

BICC Barcelona International Race Report

And finally, we have arrived. The biggest race in the European calendar, the Barcelona International. Everest. The birds that you read about below are superstars in every way. Breaking from 15,000+ birds in Spain, the other side of the Pyrenees, these pigeons are giants of our hobby and will in all likelihood go on to form dynasties for their owners. Many a fancier will knock the men and the birds that take on these marathon events, but just have a look at what these birds accomplish over 2/3/4/5 days, look at the terrain, the mountains, the obstacles they must overcome, as well as making a move from the 14,500+ birds that are heading for the Continent, it is an incredible feat.

This year, the heatwave that we have been dealing with was still roaring, and as we know from the previous couple of weeks long distance racing, it was always going to be tough, even more so at 650+ miles for our competitors in the BICC and the British Section of the International.

Having witnessed a Barcelona liberation first-hand 5 years ago, I can tell you the emotions involved when seeing that really moved me and it certainly makes you want to be a part of this stupendous occasion, but I also know from my own experiences and from others as well, it is not for the light-hearted. There are some great pigeons which meet their match at Barcelona, never quite being the same again after taking on the most momentous race the pigeon racing world has to offer.

As you know, we don't supply convoyers reports or weather reports for the International, but these can be found on various websites if you are interested in seeing what the birds are up against and how they are cared for in the week leading up to liberation at Barcelona.

Following another masterclass by Mark Gilbert, that's now 4 BICC wins on the bounce, we go straight into the Open Result, in which we also cover the first 3 in the East Section and in the Centre Section.

OPEN

Taking **2nd Open and 1st East Section** is Graham Townsend. Graham took over the running of the birds after his father passed away 3 years ago and it has taken a little while to get going again. He did prepare a team of birds for Agen in 2016 but on the last toss they got hit by a hawk, the one which got hit and came home with half a tail is.... you guessed it, this pigeon which has now scored **2nd British Section** from Barcelona! The blood of the Fear Brothers, legendary British long-distance fanciers, flows through the loft with the odd cross here and there, and keeping with tradition, this hen was prepared and sent sitting on 14-day eggs, true natural racing. She had 2 x inland races, then onto Messac, another inland race and then off to Barcelona! Graham would like to thank Richard Ashman for his help with training the birds, and as well as the training they get an open hole whenever Graham is about. Graham would also like to congratulate Mark Gilbert on the win, although he did he wishes

that Mark had put the pigeon in the stock loft when it on Perpignan last year! Finally, a great deal of gratitude to all the fanciers at the BICC marking station in Ash, without the help from these people sending to Barcelona would not have been possible for Graham.

3rd Open and 3rd East Section is Ron Dove, a previous Barcelona winner in fact. Some super information on the bird from Ron here.

“My blue chequer hen, GB 14 A 33372 was second bird to loft from BICC Poitiers 2018, 17 hours on the wing. She also had three trainers with East of England CC and BICC, all hard races with North and North Easterly and this obviously set her up for Barcelona. On return from Barcelona she had a lot more miles in the tank and was handling and looking really well. We had lost her Cock from a training toss a few days before, but as she was still sitting tight we decided to send her. She had been re-paired after racing on round-a-bout for the first part of the season, purposely for Barcelona. Her breeding is basically my own blood lines going back over many years of long distance pigeons. She contains blood from the ‘600’ Mealy (GB04 A 58600) who was 19th (2009) and 5th (2010) Open Barcelona, this was on the Sire’s side and the Dam was 3 x Barcelona 19th Open (2012) and 21st open (2013) Barcelona. Also going back to my 6th Open NFC Pau on the day. Some of the bloodlines are from Brian Long and Bruce McAllister (a gift from my good friend Billy Lynch). The Grand Sire was bred by my good friend Trevor Sheavills with bloodlines from his 6th Open Barcelona 2012, similar to blood of Mr and Mrs S. Rhodes, 2nd Open BBC Palamos 2018 with lines of Tom Gilbertson, Wim Muller, van Coppenelle and Kuyper all in gift from T. Sheavills. These are once again all gift birds. It is my belief that you only get the best from exchanges with friends. The Great-Grand Dam, my no 1 stock hen, was bred from gift from Duncan Harvey from the far west of Cornwall, containing the best of Padfield blood lines.”

The father and son partnership of Geoff and Clayton Preece are **4th Open and 3rd East Section**. Geoff tells us a little bit about the hen that was clocked.

“This 2-year-old blue hen is flown on widowhood and is a granddaughter to our ‘Jack Jones’ cock. As a yearling she flew in the BICC Le Mans National and the Perpignan International. This season she had accumulated 31 hours wing time prior to Barcelona.

Her sire is line bred to Robert Ben’s ‘Super Ben’ and the dam is line bred ‘Jack Jones’. She has returned in great condition a credit to the BICC and the International conveyers.”

