

BICC MARSEILLE RACE REPORT

The Marseille International is probably the most difficult race to win in the International race programme as far as British fanciers are concerned. This is due to its geographical location as the race point that is situated the furthest east of all the International venues. Past experience has shown that the convoy normally heads off up the Rhone Valley favouring lofts in the east of France and south west Germany.

The 2015 Marseille International race saw 77 British pigeons competing in a total convoy of 10,238 pigeons entered by fanciers throughout mainland Europe.

The pigeons were liberated at 5.40 am BST on Friday 17th July into light and variable winds but with a definite southerly aspect to them as the convoy moved north, accompanied by "wall to wall" sunshine over the whole of the course .

A fast race was therefore on the cards and this proved to be the case for the continental entrants as pigeons were being clocked as early as 14.59 BST to the loft of Denis Sauce at Neufchateau in Belgium flying 750 kms at a velocity of 1391 mpm. This was superceded by a bird racing up into the Netherlands to Jos Martens recording 1411mpm closely followed by another pigeon into the Netherlands to namesake Leo Martens. A steady stream of pigeons continued to be clocked in north east France and south west Germany . There was a cluster of birds clocked in the Saarbrucken/ Stuttgart area of south west Germany and the timings continued in a west north west direction towards the French coast and into southern Belgium. The eventual winner proved to be the Jos Martens pigeon.

Hopes were therefore high that one of the brave 77 British entries would get to and cross the English channel on the day.

However, the task proved too much for any one of the British contingent and it wasn't until 10.54 am on the second morning that the first British pigeon was clocked. This was to the Hockley, Essex loft of multiple BICC Open and Europa Cup winner David Hales and his right hand man Duncan Goodchild, although the last communication I had from Duncan was from his beachside sun bed whilst on honeymoon in Mexico!

Congratulations both on another terrific long distance performance. Here's what David and Duncan had to tell me about the Marseille race winner which recorded 731 mpm over the 637mile course to its home loft at Hockley. They also clocked a second bird on 557 mpm to finish at 6th Open. Here's Duncan's, recently back from honeymoon, take on the race:-

"Our passion the 4 International Europa cup races wherever they are held from.

For us all the other racing is just preparation, education or plain distraction.

As some of our results show our birds are not the quickest but certainly not lacking in courage?

So the bird we were fortunate to time from what has proved to be one of the toughest Internationals, a 3 year old Red Cock flown on widowhood now named "Comfort Zone" because believe us this racing takes you way outside of that frequently.

Educated in our fairly standard method, lightly raced as yb no channel. As a yearling one channel race only, as a 2 year old raced out to Tarbes NFC where he took around 2 weeks.

This year paired in March and sat for 5 days before being put on widowhood raced out to Le Mans 250 miles but this was the year to show him the Internationals, so he went to Pau timed late on the winning day when Dave got home from doing clocks.

Then rested just flown out with some open hole, shown his bowl and off to the race.

Bred for the job you decide he is half brother to 3rd BICC Barcelona, 9th BICC Marseille, 11th BICC Narbonne, 18th BICC Barcelona, 54th BICC Perpignan, 87th BICC Pau etc. He is also related to the 2013 Marseille winner Alan Parker Palamos line

Also like last years BICC Narbonne winner for our friends the Buddles of Dover a grandchild of "80" 1st & 4th BICC Perpignan. His dam a direct Hagen NL03 would love her back in the stock loft as a yearling.

The 2nd bird timed of the 3 Dave sent is turning out to be a bit of a night watchman, like the 1st bird he was timed when Dave got back from doing clocks at the Pau race this year. The same thing happened in 2014 but Dave had already timed 4 so had not reset his clock.

This Blue 4 year old widowhood cock had similar education the first bird, the moult was wrong last year after Pau so he didn't go any further something that has been rectified this year.

His prep was the same as the 1st bird we were in a bit of a hurry because of the late start but the wing has proved this worth while.

This cock is 100 % Biss with the famous Natrix dominant in his breeding. His sire was a decent racer being 2nd BICC Marseille, 96th NFC Tarbes etc when paired to the winner of 1st BICC Dax.

The third of three sent by David and Duncan is a Blue a 6 year old widowhood cock named appropriately, Duncan. Bloodlines are Jim Biss cross Alan Parker.

A grandson of Bassi 1st, 3rd and 6th Marseille for Jim 667 miles and Dave's 1st Open BICC Dax hen. The dam bred by Alan Parker from his Palamos birds.

Duncan is in the main widowhood loft and had similar preparation to the other 2 cocks. He was the fist bird to the shed at Pau earlier in the year finishing 25th Open

580 miles. This was his 3rd Marseille 637 miles in 3 years. Previously he has had 1st and 7th Open and also scored from Agen, Bergerac and Canapeville. That's 100% returns at 637 miles.

Dave had me studying food over the last year due to me being off with 5 operations so I looked into the correct feeding of fats, has this helped. 4 of 5 from Barcelona, 7 of 9 from Pau maybe?

One of the several minor modifications made this year.

So there we have it the 3rd long distance BICC winner into to Essex this year, well done John Underdown and Dave Delea come on you Towie boys lol! I also have to mention the Padfields Barcelona performance - outstanding".

In the runner up spot is another Europa Cup winning partnership, that of F Knowles & son of Wingham in Kent. The active partner here is Simon Knowles and he clocked two of his entry to finish at 2nd, 5th & 11th Open vel 673, 613 & 396 mpm. This is what Simon Knowles had to say about his timers:-

"My bird "Olie" is a 4 year old Blue Cock - 2nd Open B.I.C.C. Marseille

has also been 8th Open Marseille in 2014 - his Sire was 9th Open Barcelona.

