

SPORT TALK

A Periodic Presentation of News & Views from Around the Racing Pigeon World
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The “*Mister 1st National*” Strikes Again!

The 2013 Belgian racing season has been a successful one and has yielded several inspiring success stories. One of them is the story of the ***Belgian Argenton National II 335 miles*** flown on Saturday August 10th with **32,045 birds, comprised of 19,303 ybs, 6801 yearlings and 5941 old birds**, each competing in separate **National** categories. Weather at the liberation point in Argenton, France, and along the race course, was sunny with some clouds, moderate wind and good visibility. Liberated at 7:20 am, birds began being clocked a little after 2 pm. Winning speeds were in the 1300 mpm range. By nightfall the results were in and the “talk of the Argenton National” was **Michel Van Lint, Blue Heaven Loft, of Zoutleeuw, winning 1st National Argenton II Old Birds!**, adding another National win to his record of winning **15 x 1st Belgian National!!** There is no doubt why Michel is referred to as “***Mister First National!***” He has now won **16 x 1st Nationals in eleven years!!**

Michel’s latest National winner named **LILLY 2007064B11** is a two year old Blue hen bred down from several generations of MVL champions, such as BARBARA 1st Nat Bourges 288 miles 32,724 b; BRUTUS; BIEKE 4th Nat Vichy; BORIS; “155” 5th National Ace Pigeon KBDB; the potent breeder WITPENDER; BROTHER BARBARA; and the William De Bruijn NL blood of 2003, etc. She has Michel’s National winners on both the sire and dam’s side, and is somewhat inbred to BARBARA.

LILLY is a prolific flier, like Michel’s great champion **MYSTERE LADY** that flew an astounding 22 races covering 6000 miles as a yearling! **LILLY** won **19 prizes in the “Heavy Half Long Distance” and 13 National race prizes.** Her prize list as a yearling was:

- 1st Toury Regional 910 yearlings
- 1st Interprovincial Toury 1886 yearlings
- 1st Interprovincial 231 miles Overall 4020 birds
- 1st Bourges Regional 96 yearlings
- 1st Bourges Prov Union Brabant 2015 yearlings
- 4th National Bourges 288 miles 14,598 yearlings

1st Gueret Regional 220 yearlings
 1st Interprovincial Gueret 1540 yearlings
 21st National Gueret 335 miles 3379 yearlings
 6th La Souterraine Regional 273 yearlings
 33rd National La Souterraine 357 miles 4699 yearlings
 7th Argenton Regional 579 yearlings
 17th Argenton National Zone C 2647 yearlings
 125th National Argenton 335 miles 7046 yearlings
 3rd Melun Regional 457 yearlings
 26th Montlucon Regional 814 yearlings!
 Then as a two year old **LILLY** continued her winning ways:
 231st Chateauroux Prov 4751 birds
 624th National Chateauroux 300 miles 22,254 birds
 184th Gueret Prov 3213 birds
 628th National Gueret 12,592 birds
 And she topped off the 2013 season winning
1st National Argenton II Regional 100 old birds
1st National Argenton II Zone C
1st National Argenton II 335 miles 5942 old birds!

Michel is the *most analytical, meticulous* fancier I have ever visited in over forty years of loft visiting, and his wife Yuchin is his “right hand man,” totally and strategically involved in the management of the lofts. Michel leaves nothing to chance. On one visit to Michel’s loft I handled many of his National and regional winners, as well as his breeders, and every pigeon was a magnificent specimen: strong boned, vents like iron, abundant pink spongy muscle, silky feathered, snappy wings with a pronounced step, wigglers in the hand, alert, bright eyed, intelligent birds. I was in awe of the overall quality of the MVL pigeons, in particular the race team of cocks and hens. I didn’t say too much, but I was thinking to myself “I’ve never seen a better loft of racing pigeons in my whole life!” No wonder he is the Belgian 1st National record holder and that his pigeons have been “drug tested” so often, every time coming up *negative!* I guess it’s hard to believe such a loft of pigeons exists, as well as such a manager, but they do, in Zoutleeuw, Brabant, Belgium at the home of ***“the Wizard of Zoutleeuw” Michel Van Lint!!***

Eleven years ago Michel returned home to Belgium, with his wife Yuchin, after working in Taiwan for twenty year. He designed and built a wonderful loft based on that of the late, great Huyskens – Van Reil loft in Antwerp. He housed it with birds given to him by his friends *Willem DeBruijn of the*

Netherlands, Herbots Bros and Oliviers – Devos of Belgium, and a few other record birds. The rest is history. The Blue Heaven Loft began winning its very first season, and every season after that!

I asked Michel how he raced **LILLY** and he said: “ Tom, I raced **LILLY** on double widowhood, but her mate (cock) was lost about five weeks before the Argenton National, so I had to improvise and come up with something to keep her in good form, as well as, keep her desire keen to come home. Every Wednesday I give the race team a 22 mile toss early in the morning, as long as the weather was good. I sent **LILLY** to the tosses and every week to a race. I let her into the section where she had bred two youngsters with her husband in February. Several of the cocks hunted after her and tried to mate with her, but she wasn’t happy with them. So finally I took over..... I saw that every time I entered the loft she seemed interested in my talk and came to me. It seemed she was happy with the attention I gave her and the time I spent with her. There was a relationship between me and **LILLY**!, so I cultivated it.

At the end of July I let all the racers go to nest. **LILLY** still didn’t have a mate, so she raced celibate. I think she was looking for her lost mate every time she returned home. But the week before the Argenton National I did something special for her. On the day of basketing I put all the hens in baskets, took all the cocks off their nests, closed the boxes in half, but left **LILLY** in her nest-box. All the cocks began hunting after her. Eventually she allowed **two** amorous cocks into her box. I watched the game from nearby. When she laid down in her nest-bowl with her two cocks I took her away. My wife placed her in a basket to ship to the Argenton National.” The result, **1st Regional 1st Interprovincial 1st Zone 1st National Argenton II 5942 obs! In addition she was 5th Fastest Overall 32,045 YBs, OBs, & Yearlings combined!!**

Michel says his pigeons “are really in top form” and there are still a few more National races left to fly.... 1st National number seventeen could well be on the horizon.....

Bravo Michel! Bravo!

“Stop the Presses!” “Mister 1st National,” Michel Van Lint does it again! On Saturday August 31st, two weeks after winning the Argenton National II, the Blue Heaven Loft wins the last National of the Belgian season: **1st National Nevers OBs 275 miles 2918 obs! And 1st Overall 14,497 yb & obs combined!!**

To be continued.....