5th Open we have Mr and Mrs Rhodes, who have had an amazing couple of years in the long-distance races within the National and International arenas. Adding to the collection of incredible results is this pigeon which they have sent this information on.

“We were very pleased to time our dark velvet Jan Polders cock at 8:10am on the third morning from Barcelona. He was 8th Open Barcelona last year and is bred by the House of Aarden, he was sent sitting 10 days eggs with a different hen as his hen went missing at BICC Poitiers. She later came back, and he was having the time of his life sitting and driving his

old hen as well, congratulations to all timers on the second day, especially Mark Gilbert's bird, what a pigeon!"

The Lyden Brothers of Sandwich in Kent are in **6th Open** and here is what the duo had to say about their Barcelona bird.

"83 has been an all-rounder having won a number of prizes at varying distances at both channel and inland races competing at local club and at regional level in the East England CC, notably improving as she gets older as this performance from Barcelona testifies. Very similar to her sire in fact who won six good channel prizes at East England level in his later years before being retired to the stock loft 3 years ago. The bloodlines stem from our old family that we can trace back to the 80's with a few additions over the years.

Her cock was lost earlier in the season and she has been racing to an empty nest box since, being kept in the hen's sections during the week and permitted to spend the weekend in her nest box. Her preparation was two short, but tough and slow, channel races and a couple of 60-mile trainers leading up to the Barcelona race."

7th Open, 2nd Centre Section and 9th Open we have A & T Deacon of Waterlooville. A strong team was sent to Barcelona this year from these lofts, 8 warriors which were thought strong enough to handle the challenge ahead of them. Having had 6 return to the loft it shows what quality is on offer. A true natural set-up with minimal training and plenty of open loft flying has got these birds up to speed ready for their assault of Barcelona. The leading pigeon to be 7th Open has flown Barcelona 3 times and flown Marseilles, so is no slouch and no stranger to the International race scene. The pigeon was warmed up with a Truro race which was not an easy test and really stood it in good stead. The second timer, a 3-year-old hen raced once again on a true natural system is now one for the future, having come through this test with flying colours!

8th Open and 3rd Centre Section is Bill Aherne. The pigeon named "Young Michael" is 3rd is a previous winner of 2nd Centre Section, 10th Open Barcelona in 2016. The pigeon in question is a Great-Grandson of Bill's BICC Barcelona winner, a pigeon named Barcelona Bernie. The blood is certainly coming to the fore for Bill in this case!

10th Open is Nick Walker. I have tried a couple of times to get hold of Nick and did send a text message as well. Nick, if you are reading this then please get in touch as I would love to give the pigeon, and yourself, the recognition for an excellent performance.

CENTRE and EAST SECTIONS

The first 3 in each section in the Centre and East Sections have already been covered within the open result so we will move on to the other two sections in which birds were clocked.

WEST SECTION

Over into the West Section, a long old way from Barcelona and most of the UK birds. Like all the pigeons from this race, these birds out into the West Section have an awfully long way to come, even further possibly depending on how far they go with the International birds!

1st Section and how delighted I was to receive a text message on Tuesday morning at 11:25am which simply said, "Got 1". Nic Harvey has topped the Section after many years of trying and coming so close on several occasions! The whole year is geared towards this one race and I could probably write a full novel on the conversations Nic and I have had since being introduced to him about 6 years ago! But, I've not got that long, so this short piece will have to do!

Nic wanted to say a massive thanks to Jim Emerton whose help and guidance has really helped him with his Barcelona clocking's, and in true Oscar fashion a big thank you to his Mum for putting up with him for all these years, a task much more difficult than any Barcelona clocking I can assure you! Nic also sent me these few words regarding the bird.

"Hi John, just a couple of lines about the breeding of my 1st West Section hen, now known as "Musgrove Inevitable". Her sire is once again the blue cock now named "Musgrove Magician", a 2008 blue cock gifted to me by Paul Addicott of Taunton, being a son of his 3 times Palamos hen. He is the sire of "Musgrove Obsession", 4th Section, 35th Open BBC Barcelona, "Musgrove Insanity", 3 times Barcelona with her best performance being 9th Section, 51st Open and now "Musgrove Inevitable", 1st Section, 18th Open. "Magician is also the Grandfather and Great Grandfather of "Musgrove Wizard", 3 times Barcelona and now standing at stud for a year with Michael Feeney over in Ireland. The dam of "Inevitable" comes from the loft of Bert Shepherd, being a Grand-daughter of his champion "Seven UP" and "Jubilant".

This is "Inevitable's" third trip from Barcelona. A massive thanks to Paul for the precious gift of "Magician" whose lines now go right through my stock loft, and to Keith and Shane Burrows who have never let me down and transport my birds to all the BICC marking stations. Lastly, a special thanks to my friend, mentor and silent partner."

