Comparing prize, pool, points and average systems

Discussion article by Mysoft

As a software supplier for over 20 years to the Racing Pigeon world we have been fascinated at the variety and ingenuity of systems devised by Clubs and Secretaries and used throughout the sport. We have tackled all manner of prize, pools, points and averages that Clubs and Organisations have thrown at us and to date (with the occasional problem) we have been able to cope. Provided the methods used are mathematical and logical then converting to computer code is normally not a problem.

What is interesting to witness is the differing approaches made by Clubs as they try (like a golf handicap or horse racing weight allowance) to spread the available prizes. points or pools around. We at Mysoft have always incorporated into our software 4 systems for velocity averages and points (Loft, Bird and Co-efficient) so a club can give its members a good cross check on performance and at the same time create and element of competitive interest or "friendly banter".

The 4 systems will vary from club to club as we incorporate their existing systems. We have found that each individual club is unique and we have encountered many variations, basically all on a similar theme, but with interesting differences. Clubs can have additional systems added if required as we customise the software to their exact requirements. All are designed to be single button clicks to produce the required tables, once the race data has been entered. Additional systems such as League Tables. Special Nominations, 2 and 3 bird averages and Sponsor Prizes can be added.

In order to understand all the systems this article lists the differing averages, points, and prize methods and discusses the theory and practical aspects for each. Clubs will have their own opinion but in the end the purpose is to have accurate, fast information to the members on a weekly basis. This ensures member interest and hopefully friendly competition, ensuring a healthy club atmosphere.

The basics of each system will be discussed with full explanations and worked examples where appropriate. We hope this will stimulate some debate and equally we welcome feedback and comments and we would be interested in hearing about any other systems in current use.

Let me start by stating the facts on how races are calculated. Pigeons are released from specific known racepoints which then return to their homes over a carefully measured distance. The time it takes the pigeon to cover the specified distance is measured to the nearest second and the pigeons rate of travel is calculated and compared with all of the other pigeons in the race to determine which pigeon returned at the highest rate of velocity, which is measured in the UK as Yards per Minute.

The winner of a pigeon race is the bird with the highest velocity, that is, the distance flown divided by the time taken. Races can often be won and lost in seconds, and to counter this, many different timing apparatus have been developed. The traditional timing method involves rubber rings being placed into a specially designed clock, whereas a newer development uses electronic tags to record arrival time.

Velocity (Yards/Minute) = Total Distance flown Divided by Total Time flow

Example 1 – A basic velocity calculation with a correct clock

Total Distance flown = 123 miles 1234 Yards = 217714 Yards

Total Time flown   = 3 hrs 30 minutes 15 Seconds = 210.250 Minutes

Velocity = 217714/210.250 = 1035.501 Yards per Minute

This method of Velocity calcualtion is the basis of all pigeon racing and fundememntal to any race result with the fastest velocity (rounded to 3 decimal places as ber RPRA rules) being the winner. Clear rules exist for clocks that are fast or slow and the above example assumes a correct clock.

An important point to remember is that velocities from results cannot be taken as the basis for calculating velocity averages over a number of races. Equally it is incorrect to take the result actual flying time as this is always rounded to the nearest second. The only safe and accurate way is to add each race distance to a total distance and add each actual race flown time to reach an average velocity.

Velocity Averages

Positive aspects – Shows consistent flyers who time in all races

Limitations – Must time in all races specified to qualify for individual averages eg Old Bird Inland

Points Systems

Points Systems fall into many areas and can be an interesting way of determining performance of both the fancier and individual pigeons. In order to cover this subject we will break it down into 2 main areas, namely Loft and Bird Points.

Loft Points

Loft Points are allocated to individual member or partnerships within a club. The allocation of points can take many formats, and are designed to spread the points in order to keep all flyers involved and not timing in a race does not exclude the fancier from winning overall, as it would in the velocity average system. The winner in any combination of races is the member or partnership with the highest points.

We have encountered two methods with various starting points. The awarding of the maximum points per race is the starting point. Clubs can use the number of members sending as the starting points number. Some clubs use 20, 10, 8 6, or 5 or any other number as they see fit. Some even descent in two's eg 10, 8,6,4,and 2. Other Clubs place a finishing position for points eg 10th or 20th

System 1 … All positions can take points eg Start with winner at 10 points to 10th place with 1 point. This method allows a member or partnership to claim all positions.

A variation on this system is to allow either all lofts to gain points for timing in or to limit the last position for collecting points.

