

An Interview With Monty Neibel

The 1998 World Cup Champion

**Interview by RON PHELPS; Spokane, Washington
NBRC Region 8 Director**

Monty Neibel is the 1998 World Cup Winner. This is the second time he has accomplished this immense challenge. He can also take the glory of being the first to ever win two World Cup titles. He is truly a master and champion at kit flying.

Most people who can describe Monty as a person will say some variation of "Monty is Monty" and there is quite no other way to describe him. He has all his accomplishments and he will humbly say "there is so much I don't know." He is not into boasting and prefers to give credit to others. He has given so much of his time to the hobby by judging numerous flies, answering many calls and letters, etc. It is puzzling to me that he has not yet made it to the Hall of Fame. I do know that if there was a "kit competition hall of fame" his credentials would award him the nicknames of "The Babe" or "Bambino" and the following accomplishments would without any doubt put him in as the first elected!

Monty's accomplishments include...

- A. Two World Cup Wins.** No other person can claim this. Don Ouellette can claim to win the World Cup once and the NBRC Fly, but not 2 individual World Cup wins ... yet.
- B. Five Top Ten World Cup finishes.**
- C. One second place W.C. finish, and one fourth place finish.**
- D. Eight NW International wins with 15 top three finishes.**
- E. One second place in the NBRC fly, the second year he judged.**

My happiest moment came in my second year flying when I beat him in the NBRC Fly for our region. (I will always brag of this.) Rob Herle was judging and prior to me, Monty had been in first place. Toward the end of my fly Rob stated that he thought I had just passed Monty, I said very casually "oh", slowly walking away trying to hide my excitement.

Ron Phelps

***** THE INTERVIEW *****

RP: *If you were to be interviewed, would anyone be interested or learn anything?*

MN: *It is impossible to read a magazine while awake and not learn something. I'm almost in this category.*

RP: *Jerry Higgins seems to be doing very well in all phases of the hobby.*

MN: *Good for him! He's competitive and always puts his birds up. (Behind every good man is a good woman.)*

RP: *Rumor has it that Les Bezance would like to judge the World Cup.*

MN: *When in England I overheard the statement that George Mason says, "He will need a bullet proof vest."*

RP: *It is said by many that George Kitson is the tightest judge to be alive today.*

MN: He is the only judge I've seen that will write down on your score card "good working kit" and still give you a score that you could only hope to get in eighteen holes of golf.

RP: *Who would you say are the wildest guys in England?*

MN: Les Bezance and George Kitson, two great guys ... but you should watch them closely. They love to put you on, just ask Reinhart Wagner. He still hasn't recovered from the time they were at his house.

RP: *Some have said you are a good judge, a few have said you are easy. How do you see it?*

MN: I like to think I give them what they deserve, too tight is almost as bad as too loose.

RP: *Who are the biggest pigeon nuts you have ever met?*

MN: Not necessarily in any order; Don Ouellette, Rick Mee, Dennis Hayes, Rich Hayes, George Mason, Neville Eccles, Randy Lewis and Ken Billings. Ken will actually pound on the ground and cry out "UNHOLYAWESOME!!!" when he sees a great break.

RP: *Who has the best birds, but gets the least out of them?*

MN: Oh, that's easy ... David Naud. He keeps awake at night thinking of ways to mess them up.

RP: *George Mason says he would breed from a well-bred bird that doesn't spin.*

MN: To me, that is a step in the wrong direction. George could be doing it for two reasons; to make the hobby more of a challenge, or to give the rest of us a handicap.

RP: *Mason has almost all soft colored birds, is that true?*

MN: Yes, and boy do they have a strong constitution. Last time I was there he was concerned that they wouldn't last fifteen minutes. They went for one hour and 45 minutes and still were hitting big breaks at the end. If he had fed them up, they would have flown right into next Monday.

RP: *How is the hobby doing in the northwest?*

MN: It's holding its own. We have Randy Lewis, Neville Eccles and Byron Gable who really promote the hobby. We have a new flyer from South Africa, Dave Kapon and I'm sure he will be very competitive. To the east in our region we have Ron Phelps pushing the Rocky Mountain area to the forefront.

RP: *Is Max Runyon as competitive as he used to be?*

MN: Well his wife Mary has turned him into a big cuddly teddy bear. She demands two hours of his time each day. He has given up hope of ever beating me at flying, so he has taken up golf very seriously. I must admit his golf has improved. Joe Houghton rarely beat me at pigeons and like Max never had a prayer at the golf course.

RP: *Do you know of anyone yet that has grabbed Brian Krog by the throat yet?*

MN: No, but it is much like Armageddon, it is just a matter of when.

RP: *Byron Gable is said to give away his blue bar selfs no matter how good they are.*

MN: He has been trying to tell me something for years. If he offers you a blue bar, it is his way of telling you he don't like you.

RP: *When, why and how did you get started?*

MN: There were two fellows, Harry Dash and Martin Billings exercising rollers in my neighborhood. Martin had some great individuals and I was hooked. I was only twelve years of age at the time. I picked up a few here and there and was flying a kit in no time flat. I got to know Lloyd Thompson and Ron Scramstad. I finally had all partly colored blacks from Ron, not another color in the loft. They were deep and good rollers that flew low and were easy to handle, late developers. Lloyd started getting birds from Bruce Cooper. I visited Bruce in 1968. His birds set the standard for what a turn should look like. I soon had all Bruce Cooper birds and some Rottenbacher blood. Handling

these birds took on a whole new dimension. I would get them on form, fly too often and kiss them off every year until the end of 1976. Man... they were wonderful deep spinning pigeons. It took thirteen years before I lost a team that was hit by a snowstorm that carried them off in 1989. I almost died of grief. I would have really had something to show Bill Barrett and George Mason. It was the all time low in my flying career. In 1976 I came up with what I call the three day yo-yo, I own the same stupid pigeons, the only difference is that I don't fly them off anymore.

