

June 2010 - Colin Keene (Basenji)

Congratulations Colin on winning TOTM for June with your timeless mixed reef tank. Colin is known simply as Basenji on the RTAW forums and you can find out more about his tank in his Tank Journal

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How Long have you been in the hobby? I fired up my first marine tank in 1991 – a 3 foot undrilled fish-only tank. I had then only recently learned to SCUBA dive, had been blown away by the beauty and complexity of the marine world, and wanted to be able to bring the interest home. I had also been inspired by friends who had a stunning seahorse tank with breeding Hippocampus whitei in a tank bursting with Caulerpa. At that point, I had only limited success with my own tank, largely due to lack of reliable information, as well as lack of budget to do things properly. It wasn't until 1996 that I started to take things a bit more seriously, which was further helped by my discovery of internet-based resources. My wife and I bought a new 4' tank, cabinet and hood, bioball trickle filter sump and one of those laughable Queen Turbo protein skimmers. That is the tank I'm still running today, and is the subject of this award. Equipment line-up has changed a bit over the years, but my emphasis has always been simplicity, affordability and stability. I've never been able to justify the spending of \$1000+ on a skimmer, I've never owned a chiller or a calcium reactor, and DIY projects have always been a part of how I choose to enjoy my hobby. The tank has been through a number of stages and three house moves over the years. It has grown and developed along with my own knowledge; waxed and waned with the variations in my level of enthusiasm. Its latest incarnation has been a rebuild following a crash in 2008, although happily there are still a few corals and fish that have been with me for the long haul. I'm extremely happy with how it has shaped up, and (dare I say) I don't think it has ever looked any better. {mosimage cw=300 popup=1}

2a) What size is your winning tank, dimensions and litres? 48" x 18" x 20"; display tank with corner overflow and single Durso stand pipe. Approximately 280L system volume. 2b) Any reasons for that size tank? No particular reason for size of tank, other than it was the size that fitted into the space in the house we had at the time, and fitted our budget. 2c) How long has this tank been setup? Tank established in October 1996 (13 years) 3) Anything you want to say about your stand? Not much I can say about the stand. Fairly standard commercial stand bought from an LFS, and has always frustrated me for being about 100mm shorter than it really needs to be. I bought it in white wood, and made a poor decision to stain it in a dark jarrah colour which I have regretted ever since. The frame is solid timber, and is structurally sound, but why, oh why do they build commercial stands using MDF? Really stupid idea. The base has been falling apart through water damage since about mid-1997, and the cabinet walls (made of veneer-laminated MDF) are swelling in places. I utilise a pine cupboard adjacent to the tank to house electronics, timers, dosing system, topup reservoir and skimmer {mosimage cw=300 popup=1}

4) Do you have a sump and/or refugium? If so, what size? 24" x 12" x 12" sump. No dividers or baffles. No refugium. No remote sand bed. Sump contains - skimmer feed pump (Ocean Runner 6500) - Schego 300W titanium heater - display tank return pump - dosing point for Balling salts and RO topup. Sump return = Hydor L40 Rated 2800 LPH at 0 head. Obviously delivers less than that after head and friction losses. Split between two return outlets.

5) Filtration eg. amount of live rock, sand bed or bare bottom, mechanical filtration etc?

Tank contains roughly 60kg live rock. Medium in-tank sand bed (50-75mm) using coral sand. No mechanical filtration. {mosimage cw=300 popup=1} 6) Do you have a skimmer? Skimmer is a Reef Maniacs RSK627B beckett downdraft skimmer. (<http://www.reefmaniacs.info/protein.htm>) Purchased second hand from a fellow MASS member. 7) Water flow/movement 1 x 2000 LPH Otto powerhead 1 x 2800 LPH Tunze Nanostream 60252 x 3000 LPH JVP propeller pumps. 1 x 900 LPH Hydor nano propeller pump. Nominal 41 x tank volume turnover per hour. {mosimage cw=300 popup=1}

8) Lighting, type and times 8x54W T5 fluorescent. My choice of lamps is eclectic, and has been based on affordability, availability and aesthetic colour preference more so than any technical criteria. Currently migrating towards ATI lamps, but will only do so as tubes need replacing. Total light duration = 11 hours per day, phased on and off through 3 timers. Full intensity (8 tubes) = 7 hours per day. 11:00 – 20:00 Aquaz Blue Pro + Aquamedic Reef Blue 12:00 – 21:00 Aquaz Ocean Pro (x2) + ATI Aqua Blue Special + Sylvania GroLux 13:00 – 22:00 CH Blue Lux + ATI Aqua Blue Special

