

Hoosier Classic International One Loft Race 2018
North America's First Million Dollar Pigeon Race
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"Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark, in the hopeless swamps of the approximate, the not-quite, the not-yet, the not-at-all. Do not let the hero in your soul perish, in lonely frustration for the life you deserved, but have never been able to reach. Check your road and the nature of your battle. The world you desired can be won, it exists, it is real, it is possible, and it's yours." (John Galt, Atlas Shrugged, by Ayn Rand)



My friend, a retired law professor from Arizona, some time ago called me to ask if it were true that pigeon events existed, today, that offered prizes of **\$1,000,000.00 US** and that the winner of such an event would walk away with \$200,000.00 US as first prize? I assured him that, as unbelievable as that may have seemed to him at the time, the information he had received was “indeed accurate”. I further advised that the first such event, as unlikely as it may seem, was actually the result of South African insight into the evolving nature of “pigeon racing” that had concluded that a shift in the sport was taking place, such that, an international event would draw entrants from multiple countries from around the world. At the time the concept was radical and most fanciers doubted that any such venture could ever succeed. Why? Well given that many issues would need to be addressed including logistics (the actual successful transportation by air of live young pigeons) in most cases, from not only various countries but also different continents). These young racing pigeons required pre transport inspection and quarantine at the countries of origin, protocols acceptable to all sides needed to be negotiated by the various individual national ministries of agriculture that were acceptable to agricultural authorities and ministries in the recipient country (these protocols took time and a lot of effort on behalf of all parties). Airlines needed to approve appropriate shipping containers and protocols that allowed for the safe transport of their cargo and in this case the cargo was living cargo, namely young racing pigeons. Upon arrival, more inspections by local South African veterinary authorities, checking of originating inspection certification assuring that bilateral protocols and testing was faithfully adhered to, then transportation to the approved quarantine facilities and more testing, more observing and final release to the approved one loft race facility. It was no easy task at the time and it remains a tedious task to this day to coordinate and oversee for both the safety of the pigeons that are intended to race as well as the assurance to the host country that no adverse effects might result to their indigenous poultry operations. Against all odds the organizers through, perseverance and negotiating skill made it all happen. The first million dollar race took place in South Africa in the 1997/98 race year.

The following stats were garnered from recent a press release of Paul Smith, United Kingdom Race Team Co-coordinator/Shipper and International Race Co-coordinator for the 22nd South African Million Dollar Pigeon Race.

That first million dollar race in 1997/1998 drew 1000 entries. Six years later, that is for the 7th million dollar race the organizers attracted 2,473 entries. It was not easy attracting participants but by the 8th year the entries totaled 3,703 racing pigeons. However in 2005 by their 9th race the million dollar race attracted an unheard of number of entries 5,096 (3,711 international entries and 1,385 South African entries) from 30 different countries. These numbers are huge given all of the potential problems including technical, logistical, customs, and health issues, inherent in such a venture. Needless to say by the 15th running of the race the entries came from 36 countries and totaled 6,611 young racing pigeons. This year marks the 21st running of this race (2017/2018) with entries from 38 countries totaling 6000 racing pigeons. The entries have originated from Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America.

That very first million dollar pigeon race hosted in South Africa was actually won by an American by the name of “Qualls” who had purchased two late bred from Bob Kinney and then mated these together and entered the very 1st million dollar pigeon race in South Africa. Here is what I wrote in 2007 in an article following the death of Bob Kinney:

“Two of the “Silverado Family” birds, sold at public auction as late bred’s bred the winner of the “Sun City Million Dollar Pigeon Race” in South Africa for “Qualls” of the USA. This event, without a doubt is the most coveted event in the Racing Pigeon World carrying along with the glory the enormous 1st place prize of \$200,000.00 US. That winning bird was “Silverado family” a Janssen/Gordon family and it was about 10 minutes out in front of the next bird. They came that day one at a time. No doubt about whom was out front and where they were that day. Less than a dozen lofts in the world have ever have bred the first place winner of this race .”

Qualls was not the last American to win this race I can remember the victory in 2003 of “**Never Say Die**” bred by David Clausing of Florida and the 2005 Jeff Smith victory of “**Four Starzz Dream**” an incredible \$200,000 US pay day on a hot and windy day in 2005 !

The cradle of the racing pigeon sport is without a doubt Europe however the Americans have shown themselves to be fierce competitors literally dominating this one loft race over the past few years.

