

MT ANNAN

Early bird gets the cash

PIGEON WINS \$100,000 PRIZE

AFTER 36 hours and 800km of flying, a marathon-racing pigeon scooped the \$100,000 prize in the Bossley Park Marathon Breeders Plate.

Owner/trainer Phil Murphy, of Mt Annan, pocketed the huge windfall after star racer Aristotle was the first home in the flight from far western NSW to Mt Annan.

The Bossley Park Marathon Breeders Plate started in 2008, and this year had nine entrants from the 33 pigeon racing clubs in Sydney.

The entry ballot to this year's event cost between \$6000-\$7000.

The pigeons are driven to the starting point at Menindee, NSW, released and have three days to return to their owners.

For the past five years, no pigeon has returned within the three days, so the prize ballooned to \$100,000.

Aristotle left Menindee at 7am on Saturday, October 12 and returned to Mt Annan at 6.40pm the following day.

Mr Murphy, a member of the Campbelltown Pigeon Club, was "ecstatic" to win the marathon.

FLYING HIGH

WHAT: Pigeon racing is the sport of releasing specially trained racing birds, which then return to their homes over a carefully measured distance

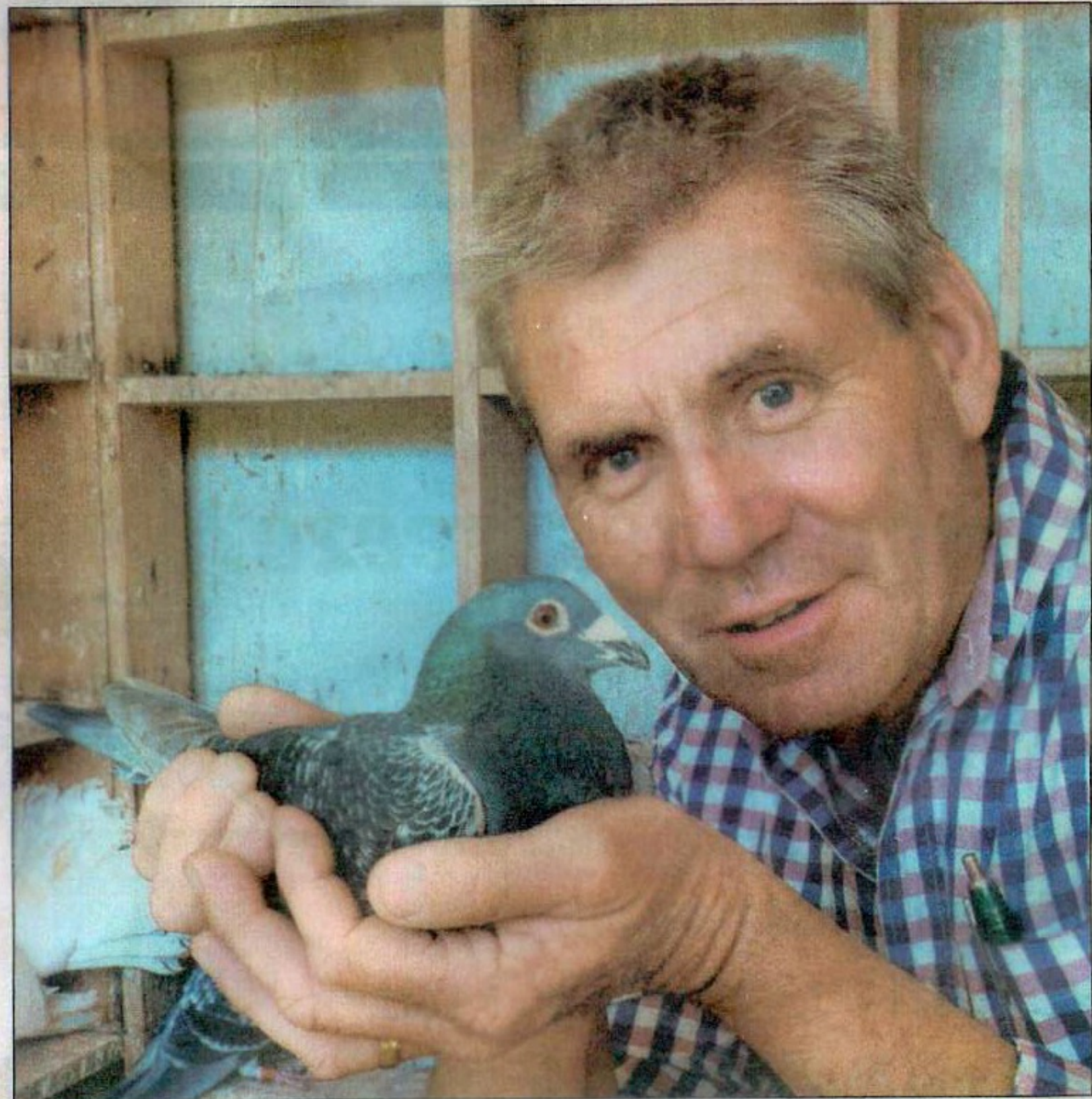
HOW: The time it takes the animal to cover the specified distance is measured and the bird's rate of travel is calculated and compared with all of the other pigeons in the race to determine which animal returned at the highest speed

"I've been breeding and training pigeons my whole life and this is the highlight of my career," he said.

"When Aristotle got back on Sunday afternoon I was jumping around like a schoolgirl because I knew he was the first back."

Mr Murphy said he had invested \$14,500 into the marathon since first entering a pigeon three years ago.

But, he said, time was his most significant investment, having trained Aristotle for the past five months, "building him up to the big one".



A jubilant Phil Murphy and his race-winning pigeon Aristotle.

Picture: IAN SVEGOVIC