The second bird is a 7 year old cock – to take 5th Open Marseille.

has also previously been 4th Open and 18th Open Marseille and 43rd Perpignan.

Third bird is a 6 year old cock and he looks like being 11th Open Marseille this being his 5th time to Marseille.

He was just out of race time in 2011 when only 9 were clocked, the other 3 times taking positions of 19th / 20th / 21st Marseille

This year they have been raced celibate as they are usually on natural.

All birds are fed on Versele Laga Best All Rounder with added peanuts and seeds for the build up for the longer races.

The 1st bird "Olie" was prepared with 2 trainers with the Wingham Flying Club, 2 short East of England Races and then B.I.C.C. Poitiers".

The Aylesham ,Kent partnership of Mr & Mrs Steven Rhodes has recorded many top flight performances with the BICC in long distance International races and in this year's Marseille race they clocked two birds in pretty short order to record 651 & 643 mpm to come away with 3rd & 4th east section 3rd & 4th Open positions. Here's what the Rhodes family had to say about their Marseille timers:-

"Our first two timings from Marseilles are nest pairs both bred from a Denis Dall cock which was 3rd BICC 146th International Pau. Also in the make up is our son of the Joost of Eric Limbourg and a Crack Perpignan hen from Jim Biss.

They had three short channel races with East of England plus BICC in preparation for Marseille. Our first bird from Marseille being our fifth bird from Agen with the BICC.

They were raced on roundabout for most of the season but were left together for three to four days this time before basketing. All our racers are fed on Versele Laga Superstar plus. Finally, congratulations to Dave Hales and Simon Knowles".

Bill Knox is always "there or thereabouts" in long distance International races having won the Barcelona race on two occasions plus many other top ten finishes. Here Bill timed one of his Kirkpatrick's for 7th East section 7th Open vel 542 mpm. Bill clocked a three year old now named "Second Chance". She was lost as a young bird on her second training toss at 10 miles. She eventually returned 9 months later in perfect condition. Some kind person had taken care of her .It was 2014 before she started racing going through St Vincent 540 miles. This year she has had three East of England races and Agen prior to Marseille where she was sent sitting 7 day eggs at basketing

and was very keen. All of her grand parents have scored at 500 miles plus.

Bill clocked a second pigeon a little later to finish at 13th Open.

Next up at 1st Centre section and 8th Open is none other than club Chairman Albi Deacon ably assisted by Jan. Albi and Jan clocked a black chequer cock to record 512 mpm to maintain the loft's incredible record of consistency over such a long period in long distance International races.

This is what Albi Deacon told me about their latest top performers:-

"Our Marseille timer is a little dark chequer Southwell cock we call "Ernie" as he is a grandson of our late cousin Ernie Deacon's NFC Pau National winner. We saw that they were starting to time in down on the east coast from late morning, so we estimated late afternoon for arrivals up this end, as it is about 110mls from Dover to us here in Waterlooville into a what was a fresh westerly wind.

Our Southwells have a habit of timing late, we clocked at 21.30 from Barcelona last year. 21.27 from Agen the year before. Roger Owers' Palamos race winner this year was bred from birds he had from us. Alan Holdaway timed at 21.30 in the Pau Classic this year when only 5 birds were timed on the day. This too was one of his Southwells. We were surprised to get the cock at that time as the light had faded fast and it had started to rain, I had to put the loft lights on to find him! He has been a very reliable bird for us, and this was his 6th International race being in the clock every time. 25th open Pau on the day 2013, 16th open Pau 2014, and I think he scored at Pau in 2012.

Our second timer is a 3yr old dark chequer cock, he is from the same sire as our 1st bird. He flew St Vincent in 2014 out of race time, this year he had a couple of races on the north and then Tours B.I.C.C. same as our 1st bird. The feed comes from Brian Wall of GEM and consists of the moulting mix mixed with farm beans for racing, plus GEM Cowood mix for trapping”.

The Dover partnership of Geoff, and son Clayton Preece have an excellent record with the BICC in International races. The 2015 season has seen them appear on every BICC International race result and in the Marseille race they clocked yet again to take 12th Open vel 369.

Last, but certainly not least of those pigeons clocked as I complete this report at lunch time on Monday 20th July, is one to yet another “ever present” on BICC marathon race results - None other than Alan “Wally” Turner of Elvington near Dover. Alan clocked an 8 year old on 298 ppm to take 14th Open.

That's yer lot for another International race a race in which all fourteen Open positions were won by just seven fanciers. Final race with old birds is Perpignan on 31st July. I will be away on holiday that weekend but will give full details of the winning pigeons on my return. Those fanciers who are successful in this race please email me details to Gcymro@aol.com and I will do my best to ensure you and your pigeons get the recognition they deserve on my return - All the best.

Gareth Watkins



David Hales and Duncan Goodchild 1st, 6th & 9th Open BICC Marseille. 100%returns at 637 miles



Simon Knowles 2nd, 5th & 11th Open BICC Marseille



Steven Rhodes and family with their Marseille timers 3rd & 4th Open



Bill Knox on right with Alan Turner. Bill was 7th Open BICC Marseille 2015



Jan Deacon with the partners 1st section 8th Open BICC Marseille pigeon. Jan & Albi were also 2nd section 10th Open with their second timer



Geoff & Clayton Preece triple Perpignan winners and 12th Open BICC Marseille in 2015 amongst other prizes