RP: *Who has influenced you the most?*

MN: Bruce Cooper by far. He had the best birds and when you visited other fanciers and saw a fine bird in the air, it was usually a Cooper bird. His record keeping was unreal.

RP: *What mistakes have you made?*

MN: My first mistake was having a flight pen right on the ground. One rainy day the stock hens got on the ground and the next day they all died. It took a while to get over that. Also, flying birds too much once they get on form. The better they get, the less you fly them. The three-day yo-yo is where it is at. I would have also kept better records.

RP: *How long did it take you to build your family?*

MN: I got a fast start since Bruce had already done it for me. I don't bring in outside birds... none for 22 years. This way you end up with a family if you like it or not. I brought in some 8409 blood in 1990.

RP: *How many champions have you seen and what makes a champion?*

MN: I've owned about five champion cocks and fifteen champion hens. I've never owned a pair of champions. I've seen around 40 champions in my life. What may be champion to one person might fall short to another. A tough question. I know they all have tough constitutions and are awesome flyers. A champion need not be perfect. A champion would hold on to the roll for 3-4 seconds in excellent style, rarely leave the kit, and knows where it is at all times. All other performances are garbage. They tend to go on all breaks with no bumping, coming or going.

RP: *What do you look for in a stock bird?*

MN: All the above with good confirmation as much as possible.

RP: *Would you use a red bird?*

MN: I assume you mean recessive red. I don't own any and probably owned only one or two in my lifetime. However, I wouldn't hesitate to use one if it was worthy. Most of my matings are gut feelings. I have only four or five white wingers. In fact I just gave them all to Dave Kaplon. I've seen excellent velocity in every color. Doug Brown, Randy Gibson and John Jones are proof of this.

RP: *What do you think of eye sign?*

MN: Joe Houghton when asked replied, "they need two eyes." However, I dislike fishy-eyed, pearl-eyed birds. I seem to get a lot of good yellow-eyed birds.

RP: *If you lost your hold over kit, how long would it take you to build another world class kit?*

MN: Two and a half years.

RP: *What is the average age in your World Cup Kit?*

MN: Two and a half years.

RP: *What is the biggest mistake that most kit flyers make?*

MN: Once they come on form, they fly them too much and feed too much. As soon as a kit is worthy, get them on a three day yo-yo.

RP: *Are today's birds better, same or worse?*

MN: On the average they are better but there is still tons of rubbish out there.

RP: *What contributions would you like to be remembered for?*

MN: A square shooter who was a competitive flyer.

RP: *How do you feed your birds?*

MN: Stock Grade A commercial mix. I add millet, oyster shell, Belgium racing homer powder. To the water I add iodine, garlic, sugar, bleach and apple cider vinegar. Young kit, I'll give red wheat, 5% millet, grit and powder. Old kit I give the same ingredients as the young birds only a different amount. Kit birds rarely see a mix regardless of age, they don't need it. In severe cold I'll give them some corn.

RP: *How do you prepare a kit for competition?*

MN: I keep them on a strict three day yo-yo and bring the feed down to where it should be on the last three cycles. I've experimented with giving them the worst cracked poor quality wheat on the last day of the three day cycle. Seems to help take the starch out of them. For the NWI, I had all of them on the floor on the morning of the fourth day. For the World Cup, six were on the wire. I had them close, but not right on. In a kit of twenty, for fly day I usually boost about two with twelve peas the day before. When you have them right they should look like they aren't going to lift out of the yard and the kit should be quiet. Once they get to a safe height they should pack tight and fly with straight wings. If their wings are bowed there is either too much wind or you have them feeling too good. If possible, try and get them to fly 400' to a maximum of 600'. This is the way I handle my family of birds. Close programs of this size have been practiced by many of the world's best, past and present flyers. If you want to put up a boring kit, then continue the holiday approach. I've fooled around with the loading idea, but unfortunately those that know how to do it aren't running around spilling their guts about it.

RP: *It is rumored that you have a lady next door who is called your loft manager, is this true?*

MN: Yes, she makes all the major decisions pertaining to my birds.

RP: *Who was the Bob Brown you've known?*

MN: That is a tough question as I have only been with him once and never really knew him. He had a gentlemanly appearance that is legendary around fanciers. It would take a dump truck to carry around all his ribbons and trophies. He always wore a tie to the flys and his wife lovingly pampered all the visitors, it was worth a trip to England just to see his birds go. I can't come up with any fellow in America or Canada quite like him. Those English guys have a style of their own.

RP: *Do you feel that judging is tougher today than before?*

MN: Definitely. I know that 7,8 or 9 bird breaks used to be half turns, prior to 1990.

RP: *What do you look for in frequency?*

MN: Birds that give off big jack hammer breaks. A break a minute is way more than enough... too much frequency messes up the overall quality.

RP: *Do you medicate?*

MN: My birds have not had any antibiotics in 15 years. I do treat for canker if it shows up. I have not wormed in ten years.

RP: *Is it true that you are not impressed with the intelligence of the roller?*

MN: Frank Picolet summed it up years ago when he stated that "all birds know how to do is sleep, eat and shit."

RP: *That sure is a lot of stuff you put in the drinking water.*

MN: Several months back I was telling Bruce Cooper what I use in the water and he said "Rottenbacher once said 'the birds survive despite us'."

RP: *Will we ever see Australia enter the World Cup?*

MN: You can bet your life on it!

RP: *Thank You.*

(Monty Neibel Interview by Ron Phelps, Region 8 Director)