*David & Anna Clausing have stunned the racing pigeon fraternity by leading the pace in the Million Dollar prize pay-out package with their staggering results in this event. Since inception of the race in 1997 a summary of some of the top results that the Clausing’ s have scored are: 1st, 3rd, 4th, 24th, 26th, 26th, 36th, 45th, 58th, 68th, 90th, 93rd, 99th – and numerous other places in the top 250 cash prize positions. The win which came in 2003 with their pigeon named, ‘**Never Say Die**’ netted them a cool US\$ 200,000.00 in hard cash. Their own results & and those of others with Clausing’ s will fill all the pages of this magazine. As opposed to fainting during their flight in the heat of the day, they kiss the morning sun.” ~Thomas Smith*

My old and dear friend Jim McLean had a favorite saying “*Talk is cheap and it takes money to buy whiskey*”. For 21 years the South Africa race has been considered the “*Olympics of the Racing Pigeon Sport*”. The guaranteed prize money, the competition, the reality was simple if you could win in Africa you were the very best in the world.

I asked Jim what he personally felt the role of One Loft races was and were they good for the sport. Additionally which events did he personally compete in?

“The role of one loft races, are to offer a level playing field for all the entries. All birds are treated equal from medication, feeding, training, and loft location. All birds are flown on the same system. In one loft racing you are not competing against another handler but a breeder. I truly believe here in the United States one loft racing has helped the pigeon sport. Not all fanciers have the luxury of flying in a club let alone a big club. With clubs closing because of decreasing membership, fanciers still have the option of competing with one loft racing. In most cases a fancier can compete against the best in their country and sometimes the world. We compete in several races a year. San Francisco Triple Crown, Breeders Fall Classic, Southern Bell, Pacific Northwest Challenge, Big Andy’s One Loft Race, South Africa Million Dollar Race, Victoria Falls, & Crooked River Challenge are the races we entered.”

What Makes A Great One Loft Race?
A Great Loft . . . A Great Location,
and A Great Handler.
Well Finally. . . Here It is!

What makes a truly great one loft race? According to Jim Ward :“*A great loft, a great location and finally a truly great handler*” to this I

would add – a great team, including an experienced avian vet, an extraordinary loft manager, along with sufficient and capable staff to handle all day to day activities, the very best feed and supplements possible. Then pray for the best because “things” happen to the very best laid plans.

For 21 years the South African race has essentially had the market to itself, it has grown and prospered. I often wondered whether others might one day have the courage to put up the serious financial and human resources as well as the very real expertise in a whole host of areas. No one had really risen to the occasion. But as I understand it that situation is about to change.

Towards the end of 2017, after five years of successfully operating ,one of the finest one loft races in the USA the Ward family of Indiana stepped up to the plate prepared to take their successful race over the top. **Thus the Wards have personally guaranteed the largest payout in the history of one loft racing in North America and in so doing created the very first million dollar pigeon race in the America’s.** It takes a very special person, a very special family to undertake such an enormous venture. The Wards eat and breathe racing pigeons, they

race in one loft races across the USA, they regularly compete in the African races, and they market a full range of products, supplements, and paraphernalia through their recent purchase of the highly successful “*Vitaking Products*” company originally started by the Ganus Family.

It took the South African organizers a full six years of operation to finally achieve an entry of 2,473 birds. As of January 5th 2018 the “*Hoosier Classic Million*” had already received 2300 reservations (that number now exceeds 2700). That is impressive and a huge testament to the reputation of Jim and Kelly Ward.



So what do we know about the Wards? Frankly I knew very little and decided that I needed to know a great deal more. It's not every day that we are witness to the birth of a “**million dollar race**”. The Wards are serious, very serious people, they work endlessly, the research exhaustively, the love their racing pigeons and the love our racing pigeon sport and strive to achieve in all areas. It however takes more than a family, more than a guarantee of one million

dollars in prize money it takes an incredibly talented team to turn an incredible idea into a powerful reality. Time will tell but I believe, the Wards have everything necessary to turn the “*Hoosier Classic Million*” into a must race for serious one loft race aficionado’s world- wide.



