

The Start of Racing by Geoff Kirkland.



Me holding "Tony's Boy", 1st National Angouleme and 3rd National Nantes Bath M.N.F.C

In my last article I talked about the preparation for racing. This article will be right up to date and describe what is happening so far with our team. We have had a few races now, although we missed the first two short races which I think are too early for us. Bearing in mind that we are not really interested in sprint racing and need the pigeons to be in good form later in the year ready for the Nationals and Classics. I have found out over the years that the sooner you start then the sooner you finish.

I once read a very good article by Jeff Van Riel of the "Huysken - Van Riel" partnership. The head of this article said "**Small Sacrifices, Big Victories**", this has stuck in my mind for many years.



"Lady Isobel" with the babies.
She raced to win 1st Section, 4th Open
Mid Nat Bergerac (580 miles)



"The Pest", Twice 1st National
1st National Nantes BBC
1st National Angouleme M.N.F.C.
Picture taken from oil painting
done by Catherine Cooper.

As I said in my last article we are this year racing on "Double Widowhood" with cocks and hens. So far it is working well and the only problem we have had so far is the ridiculous speed of the races with the gale force tail winds, but having said that, both the cocks and the hens have won races.

The only snag is that they have not had enough time on the wing to condition them for the longer National type races. This conditioning, as we call it, is as much mental as it is physical and if they have to face a longer race with a head wind it is a big shock to them and also sometimes for the fanciers as well because the form of the leading pigeons in the fast races is stood on it's head and different pigeons come to the front. It is exactly the same as horse racing when the ground goes from firm to soft. What we have been doing is taking them all on a few training tosses at about 70+ miles to get a bit more time on the wing.

We would not be training at all at this time of year on a normal season. One thing I have noticed this season is the cocks are slower coming in to top form. This I put down to pairing up later and rearing only one pair of youngsters, as for the last few seasons I have paired all the racers in the Winter, reared a pair of early youngsters and separated them, then re-paired them at the end of February and reared another pair. Treated this way they have cast the fist flight and hit the ground running and won right away but of course they are one feather farther on in the wing when the longer races come round you can't have it both ways.



Our Granddaughter, Isobel, looking at her favourite "Billy", just after he had been clocked in from Saintes (511 miles)

Feeding.

I have had a re-think on the feeding front and this year I am trialling "GARVO" corn, using "GARVO SPRINT" in the short races and then "GARVO MARATHON" for the longer ones. This feeding is completely different concept it has every possible thing that the pigeons need, including vitamins, minerals, pro-biotics and all the trace elements. The only things you need to supply in water and fresh grit.

This is the theory of it and I will give it a fair trial and report on my findings. I think I may have to give extra fats for the longer distance but we shall see.

E.T.S Clocking

This season we are using the E.T.S. in National racing after playing about and getting used to it in training etc. I must admit it was with some nerves and trepidation we sat waiting for our first race, it was very strange to have no clocks and no rubbers on the pigeons. This worry was completely unfounded and the system worked like a dream so much so that I would never go back to clocking manually with a few exceptions for times when it is not possible. Enough of me being sold on the idea now a few observations on some of the objections to the system.

Observations.

1. First of all, why can't the professional objectors mind their own business and let others mind theirs and clock in on whatever they wish, I have no interest what so ever how they time their pigeons...
1. Why are the most outspoken about the system the ones who have never seen it in use and do not know what they are talking about. How can you have an opinion when you have no idea what you are talking about and why do these backward looking loud mouths try to impose their ideas on others...
1. I have heard a lot of these die hards, for want of a better word, have done a complete U-Turn when the club has been given a lottery grant and obtained free systems. These people do not have any objections then, in other words it is not the system but paying for it that they object to...

In conclusion, my own idea is that it is the most efficient way of timing ever invented and one of the biggest steps forward I have ever experienced in over 55 years of racing. If we had listened to the dinosaurs in our sport over the years we would still be running with rubbers to the post office!



Me holding the "Angouleme" after he won the 1st National Angouleme Mid National.