2nd Section is no stranger to success at Barcelona, John Halstead. This pigeon for John was 3rd Section, 9th Open from Barcelona last year and won the GDSBNFC. It is from the lines of "Nyland Ashley", 2nd Barcelona, and a Graham Clift hen which is bred down from the legendary "Tuff-Nutt" of Brian Denney. Raced on a standard widowhood system, the pigeon went to the tough Poitiers race and dropped at 7:20am the next morning looking like a superstar, so John said he knew she was ready to go to Barcelona. She has come together pretty well, and he may well have a look at Perpignan for her.

3rd Section are Brooks Brothers and Wilcox, having a truly wonderful season. Stuart sent me this information across.

“We timed a 4-year-old blue white flight hen now called “Mendip Mo”. She has flown Tarbes plus a few international races and was lined up for Barcelona at the start of the season. She is bred back to our old Fear Brothers and Vic Priddy lines, her dam is sister to “Mendip Magic” 1st Sect, 2nd Open Pau and “Mendip Hope” 1st Sect, 8th National Pau. Sire is down from the “Chuckle Brothers”, who both flew Pau on the day including 9th Open.”

Now up into the Northern realms of the BICC where two brave birds battled up to secure their place in Barcelona folklore!

NORTH CENTRE SECTION

1st Section goes to Trevor Robinson of Patrington. At 850+ miles this is truly remarkable flying from an exceptional fancier, who quietly goes about his business whilst snatching some superb results from these extreme-long distance races. Congratulations on getting this little beauty in the clock Trevor, and thanks for the information.

“My section winner is a very small hen bred in 2013, she has flown the channel 11 times, three from Tarbes (722 miles) with the NFC taking seventh and eighth section. Last year she would have been in the first ten in the section, but due to being away did not record her arrival. This year she was solely prepared for Barcelona, 852 miles. Her breeding is tried and tested distance blood, her sire was first section for me from Barcelona, and has the blood lines of Emiel Denys and Hoogavorc of Holland. The dam side is a mix of the Motta-van-He, Kirkpatrick, and Sticklebaut.

A big influence also on the dam side is of the Jim Emerton's Dark Enchantment, and Circus Boy blood. A youngster was given to me by Jim that bred the grand dam of this year's section winner. The grand dam also flew Barcelona for me three times, taking second section. There is also the blood of de-Barcelona, de-Smarag Barcelona, and a touch of the old Verheye blood.

Congratulations to all who timed in from this race, it was no walk in the park. Again, thanks to Jeff Lyden and his helpers at Chestfield marking station for making the 550 miles round trip worthwhile.”

Quite incredible that Trevor did 550 miles, the pigeon did 850, so this is a 1,400-mile result in the making!

2nd Section is the partnership of Kevin and Lauren Grace. 3 pigeons were prepared for Barcelona and all 3 went to Perpignan last year, but unfortunately none of them arrived in race-time. Having the confidence in them that they at least knew the way to some extent, the duo got these 3 birds ready for Barcelona and this 2015 blue hen did not disappoint on what was her first outing across the Channel this year! The bird is bred down from De-Rauw Sablon bloodlines, brought in from Holland, and they have been successful for Kevin and Lauren. The only real training they have had has been private training down to Purbeck on the South coast and the birds are all raced naturally.

The excitement of Barcelona has now come to a close. The fanciers that set their stall out for this race will no doubt start planning their assault on the Spanish race-point for 2019 very soon. Congratulations to all those who have clocked and to the brave men and women who are looking to send these birds back into battle again, my sincere best wishes to you all.

From Pau International a pigeon was clocked by W. Swain and Sons which I did not manage to get any information on at the time. Well I am now pleased to say that I have this information and can detail the information below.

W. Swain and Sons is now just one of the sons, following the passing of both the father and his brother. The silent partner who assists massively is Tom Diaz. He helps with all aspects of the daily chores, including dealing with the widowers. The birds are Busschaert based and both parents of the Pau timer were strays! This pigeon had plodded along for 6 years on a standard widowhood system, and having raced this year from Bath to Yelverton, the pigeon was then lifted into Pau International for the first Channel race of the season. The International bug has now bitten, and you can bet your last tenner that the Swain and Diaz duo will be sending to more of these prestigious races in the future.

The heatwave continues, as does the heat within the long-distance pigeon world! Still many more long events to come, starting with St Vincent and moving on to other race points such as Perpignan and Marseilles. There will be more legends found in the next few weeks, both fanciers and birds, good luck to you all and hopefully I'll be speaking with some of you very soon! Until then, stay lucky.

John Ghent

Joint Press Officer BICC