Here are the important feature points of interest to date. The Hoosier Classic Million will pay out guaranteed **\$1,000,000.00 US** and there will be 150 prize positions, live clocking, weekly updates, video updates, and monthly vet testing, live GPS tracking on all races, Top quality products to be used including “*Ropa B-10% liquid oregano*” products and “*Vitaking products*”, full time 7 day per week staff.

Jim Ward was born in 1975 in a tough Chicago neighborhood called “*Back of the Yards*” to Charles and Beverly Ward. Quite a number of pigeon fanciers were located in this area. Interesting that Jim ward’s parents, much like my own 24 years earlier had understood the positive benefits to promoting children to experience the joy of taking care of animals be they pigeons or dogs or poultry whatever.

“As a child I grew up in the south side of Chicago in a neighborhood called “Back of the Yards ” this was a tough part of Chicago and had quite a few pigeon fanciers in it. As far back as I could remember my parents always allowed me to keep pigeons and chickens in our yard and always a dog. This was their way of keeping me from running the streets and getting myself in trouble.”~ Source Jim Ward

Jim ward learned at an early age respect for hard work and his grandfather had started the very first guard dog security service in Illinois and it was the almost daily access to his grand-fathers security dogs that Jim developed a “passion” for working dogs that continues to this day.

“My grandfather owned the 1st “Guard Dog Service” in Illinois. So at a young age I was around a kennel full of dogs almost daily. My uncles took over the family business by the time I was a teenager and allowed me to work evenings and weekends. It was here I learned many things and developed a passion for working with dogs.” ~source Jim Ward

By the age of 19, having completed his High School and one semester of College Jim started his own business that, (security service) interestingly enough he continues to operate to this day almost 20 years later.

Jim’s uncles, during his formative years, kept fancy pigeons so Jim developed a keen interest in all pigeon varieties. So the reality is that Jim’s uncles nurtured his fascination for these birds by allowing Jim to feed the birds and clean the lofts. Visiting his uncles, scrapping floors and

perches, feeding and observing the birds is a sure fire way to insure that you become a causality to the lifelong “in your blood” pigeon bug!

“Whenever possible my uncles (who did not race birds) would take their birds to Wisconsin or Indiana and let them fly home. It would always amaze me how these birds could make it home under all weather conditions.”~ source Jim ward

It was not long before Jim actually began racing, in fact it was 1987 at the ripe old age of 12, as a junior member of the South Side Racing Pigeon Club.

“I first started racing as a Jr. Flyer in 1987 at the South Side RPC. I only had 6 youngsters to race and had very poor results. Somehow I managed to fly 7 of 10 races.”~ source Jim ward

*“Historically the most important pigeons to me should be the \$5.00 pigeons my parents bought me as a kid. These were the ones that got me hooked! When I was flying as a Jr. Flyer I partnered up with my best friend (my Uncle Marty). We had two super pigeons - 5183 which was a De Klak Janssen given to us from Bob and Judy Alexander. They flew under the name **Family Loft** and were unbeatable in the late 80's in Chicago. 5183 was the first bird we scored with winning a club diploma. Another bird was 3058 Chicago AU 1991 from Steve Plant. She was a Voss Janssen line from Hackemer. This was an incredible hen and always first to our loft. Marty is only 4 years older than me so we were both Jr. Flyers and won Jr. Average Speed. Needless to say we were very happy that year. It's amazing we can remember band numbers from 30 years ago and I can't remember my anniversary!” ~source Jim Ward*

Jim as indicated earlier started his own security service company at age 19 leaving little time for racing pigeons as he sought to build clients and grow his business and start a family. However by 2006, after purchasing his first home the pigeon bug resurfaced and he has been with it as a family sport ever sense.

“After taking a long break from the sport I focused on business and started a family. In 2006 we moved to Wanatah, Indiana and bought our first house. In 2008 the bug bit me again and I joined the Gary Racing Pigeon Club (Michiana Combine). We had birds from everyone and tried every popular strain at the time. Our first year back we won 3 - 1st Combines, Champion Bird & Average Speed.”

His initial success notwithstanding Jim learned quickly that you can waste a great deal of hard earned money on purchasing racing pigeons without first developing a very clear plan of action and doing a great deal of legwork and research. Tons of strains, tons of claims, endless high hopes and not a great deal in terms of results. Most never get off of this treadmill but Jim finally realized what he needed to do and actually did it. After being in business for oneself you quickly learn that average, in anything is just not where you ever want to be. Hard work and great dedication divides average and “far above average”. From 1997 until 2007/2008 Jim did not follow the sport at all. When Jim returned to the sport one of the first things that he noticed was the growing popularity of one loft races. He started to study the names of fanciers who were consistently at the top of these one loft races and came to appreciate that if he could acquire birds from these breeders it could provide a good foundation for his future aspirations in this area...

