

Sport Talk Sept 2013 Van Lint 1st Nat Nevers OBs

SPORT TALK

A Periodic Presentation of News and Views From Around the Racing Pigeon World

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Continued from..... Part II

MICHEL VANLINT, *Mister 1st National*, SCORES AGAIN!

Michel Vanlint's "Blue Heaven Loft" in Zoutleeuw, Brabant, Belgium has had ten successful seasons in a row, including the 2013 season, which was topped off with two tremendous wins.

On Saturday August 10th, 2013 Michel Vanlint's two year old Blue Hen, *Lily*, "made the heavens smile:" *1st National Argenton II OBs 335 miles 5941 birds!* It was *Michel's 16th 1st Belgian National win! A new record!* But the racing season was not over yet... Four more Nationals to go... And Michel still had a few "tricks" to play in his quest for another National win...

Over the next two weekends, the MVL birds flew the Issoudun National 300 miles and the La Souterraine National 353 miles, scoring in the National prize list. The team looked very fit, considering the long racing season they had competed in, but Michel felt they needed a little something extra. Now, one week to the last National of the year from Nevers, the birds were flying freely around the loft, diving, slapping their wings, zipping around, exhibiting tip-top condition. Michel likes to see that, but he decided to play some more "tricks" to get them really motivated.... The team was shipped to the Nevers National 290 miles on Thursday, and on race day, Saturday August 31st, a two year old Blue Checker hen named *Leona*, "made the heavens smile" again, winning *1st National Nevers OBs 280 miles 2918 birds! & 1st fastest of the entire National convoy of 14,497 obs & ybs!! Michel Vanlint turned another page in the history books: 17 x 1st National!!! "Mister 1st National" was the talk of all Belgium!*

Both *Lily* and *Leona* lost their mates during the racing season, but Michel with his expertise, used it in his favor. *Lily* first flew on double widowhood, then celibate, then to *two cocks!* Michel is a keen observer, watching his pigeon in and out of the loft for hours. He watches them train around the loft every day. He watches them when they arrive home from their 22 mile toss on Wednesdays. He watches them inside the loft. And he watches them especially close on basketing day, Thursday. They get a toss only if the

weather is good. Michel knows that each bird is an individual and must be treated as such to get the best performances from it.

I asked Michel to explain how he raced **LEONA** to win the National and he detailed it like this:

“Tom, **Leona** was raced on double widowhood, but 4 weeks before the Nevers National her mate (cock) was lost in a race, I continued racing her to her nest-box for 2 – 3 weeks. I was about to move her into the loft with the 2013 ybs, but my wife said “Don’t do that. The changing will be too confusing.” I thought about it and agreed with her. Instead, I decided to take an old cock out of the breeding loft, one that had raced to the loft **Leona** was in, and mate him to her. It worked. **Leona** was “in love again!”

Two compartments for the hens were empty, so I paired up all the race birds, let them lay eggs, and later on gave them a youngster from the ‘feeders.’

Leona and her new mate were given a small box with a nest-bowl. Every day after training, she was allowed to stay with her new mate for a little while, then moved to the racing hens section, and raced every weekend. She was not allowed to lay eggs. Two weeks before the Nevers National, **Leona** flew the Issoudun National 303 miles, but was late. I left her with her mate for an hour. She recuperated quickly. That was Saturday. On Sunday the birds were not trained around the loft, but on Monday they were allowed to fly at two o’clock in the afternoon for 20 minutes. One bird was on the roof and won’t train. My wife said ‘Let that bird come down and go into the loft.’ I thought about it and finally obeyed; I saw it was **Leona**! She ran inside to her nest-bowl. After all the birds were called in from training, my wife went to check on **Leona** and she found her sitting on a newly laid egg! We immediately gave her a second egg. Now I know why she was late from Issoudun; she laid the first egg somewhere along the way home...

