Harold Zwiers (Den Ham, NL) Maestro of the long distance races from the north of Holland

By: Calvin Gall (Marathon Masters) calvin.gall@mail.wlc.edu

Harold Zwiers lives in a northern portion of the Netherlands and competes at a very high level in the national races, both with the morning releases in the ZLU and the afternoon releases of the NPO series. This attests to the quality of pigeons that he has. Not many fanciers can successful compete at the top in both of these disciplines, but Harold manages to do it year after year. He has been among the champions in his club for over 20 years now and competes in the highly competitive VNCC, with the likes of Jelle Jellema and Gerard Koopman. Just for example, the three best pigeons of the VNCC in 2019 also proved to be three of the best in all the Netherlands.

What is the base of your family of pigeons (bloodlines)? How did you breed them to create your current family?

The basis of the pigeon strain of Harold consists of descendants of the top couple "1336" x "Morsie." This couple is for the most part created with the blood of the pigeons of Jan Theelen. "The 1336" is pure Theelen and "Morsie" is 50% Theelen and the other half is from a daughter of the 1st National Perpignan winner of Jan Walpot with a son of the 1st National St. Vincent winner of Van Zelderen. Almost all the pigeons in Harold's loft descend from this couple.

Here are some top results achieved by children of "DE 1336 X MORSIE." They are the father and mother of 1, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 9 in NPO/VNCC competition.

Further descendants of this super pair won in the NPO/VNCC competition the following: 1,1,1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4,4,4, 4, 4, 5,5, 5, 6,6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7,7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 9, 9, 9, 10, 10, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13, 13, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 15, 16, 16, 16, 16, 17, 18, 18, 18, 18, 19, 19,20, 20, 21, 21, 22, 22, 22, 22, 23, 24 (19th International Barcelona) etc.

What system do you race and how do you prep them for a long distance flight?

Harold's pigeons are stuck inside 7 months a year because of the fact that the birds of prey are so heavy in his area(from August to the end of March). This has caused Harold to have a special schedule. He breeds from his pigeons early, beginning at the end of December or early January until early March for a few weeks. That way before they are let out they have finished breeding and the preparation for the race season begins. At the beginning of March after breeding is done the pigeons receive 100% barley so that they slim down again and detoxify. Around mid-April they go to their first training races and are again on a light mixture and they stay on that until about 4 days before the first basketing of a big marathon race. The pigeons are raced on the nest on either 10 day old eggs or on youngsters 5 days old. He also races some on total

widowhood

What supplements do you use or natural products?

Harold uses many natural products and as little medication as possible. His natural products consist of garlic and onions through the water along with thyme, honey and brewer's yeast. As well as many natural products from the company DHP.

How do you feed and what do you feed your birds during the training period and leading up to a race?

In the beginning, before the start of the racing season they are fed mainly barley. As the pigeons train longer, the food becomes richer and heavier. The food consists of a basic mixture from Beyers (Jellema Sport) which is used during the racing season. About 4 days before the long distance races the pigeons are fed extra with peanuts, candy seed, hemp and more fat-rich seeds.

Thoughts on medications?

The youngsters and all old birds are vaccinated against paramyxo and in mid-March the old birds also for paratyphoid. For canker, the youngsters and breeders are never cured and the old birds only if it is really necessary (in 2019 the old racing pigeons have not been given a canker cure). It went well without medication. Harold tries to keep his pigeons as close to nature as possible, when youngsters cannot cope with it they are removed. Harold says when you do this for a number of years you will create a strong strain of pigeons.

What are some of your best achievements, championships, titles or prizes won?

Harold has won many championships in the last 20 years. Too many to mention, but here are a few. In recent years he was 2 x 1st champion, 4 x 2nd champion and 2 x 3rd champion (2019 3rd Champion) in the strong long distance club VNCC.

Below are the championships of 2018:

Winner of the Super Cup Marathon North

Winner of the Ace Pigeon title for the Marathon North with "De Jonge Deugniet"

1st National Ace Pigeon NPO Bergerac 3 year ranking with the "Veens Blauwtje" (2016 to 2018)

1st Non-nominated Champion area 1

2nd Nominated Champion area 1

2nd Non-nominated Champion Province 9 East Netherlands

2nd Nominated Champion Province 9 East Netherlands

3rd Champions league VNCC

3rd Designated VNCC

5th Nominated Northern Union Champion

6th Marathon North afternoon release

8th Northern Union Champion

8th Non-Nominated Champion VNCC

9th National Champion Nominated

9th National Ace pigeon NPO Bergerac 2 year ranking with the "Veens Blauwtje" (2017 to 2018) 11th Marathon Olympiad Category E 2018 with the "Veense Blauwje"

What is currently your best pigeon?

When asked this question Harold came up with two names. The hen, "Veens Blauwtje" who is a super racer and the super breeder "De Deugniet" who is the grandfather of 2 NPO Winners in 2019 alone.

Goal for the future?

Harold's goal for the future is winning a 1st National Barcelona which he has been focusing on and has bought pigeons for the last 2 years with this goal in mind.

What is the secret to your success or what do you attribute your success to?

Harold says that the short road to success is by breeding a lot of pigeons and racing them and then having a strict selection, but also bringing in pigeons from the best fanciers around.