“I started researching different strains and systems for racing when I got back into the sport. I learned very quickly that there were several different systems for racing and multiple strains that had been proven here in the US. I also learned the quickest way to achieve results is by starting with good stock. Early on I wasted so much money on pigeons... Finally I realized I'm going to buy the best I can afford and start paying attention to my bird's results whether it be breeding or racing. I also learned don't be afraid to ask questions.” ~ source Jim ward

Jim developed a fascination, as so many of us have especially given the technology that makes it possible for the whole world to watch results unfold in real time in One Loft Races world- wide One loft race birds are competing on a level playing field all flying to the same loft, all fed the same, all exposed to the same management system, all exposed to all of the same variables. With these thoughts in mind, when you see the same names dominating the winners circle, year in and year out it's more than just luck. The reality is that these are exceptional pigeons that can handle a variety of courses throughout the United States, Canada and the world. The list of Great Breeders is actually growing every year. What you are witnessing is the emergence of a class of professional pigeon breeders who participate every year, testing their birds in well managed, well- funded, serious races.

By 2009 Jim Ward entered his first one loft race the Shasta Classic run by Dan Welch. Not surprisingly Jim's birds were beaten in every race in this series. Not an easy lesson to learn, actually one that most people never really learn or contemplate. The question in Jim's mind “*how I could get great results racing in my local club and win with these same birds but get beat up in a one loft race?*” After speaking to Dan Welch he explained to Jim the many factors that need to be considered before entering ones birds into a One Loft Race. The upshot of all this, heart to heart chatting, was in its essence quite simple, simple in theory but complicated in day to day execution . If you are going to compete with serious professionals, you need to get really serious about your pigeons and your evaluation of your pigeons: “... *so I reevaluated the list of breeders who were winning in One Loft Races. I decided to buy the best I could and hope to achieve better results.*”

The Wards fly as a family however Kelly Ward, Jim's wife had like most fanciers wives to be never heard of racing pigeons until she met Jim. Jim's was very lucky that his wife and children developed a keen interest in the sport especially after Jim made the decision to start his own one loft race some 5 years ago called the “***Hoosier Classic***” .Once that step was taken then the family really did become “**FAMILY LOFT**”

It is not the norm to see a family come together to participate in a sport, especially the sport of racing pigeons the way that the Ward family has. Jim outlined the roles played by the family members in the ***Hoosier Classic One Loft Race***:

“My three sons Ryan (15), Jimmy (13), Colin (12) love all sports, however once breeding season starts all the way through races they can be found in the lofts. Colin can point out something wrong with a pigeon from a distance. He amazes me when we are loading 1400 pigeons on a hot July morning and he will pick a bird out of a group and inspect it from head to toe and let me know very quickly if something is wrong. He almost seems to have a 6th sense about pigeons. Jimmy and Ryan are equally talented in their own ways always watching that we do not

overlook anything. My daughter Morgan (18) will help when shipping the One Loft Birds but doesn't have an "interest" like the boys and my wife do... My wife Kelly handles everything related to the Hoosier Classic from intake of birds, putting chip rings on, to loading birds for training tosses and races. Kelly is now running Vita King Products on a daily basis. We had the opportunity to purchase Vita King in 2017 and have been very busy with pigeons and products ever since.” ~ Source Jim ward

I was curious as to the genesis of the original “**Hoosier Classic**” and how it all began and the why of it .Jim was happy to oblige and so he related how it all began on a visit to, of all places, Belgium.



Quarantine facility on the Ward property is a wonderful building including outdoor aviaries.

Al and Jim on the steps to the racing loft.