System 2 … Only one lot of points is awarded to each member or partnership per race. A variation on this system is to allow points down to a specific race position.

Bird Points

Bird Points are straightforward and are available for all finishing pigeons and are allocated in descending order from eg 20 points for 1st down to 1 point for 20th position. The maximum points and the finishing position will vary from club to club.

Positive aspects for Loft and Bird Points – Do not need to time in all selected races

Limitations – not as definitive as velocity average but allows fanciers a chance to compete and gain points.

Co-efficient Points System

This system developed on the continent tries to use the pigeon race finishing position as the points score allied to the total birds entered in the race using the formula. The lowest points total for any group of selected races is the winner.

Co-efficient = (Finishing position / Total pigeons entered in race) * 100

Eg Pigeon finishes 1st out of 145 birds   (1/145) *100 = 0.68965

Finishing 122nd out of 145 birds   (122/145) * 100 = 84.1379

Positive aspects – awards race position and can show consistent performers. Clubs can tie this to the points system by allowing only the members best position to count or to limit the finsihing position for points.

Limitations – None, considered a fair system and being adpoted more and more clubs and organisations.

Other Points systems

Other points systems are confined to specialist clubs and include **Event Points** which target specific races and nominated pigeons. Much like the Accumulator or Snowball selection it is a race within a race and is down to the fancier selection for the selected race.

Other Clubs operate Divisions if in larger clubs and this allows further competition with promotion and relegation. A typical club with over 20 members could have 3 divisions ideally 2 of 8 members or partnerships and the Third Division made up of the balance. Top two and bottom two promoted and relegated and points allocated by best race finishing position each week.

Other Clubs with either Sponsorship money or special donations use Jackpot points as a way of allocating the money and again involves selecting specific pigeons from entries to complete in a race within a race. All these systems will need a solid software package to be able to cope as it is critical to have this information printed out along with the actual ace result. Fast up to date data is the key to a successful and interesting club. Equally if any objections and additional race data then the software must re-calculate and re-sort and print the required information.

Prize allocation

Compared to points and velocity averages Prize allocation is a straight forward business and is normally as simple as first 3 positions paid either as fixed amounts eg £4 , £3 and £2 or a fixed amount eg £20 and paid 40/30/20% to first, second and third positions. Our policy is to allow flexibility in Prize Money especially in cases of larger organisations with Section and Open Prizes.

Pools

The number and types of pools for each pigeon club is interesting and no two clubs seem to operate the same systems, which makes for some interesting combinations. Pools are simply a way of competing against each member and as a percentage of the pool is retained by the club it is a way of helping the club funds. Pools fall into 2 categories and these are as follows

1 … Percentage split eg 60/40% with or without a percentage to the Club.

2 … Paid 1 in 10 or 15 or 20 or any number deemed acceptable by a Club with or without a percentage to the Club

We have found the percentage to Clubs varies normally between 5 and 10% and Clubs have two options to this deduction, that can make a small difference to payout anounts, and needs explaination which is best shown by examples. In both methods the total payout is the same but individual payouts for pool winners will be different.

Pool A (Value £1) paid 1 in 20 with 5% to the Club with 130 entries = £130.00

Method 1 … % to Club from each winner   130 / 20 = 6.5 pool shares each less 5%

6 @ £20 less 5% = £114.00   +   0.5 @ £20 less 5% = £ 9.50

Total payout £ 123.50

Method 2 … % to Club taken from pool shares   (130 / 20) * .95 = 6.175 pool shares

6 @ £20 = £120.00 + 0.175 @ £20 = £ 3.50

Total payout £ 123.50

Both methods end up with the same total payout but with differing individual payouts. We simply follow Club instructions but we are interested to hear from readers which method is considered fairest and best practice.

Additional pools such as Nominations, Bonanzas, Accumulators etc are simple and should present no issues.

Summary

We have been challenged by the amount of variations in prizes, pools and points and it is interesting to see how this has developed over the last 20 years. Smaller Clubs in the main have reduced pools or eliminated them completely but with good software points and averages can help interest and competition, which is vital for the health of a Club.

Larger organisations, Classic Clubs and Specialist Clubs such as Gold Ring races have serious pool systems and large payouts and equally need fast and accurate race data input and calculated payouts to the penny.

Given the low cost of hardware to run good solid software no club should be without the benefit a customised system can bring to its members.

Mysoft

ww.mysoft.co.uk

01484 686033