

Leon Roks (Standdaarbuiten, NL) The Man with Pigeons made of Iron and winner of 1st International Barcelona 2017

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The famous race of Barcelona in 2017 was one for the record books and took special pigeons to finish at the top of the sheet. The race was in extreme conditions with hot temperatures and a steady wind on the head, plus the miles to be covered as it is the longest international race on the calendar. A super test of the best long distance pigeons of Europe and some would say the world. Who would come on top in this special race? It would be the Dutch with a special pigeon owned by Leon Roks. A pigeon truly made of iron. What was also extremely special was that he clocked before any birds were clocked in the countries to the south of him, namely Belgium and France who would have had much shorter distances to cover, yet he came through before any of them. This pigeon was named "Don Leo" and had already won a 1st NPO Dax as well, so he was no stranger to the podium. "Don Leo" would later be purchased by Batenburg vd Merwe and PME and his name was then changed to "Sumerian Fighter." Now Leon has numerous birds ready to take his place and continues to perform very well in the national long distance races. His iron pigeons show their true potential in the toughest of races and the longest of distances.

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

The basic pigeons of Leon Roks loft are the Leo Kouters pigeons (same line as the Barcelona winner), as well as the old-fashioned Oostenrijkers. The real tough as nails pigeons who don't quit, pigeons that perform for example in races at 800 to 900 mpm (874 to 984 ypm). Leon also does very well with his "Gilbert" line. "Gilbert" was the 1st Ace Pigeon NPO on the afternoon releases in 2011. "Gilbert's" father came from Theo de Jong of Noordhoek who was four-time marathon champion of The Netherlands. Theo owns a loft full of Oostenrijkers. Leon also likes to breed from half-brother x half-sister matings.

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

The racing pigeons will go weekly in the basket until they have 2000 training kilometers under their wings. The hens for Barcelona are sent to the race on a youngster of about four to ten days old. Leon also races with 16 widowers who compete in the other ZLU races (national morning release races, also part of the international series). His yearlings are also entered weekly on the short prep races and are then prepared for National Agen ZLU which is about 900 km (560 miles) for Leon.

What supplements do you use or natural products?

Leon uses the Wonder Pigeon supplements and is very satisfied with it. The pigeons also get Tovo and the minerals of Patagoon on a daily basis. Plus, they get a lot of candy seed.

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

Before getting them ready for a race they receive a low protein food mix called Gerry Plus from Versele Laga. Then about ten days before basketing they will get a combination of three mixtures called, Super M + Kweek Geel (breeding yellow) + Vlieg Rood (flying red) from Mariman and Leon has been using that system for years. During this time they are given plenty of food, but have to eat everything.

Thoughts on medications?

In April the birds receive a tricho (canker) cure for about four days. When basketing for a race they always get a Belga Magix tablet from Henk de Weerd. When the birds return home from a race they always have Belgasol waiting for them and they receive that for a day and a half.

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

- 1st National Ace Pigeon NPO with "Gilbert"
- 1st NPO Dax 2014 with "Don Leo"
- 1st International Barcelona 2017 with "Don Leo"
- 1st Ace Pigeon over the races Barcelona + Perpignan with "Pauline"
- 3rd National Ace Pigeon ZLU races WHZB with "Cancellara"
- 3rd International Ace Pigeon 2018 with "Pauline"

What is currently your best pigeon?

"Marcella" is Leon's best pigeon at the moment and is named after his daughter. She has already won:

- 52^e Nat Barcelona
- 63^e Nat Barcelona
- 79^e Nat Perpignan
- 20^e NPO Dax
- 84^e NPO Tarbes and so on

Goal for the future?

When asked this question Leon gave a chuckle because its hard to top winning International Barcelona, but he said, dreaming of winning another ZLU (national) race and of course to stay healthy.

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

Leon said he credits his success to Leo Kouters who gave him a lot of tips and helped him to master the nest game (natural system), and of course the great pigeons he got from him. "Don Leo" (International Barcelona winner) also deserves to be mentioned he said as Leon called him "a warrior."