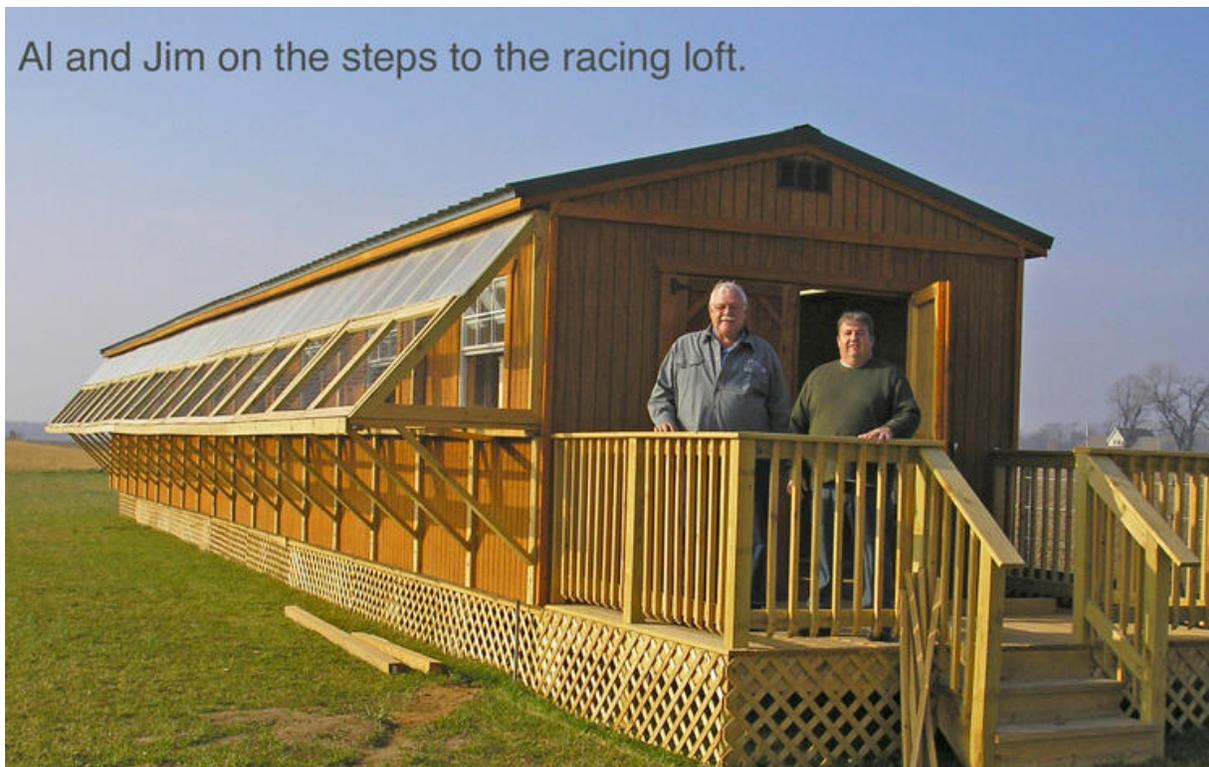


Figure 1 the original founders of Hoosier Classic were Al Hilaert and Jim Ward two long- time friends on the deck of the original loft! The new Million Dollar race loft is 208 ft. long complete with 208 ft. of attached outdoor aviaries.

"In 2012 I was visiting Belgium and Holland with a very good friend Al Hilaert and a few other people. While visiting lofts we were able to stop and see The Belgium Masters One Loft Race. It was a beautiful building and the staff was very professional. At dinner that night we started talking about the idea of hosting a race back home. Al and I decided to partner on the idea after doing some research and looking for advice. Some thought we were crazy for wanting to do a one loft race while others thought it was a great idea. In the end we built a loft and started with a 72ft loft and began accepting birds in March of 2013. About 2 weeks before we started accepting birds I got a phone call from Mike Ganus wishing us luck and some advice I still use to this day..."You only get out what you put in them and don't take any short cuts. Stay on top of vaccinations and medications." In our first year we had just over 300 entries and year two we couldn't get anything right. We had agreed to host a 7 race series and living just south of Lake Michigan you run out of good weather in a hurry come fall. We struggled in year two and almost threw in the towel on the Hoosier Classic. Then I remembered reading an article written by Joe Nemelka about one loft racing. In the article he mentioned what he wanted out of a one loft race and that if a fancier started a one loft race they should plan on staying with it for 5 years. I remember thinking then "Do you want to be the best or do you want to be a one loft race nobody remembers?" By the time year 3 came we were adding on to the loft 24 ft. and beginning the season with just over 500 birds and taking 350 birds to the final race with 282 clocking. Year four we took in over 700 birds and took 523 birds to the final race clocking 373. This was the year it was decided that I would buy Al out of his half of the Hoosier Classic. Al lives about an hour away and couldn't help on a daily basis. We added another 72 ft. in year five and accepted 1642 birds. We took 1331 birds to the first race and ended the

