meet a yearly legal requirement (Office of Fair Trading), the Treasurer requests an audit be made by an accountant appointed by the membership at the AGM.

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Race Secretary: The Race Secretary is, in my opinion, the most important job in the club. This is the person responsible for the conduct of all the club's races. **The Race secretary is your event director.** He / she chairs the race committee (if applicable), which usually includes other elected or appointed members. This committee will resolve all questions and disputes regarding the racing competition. The Race Secretary is also responsible for conducting and maintaining the records of all loft surveys and ensures that the racing supplies are adequately maintained. The Race Secretary coordinates the liberation and makes provisions for notifying club members of the release times. He shall manage all race-figuring activities, and is responsible for publishing race results and the distributing of diplomas and awards.

The rules are the club's policies and operating procedures. This is the How, When and Why, things are done. The Constitution defines the club's policy as to rule changes, voting, dues, when to hold elections, and what happens if the club dissolves, should that ever occur. It is designed to keep everyone all on the same "page" and eliminate misunderstandings. Participation and harmony is always improved when all the members understand how things are supposed to work.

Many club members seem to have little or no interest in their club's rules or bylaws until a conflict occurs and for the uninformed club this can be a disaster. This is when the club can be "rail-roaded" or intimidated into something that may either be unfair, improper, poorly conceived or thought through. If the club has a strong set of bylaws and refers to them regularly, a procedure will exist for handling most situations that are likely to occur. (The NRC also has procedures for interpreting and adding things that are not covered).

Every club should invest a few minutes at their annual meeting to review their Constitution, bylaws and race rules and make copies available for the members to access (either to take home or access on the internet) and review. It is your responsibility as a member to be familiar and understand how your club operates, and what is expected of you and the rest of the members.

We need to remember that people join pigeon clubs to fly and enjoy their birds, but it is everyone's responsibility to make the club run smoothly and fairly. Should dissension occur again within our club, remember the motto that should burn, **"Competition is for Testing Pigeons, not Relationships"** to re-focus our clubs purpose and the discussion. With a good Constitution, complete set of rules and race Terms and Conditions, a stronger, more harmonious club can almost be guaranteed.

So when was the last time you reviewed our club's Constitution, rules and race Terms and Conditions?

For a copy of North Road Combine's Constitution, rules with race Terms and Conditions, refer to www.nrcpigeons.com under the [Information] Tab under either [Constitution], [Flying Rules] or [Invitation / Novelty Races].