But the story is not finished. Tom, as I told you I paired up all my racers in late July after the Bourges National, gave them eggs, and later on a youngster, so the two compartments for the female racers were empty, but **Leona** and her mate were breeding in one of them.

One day before basketing for the Nevers National I noticed that some cocks started chasing their hens. Their youngsters were two weeks old and that’s the time that the cocks will start hunting their hens again. I wouldn’t allow them to do that, so I decided at 6 o’clock in the morning to take all the hens away. I put 12 of the hens in the compartment where **Leona** was breeding. She went crazy! Never in my life have I seen a pigeon in such an angry mood! Every hen that dared to come down on the floor of the loft was hunted, attacked, and fought with until it flew upstairs.

In the afternoon of the day of basketing, I first put the cocks in the baskets, then let the hens go back into their nest-boxes with their youngster. Before they started feeding their youngster, I took them away and put them in baskets to be entered in the National. **Leona** became quiet again, sitting down on her eggs, knowing that her territory belonged only to her! As the last pigeon, I took her from her nest and put her in the basket. My wife placed her as 2nd nominated, instead of our number one. Chinese people believe that number one means an obligation to arrive and come back first. **Leona** failed two or three times at that position, but won each time a top prize.

And for me now. I thought that I made a mistake by taking away all the hens from the compartment where Leona was sitting on eggs. She was so excited before removing the hens, and I thought I should have put her in the basket in that situation. I was wrong. The excited period followed by peace let her go to the race calm, yet with great determination to get home to protect her nest of eggs, her nest-box and her territory! I had never seen her return from a race as she did from Nevers, like a bullet she came out of the sky and into the loft! Result: **1st Region 1st Provincial 1st National Zone C1 1st National Nevers Old Birds 2918 obs & 1st Fastest 14,487 ob & ybs!!**

Leona flew an amazing **9 National races** in 2013:

48th National Bourges 286 miles 19,655 birds

120th National Gueret 342 miles 12,592 birds

32nd Interprovincial Orleans 247 miles 1600 birds

159th National Montlucon 330 miles 18,568 birds

989th National Chateauroux 319 miles 22,254 birds

361st National Chateauroux II 319 miles 4757 birds

193rd Prov Bourges National II 286 miles 2671 birds

National Issoudun 303 miles late

216th National LaSouterraine 358 miles 2569 birds and

1st National Nevers 280 miles 2918 old birds & 1st Fastest of **14,487** obs & ybs combined!! What a pigeon!

Michel says that no matter what the system of racing is, the birds have to be super healthy and fit to win. He feeds the best *Versele-Laga* feed and uses *Herbots Health Products*. Michel has his pigeons checked out regularly during the racing season, by his friend, veterinarian *Raf Herbots*. He discusses various methods and situations with Raf, and the Herbots Brothers. **Leona's** bloodline is superb. She is bred down from three of Michel's 1st National winners, Boris, Adonis and Anita. Further back, she is down from

the original *Willem De Bruijn (NL)*, *Herbots Bros (B)*, and *Oliviers-Devos (B)* foundation pigeons from a decade ago.

Michel & YuChin Vanlint are a perfect team. They are retired from “work,” but have full time jobs, managing the racing pigeons “24/7.” Their lives revolve around the birds. YuChin cares for the breeding pigeons and Michel cares for the racers, but both help each other. Michel brought back much pigeon racing knowledge from Taiwan, when he retired from his job there, but the best thing he brought back to his home in Belgium was his wife YuChin. I found her to be a delight and quite knowledgeable about the birds. Of course Michel is a true ***Master*** of our sport and the most *meticulous* fancier I have ever met.

Now that the Belgian National races are over for 2013 you would think MVL would take a break, but ***“Mister 1st National”*** did not achieve such tremendous success by sitting on his laurels.... No, his eyes are already focused on the 2014 season to come... One must be a step ahead to beat the competition in the Belgian Nationals... ***MVL*** has that step.

Bravo Michel, you are indeed one of the “All Time Greats” in our sport!
Tom Smith