season taking 989 to the final race clocking 869. In 2017 we introduced a new exciting format for the Hoosier Classic race. Any pigeon raced in 2017 can have the option to fly a five race old bird series 100- 200- 300- 400- 500 miles. Old birds will be flown from our original Hoosier Loft 164 ft. long. Old bird races will start in May of 2018. The great thing about this old bird series is you can fly your birds for as long as you would like as a 2-3 or even a 4 year old. We feel this will be a great test as we know not every great young bird makes a great old bird. Another great way to test your breeding program”

Five years of successfully operating the original **“Hoosier Classic”** laid the foundation for the **“Hoosier Classic Million”**. Research, endless research, study, continuous questions, constant seeking of advice from top flyers, consultation with Family members all leading to a final positive conclusion.

“We have been asked several times over the past two seasons if we would ever see a million dollar race here in North America. Again we have been seeking advice and studying international races as to what format would best work here in the States. It’s very important to ask the advice of top flyers before starting such an important race like this. Anyone in the sport could have easily tried what we are doing. My Family and I have never set out to do anything half-heartedly. When asked if we would ever consider this endeavor we asked each other if this was something we can handle. The answer was YES! We feel North America needs a race like this and would be very good for the sport. In order to last in the one loft race business you must be Honest and Hard Working we have proven this over the past five years. We also know we will never make everyone happy. However if you stick to your rules and do what you say you are going to do it makes it very hard for anyone to question your actions. We were the first to use GPS tracking in our country on our trailer and we consult with a veterinarian on a monthly basis. Our race has grown every year because of the hard work we put in. As our race has grown so has our staff. We now employ five more individuals for administrative duties as well as loft management. Our hope is to have a race that everyone can trust and turn the Hoosier Classic into the Best Race in the World. We know this will not be an easy task and my family and I are taking a big risk. However it comes back to hard work and honesty! NO SHORT CUTS! By following these two rules we see us reaching our goals. The Hoosier Classic is a family owned and operated business with no partners. We designed a new 280ft long loft 16ft wide with a 12 x 200 fly pen attached to the front of the loft. A spacious loft helps with keeping pigeons healthy. Every decision we make is with the best interest of the birds in mind. Our loft sits on 20 acres of land in the country and a great place to have a one loft race. There are many great one loft races and we fly many of them. We still believe one loft racing is the best way to test your pigeons.”

It’s clear to me, from all the research undertaken, that the Hoosier Classic International Race is committed to the highest standards of accountability and quality. Planning began in late 2016 with the Wards seeking advice and input from top fanciers worldwide. This highly valued input enabled the Wards to begin construction of the first Million dollar loft Race in the USA. The new loft is designed to comfortably accommodate 7,500 birds; the Hoosier team takes a genuine interest in ensuring that your pigeons are met with the highest professional standard of care.



The newly constructed lofts for the Hoosier Classic Million Dollar race are 280 Ft. Long and 16 ft. wide with a 12 ft. X 200 Ft attached aviaries, all situated on 20 acres of prime farmland.

*“... I also read everything I can get my hands on. The internet is amazing with all the knowledge on our great sport. Another passion of mine is the studying of pigeon health. There is so much to learn on this matter. I am sure I drive my veterinarian crazy with all my questions. This interest spiked once we started the Hoosier Classic. The mixing of so many birds makes it a mixing pot of potential viruses. We learned early on that vaccinating youngsters once is not enough a second vaccination four weeks after the first is just as important. We always use the best products available. We do not use products blindly and study the benefits and negatives of such products before using them. Recently we have seen the benefits of **Ropa B 10% liquid** used in one loft racing. In 2018 **Ropa B 10% liquid** will be a product we will be using. The benefits of **Ropa oregano** have proven to be so beneficial to the digestive systems of our birds. Our feed is imported from Belgium and I do think that we were the first one loft Race to feed Versele-Laga and Jovati Grit the best on the Market also imported from Belgium. Vita King Products have always been our products of choice. In 2017 we were presented with the opportunity to buy Vita King Pigeon supplies. After careful consideration and asking our family their opinion we purchased the company from Mike and Debbie Ganus. Vita King has been serving the fancy and racing pigeon sport for 32 years. Needless to say we are involved with the pigeon sport in some manner every day of the week.” ~source Jim Ward*



Above is a photo of the location of the Hoosier Classic Million dollar race. It is absolutely beautiful surrounded by farmland incredibly well maintained, safe secure just ideal!