9) Other equipment - Autotopoff with RO freshwater, via Williamson peristaltic pump controlled by "ATJII"; DIY float switch controller. - Reef Magus 3-channel peristaltic dosing controller for Balling salts. - Cooling via room air conditioning, and DC computer fans on water surface. {mosimage cw=300 popup=1}

10) Water parameters Salinity: 35 ppt (Refractometer) Calcium: 400-420 ppm (Salifert) Alkalinity: (Salifert) Magnesium: 1300 ppm (Salifert) Nitrate: undetectable (Salifert) Phosphate: undetectable (Salifert) (Hanna checker)

11) Additives and conditioners 3-part dosing by Randy Holmes-Farley recipe: 1) Calcium part – Damprid solution 2) Alkalinity part – Baked sodium bicarbonate 3) Magnesium part – Combination of Magnesium chloride hexahydrate + Magnesium sulphate (Epsom salt) Prodigio Biodigest (bacterial culture) and BiOptim (trace element). Weekly addition of Seachem Reef Plus (vitamins and amino acids) Prodigio and Reef Plus have been in use for last 3 months. To be honest, the jury is still out for me in terms of effectiveness at this point. I'm not actually convinced that they have made any difference.

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12) Fish stock. Zebrasoma flavescens (Yellow tang). Added August 1997 (13 years) Pair of Amphiprion ocellaris

(Falsepercula clownfish). Have recently spawned for the first time. Centropyge acanthops (African Flameback Angelfish) Pseudocheilinus hexataenia (six-line wrasse) Feeding is primarily Spectrum pellet, with supplementation with nori, frozen mysis and brine shrimp, and flake food.

13) Coral stock. Catalaphyllia jardinii (Elegance coral) Euphyllia divisa (Frogspawn coral) Echinophyllia sp. (Chalice coral) – two colourmorphs Pavona maldivensis Acropora sp. - various Pocillopora sp. Stylophora sp. - various Monitipora sp. - various Xenia sp. Photosynthetic gorgonian Various Palythoa / Zoanthids (hitch-hikers)

14) Other Inverts. Ciliopagurus strigatus – Red-legged hermit crab Trapezia sp. – Acropora crab Turbo sp. – Algae snails (breeding colony) Trochus sp. – snails (breeding colony) Echinometra sp. – black boring urchin Mespilia globules – Tuxedo urchin Linckia laevigata – Blue Linckia seastar {mosimage cw=300 popup=1}

15) Maintenance Daily: (monitored by checklist) - Feedfish, - Observe livestock health - Check topup reservoir, dosing system, skimmer reservoir. Maintain as required. - Record temperature daily. Weekly: - Dosing ProDIBio and Seachem Reef Plus. Monthly (or thereabouts): - Waterchange, typically around 30%. Quick syphoning of any visible detritus from rocks is conducted when doing water change. Water changes use a combination of Artificial and Natural Salt Water, depending on availability. Periodically or as required: - Periodically test and adjust salinity, calcium, alkalinity, magnesium. - Internal glass cleaned with magnet cleaner and razor blade - Skimmer, pumps, powerheads cleaned

16) Acknowledgments and any other comments Thank you very much to the MASA Committee and the Promotions and Competitions team for this award. It is always nice when people take an interest in what you are doing, but it is even nicer to be recognised by your peers in the context of all the wonderful tanks being kept by Aussie aquarists these days. I also have to thank my friends within MASS and the broader MASA community for their assistance, frags, information and encouragement that have always been so freely shared, and without whose help I could not have achieved what I have. I've always felt that a Tank of the Month winner should have something to teach the aquarium community. I don't consider that my system is particularly spectacular to look at. The glass is a bit scratched, the plumbing is a bit industrial and the cabinet (like its owner) is a little bit worse for wear. I do, however, believe that it is a good example of what can be achieved with a pretty stock-standard tank available from any aquarium shop, given a bit of research, some perseverance and more than just a little bit of obsession. I would like to think that it is my keep-it-simple approach that has set this tank apart, and has attracted this award.