

Coen van Haarlem (Uift, NL) A Barcelona performance to remember

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Barcelona, the race everyone in the world knows. The race that the entire world watches to see who will claim victory in this prestigious International Classic. The 2017 edition of the race was one of the hardest ever flown with no birds arriving on the day of liberation and the first bird was not clocked until almost 1 PM the next day. Even more incredible was that the first bird to even make it home was in the Netherlands, which is the country that flies the farthest distance. Clocking before France, Belgium, Germany or Great Britain. Coen van Haarlem put up a performance that will be remembered for many years to come in this tough race, winning 4th and 7th National of all the Netherlands and Internationally winning 7th and 12th vs. 17,094 pigeons.

Basis of his family and how he selects his breeders

The base pigeon of his currently family is the "Superkweker" which himself comes from a family in which there are already many top pigeons. He has produced top pigeons with several different hens up to the 7th generation.

After a very hard selection and pigeons winning top prizes, then they are allowed to enter the breeding loft. Once they are in the breeding loft they must produce good pigeons within 2 years.

System flown and preparation for the long distance races

Coen only races using the natural system with both cocks and hens. Entire couples will go to the same races and he tries to set them up for an important race on their first young of the season because they are the most passionate and motivated then.

The pigeons must train twice a day with the use of a flag and do this for an hour each time.

In addition, the pigeons are basketed twice a week on Wednesday and Saturday. On Wednesday they go to Geel (Belgium), which is approximately 125 km (78 miles) away. On Saturday they will be shipped for the club race and go to the scheduled race for that weekend. They are also trained on the road on Thursday at a distance of about 90 km (55 miles) regardless of the weather.

However, they always race with a different department because then they have to fly home alone and that is important for preparing for national/international races. Before they enter their first marathon race of the season, they have already trained 3500 km (2,174 miles).

Feeding for the race season

When the season starts they are allowed to eat as much as they want with a full tray in front of them. The food they receive is the Koopman mixture All in one from the Beyers company. The last two days before shipping they receive the Jellema mix. This is a high-fat food with a lot of hemp in it. When they come home they can eat as much as they want. There are also electrolytes in the drinking water when they return home. The pigeons get plenty of grit every day and a mixture of all different kinds of minerals.

Thoughts on medication and use of it

The use of medication is minimal. Two weeks before the race they receive a tricho pill for canker and when it gets warm an ornithosis pill for respiratory. For the rest of the season they must remain healthy themselves. If they cannot, they are removed from the loft.

Performances

Coen's best performances were the 4th and 7th National Barcelona in 2017, one of the toughest Barcelona races ever flown. He also won 1st National/NPO Brive which he said was also nice. Coen had recently moved and this year at his new residence he won 8th and 10th International Agen Yearlings vs. 10,616 pigeons with extreme heat during that race with temperatures at 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees F) along the race path.

Coen is a humble man and did not want to list all his titles and championships, even though he has won many top prizes and championships, but for him Barcelona 2017 was the best.

Current top pigeon of his loft

Coen's best pigeon at the moment is the "772," she won 7th National Barcelona and 7th National/NPO Limoges in the same season, quite the accomplishment. She is now in the breeding loft and her first youngster to race has already won 8th International Agen Yearlings vs. 10,616 pigeons in 2019.

Goal for the future

His absolute number one goal for the future is to win International Barcelona. This will be the main focus in the future and all the pigeons from 2018 will go to Barcelona in 2020.

The way to his success

When I asked Coen what was the secret to his success he told me, secrets in the pigeon sport do not exist. You must always be looking for the best pigeons and breed as much as possible from them. Then you must race and select them a lot and if you do that for a few years you will automatically get a strong line that can handle the toughest races. He also said to be especially careful when using medication because marathon pigeons must naturally remain healthy.