Jim Ward is an excellent business man but the reality is that he (and his family) love to breed and race their pigeons. They understand the sport, they participate at all levels of the sport, as pigeon products suppliers through their ownership and operation of Vitaking Products, as breeders and competitors at local and combine levels, as one loft entrants in most major races both domestically and internationally, and as One Loft Race operators themselves being the founders of the Hoosier Classic.



Figure 2 with some 280 Ft of outdoor, walk in, aviaries in the Hoosier Million Dollar lofts, there is room for every bird to be outside in the sunshine.

Jim had left the sport in 1997 as he dedicated all his time to his young family and returned in 2008. Upon his return Jim did a lot of research but was impressed that one of the top fanciers in 1997 was certainly Mike Ganus and Mike Ganus was still at the top over 11 years later in 2008.

“When I left the sport in 1997 the name Ganus Family Loft was very popular. When I returned in 2008 it was clear this loft was still at the top of most big races throughout the United States. I live about an hour from Ganus Family Loft so with the close proximity and great results I decided to purchase our stock from them. In 2009 I told Mike I wanted to purchase a couple of grandkids of his #1 breeding hen "Mona Lisa." While vacationing with my family in the summer of 2010 I received a call from Mike stating he had 10 grandkids of Mona Lisa who were to go to South Africa Million Dollar Race but he had missed the last shipment and I could purchase one or all of them. When I got off the phone I told my wife and she said "Don't buy them all!!" Once I had a chance to see them it was so hard to pick one over the other. Needless to say I bought them all and never looked back. These 10 are the foundation of our loft and we still have 8 of the original 10. We have since added other pigeons from Filip & Nicholis Norman, Chris Hebberecht, & Gabby Vandenabelle.” ~Jim Ward

Jim Ward **“Family Loft”** has a “performance family” of racing pigeons made up of several strains that themselves have impressive origins.



Figure 3 each section in the Million Dollar loft has wire bottoms, room to spare, endless perches so every bird has a place, truly an incredible set up.

Jim Ward's personal colony of pigeons is, performance based, made up of several strains and include, arguably, some of the most respected individuals in the sport, in their back ground.

Rocket - NL 9669302-96 1st National Ace Pigeon of all Holland

Hollywood - NL 40553083-93 1st National Ace NPO All Holland 97

Topo - NL 1968025-93 1st National Ace Pigeon Middle Distance NPO All Holland 95

Phantom - BLG 6162096-97

Natural Marvel - GFL 917-2008 (Natural x Mona Lisa)

Primetime - GFL 793-2008 (Natural x Mona Lisa)

Davinci- GFL 623-2006 (Prize Fighter x Showgirl)

Mona Lisa - 487-2006 (Phantom x Memories)

Abraham - Belg 3129113-05 Father to 1st place South Africa Million Dollar Race

Sun City - DV 02656-10-85 Father to two 1st Place South Africa Winners

Jim Ward has one guiding star and that is performance, pedigree's are only important once performance has been proven:

*"I do enjoy reading pedigrees; they are an important tool in record keeping and for preserving a family of pigeons... As I stated they are a great tool but remember pedigrees don't fly ~ pigeon's do! Race your pigeons and don't worry about how they size up on paper unless its race results."
~Jim Ward*

and as already mentioned Jim stresses performance above all else. According to Jim his birds have been proven in almost every one loft race in the country and flown in all conditions.

"I'm very particular about my pigeons as far as looks and how they handle. There are good and bad traits in all families of pigeons. Keep weeding out the weak and it will make the strong, stronger! Keep the strong and keep the winners and this will pass on consistency, toughness and the will to come home to their youngsters." ~ Jim Ward

Jim Ward has had success with his birds in one loft races in addition to club and combine racing in his area...

Grand Average Winner 7 Race Series - Winners' Cup

2nd Equal 1st - Flamingo International

1st Place 300 Miles - Southern Belle

1st Place 250 Miles - Southern Belle

3rd Place Equal 1st 325 Miles - Southern Belle

12th Place 350 Miles - Breeders Fall Classic

6th Place 360 Miles - Breeders Fall Classic

14th Place 350 Miles - San Francisco Triple Crown

Equal 1st 175 Miles - Southern Belle

Equal 1st 250 Miles - Southern Belle

Equal 1st 330 Miles - Winners' Cup

Equal 1st 125 Miles - Winners' Cup

Equal 1st 250 Miles - Winners' Cup

5th Place 325 Miles - Winners' Cup

9th Place 325 Miles - Winners' Cup

1st Place GHC Classic 2013

1st, 2nd, 3rd, Indiana Combine Auction Race

1st Place Great Lakes Invitation Auction

1st place NWI auction race

Jim maintains, on average, 24 breeding pair with about 15 extra hens. His young bird team usually consists of 60-70 youngsters. However, in 2017 he competed with 35 youngsters and according to Jim he had great results and a lot more fun. If truth be known the average fancier probably only needs 10-12 breeding pairs. Jim Ward has a simple overall philosophy and that is to win!

“If you want to be successful you have to be enthusiastic about what you do. When I fail I don't sit around and complain. I pick myself up and learn from my failure. As far as reaching goals I have achieved some and still try for others. When it comes to the Hoosier Classic my number 1 goal every year is to keep the birds healthy. This is why we consult with a veterinarian on a monthly basis. By accomplishing this goal it helps to reach our next goal and that is making the Hoosier classic race the best race in the world!”~Jim Ward

Though, throughout this article I often refer to Jim Ward the truth is that it's really “FAMILY LOFT” and Jim and Kelly and their sons really enjoy competing and working together as a family. Over the past nine years they have achieved just over 50 - 1st place wins in their club and combine. They were able to fly old birds for three seasons and clearly had a great deal of fun doing that. They won Average Speed, Champion Loft, and Champion Bird seven of the nine years they have competed. With their total commitment to the new Hoosier Classic Million they will not be flying in their club in 2018, which is totally understandable but they will continue to ship their “FAMILY” birds to one loft races across the USA and Africa.

In their personal lofts the Wards are great believers in giving your breeders a healthy start! *“So many fanciers think about their breeders only about a week before pairing them up. As I stated earlier winning starts in the breeding loft. I spend more time with my breeders in late summer than I do any other time of year. My breeders are vaccinated for both PMV & Salmonella in the fall every year. Then they are put on Enrofloxyn for 10 days followed by a*



Figure 4 really appreciate seeing the interiors of the Hoosier Classic Million Loft I do not ever remember other major races allowing the interiors to be photographed!

Canker treatment. If a breeder becomes weak or ill and needs to be medicated after this it is eliminated. No time to play doctor. Our lofts are cleaned daily and fresh food and water is given daily. We provide our birds with the best products on the market so there should be no reason for a breeder to get sick. If they produce weak babies they as well as the youngsters are eliminated. You need to remember when participating in one loft races if your youngster did not have a great start at home and become sick at a one loft race...game over. Put the work in at home and give your youngsters a head start. Look at one loft race entries. You can see breeders who enter 12, 18, 21 youngsters and never lose a one to sickness. This is because their breeders were well cared for and it showed in their offspring.

**Don't keep to many birds*

** Clean loft daily*

** Vaccinate regularly*

** Good Feed*

** Vitamins & Minerals*

ALL of the aforementioned leads to success in the breeding loft.



Figure 5 out flying perfect location , surrounded by fields of green, for this great one loft race!



Figure 6 Design of the loft was done to insure the comfort of the entries without the stress of competing for a perch, overcrowding and the stress that would go with it have been addressed in this excellent design of the Hoosier Million Dollar 280 ft. Long loft!



Figure 7 the Ward Family, Jim Ward, Kelly Ward, daughter Morgan, sons Ryan (15), Jimmy (13), Colin (12).

To the Ward family, in my humble opinion you all are making HISTORY and I want to personally express my gratitude for all of you having the insight, the courage, the willingness, the foresight and the expertise to undertake, what I believe will be the greatest one loft race in the America's the "*Hoosier Classic International*". Congratulations and I look forward to watching your progress as your race grows yearly from strength to strength.

"My father would come home from work and catch me standing on the corner with my friends and he would always tell me surround yourself with good people. Surrounding yourself with hard working honest people will make you the same. I always applied this advice in business and the pigeon sport." ~Jim Ward