

Over the course of the 2018 International race program with the British International Championship Club entering all seven races, I went to Mark Gilberts loft on five of those races to report on the UK national winner. Over the course of the previous one or two seasons, I had been gradually realising that something really special was unfolding at the Southfield Loft in Windsor, and had been reporting on how Mark was building a team to compete against the best of Europe, with the main aim of achieving the coveted 1st International Barcelona.



Mark Gilbert

It was considered by most fanciers that winning those five races from the International race points, would be a difficult record to emulate by another loft or even repeated by **Mark Gilbert**. But none of us expected the truly outstanding performance that was put up in the **first International race of the 2019 season from Pau** by Mark with his wonderful team of long distance pigeons, and it is one that the very best lofts, throughout the whole of Europe, will applaud.

Having been released at 7:15am British Time, the pigeons had to face a light head wind from the north east through most of France and indeed it was not until evening time that the French began to make their recordings around the Paris area. As the UK birds would have to take on a stronger more easterly wind in the channel, I for one did not expect any UK birds on the day. But I had not reckoned for the performance of the century which was about to unfold.

Amazingly, news came through that Mark Gilbert had clocked three birds, flying 562 miles on the day, in an unfavourable wind, to take the first, second and fourth in the International

result at the close of the first day. When I called he was obviously very excited and exclaimed "What a buzz, Chris it shows we can beat them, what a buzz"
I made arrangements to visit early the next morning, hoping he would hold the top position and I would be photographing yet another UK International winner. I dare not go to bed in case I over slept and missed the early morning arrivals, as Mark had entered ninety in preparation and selection for the Barcelona International race. I told him I would be there for 5:30am and as it is just over a two hour drive from my home in Leicester, I loaded my photographic equipment and left at 3am.
When I arrived, I was met by his father Jeff who opened the security gates and told me the Dutch had taken first place in the International result. Not too discouraged, Mark was upbeat about the race and the condition of his birds. He proclaimed that pigeons would come up to about 7:30am due to them being across the channel the night before and flying the 60 miles inland to his loft, then there would be a break in arrivals, before beginning again around 10am with birds coming over the channel that day.



As expected, a further six very brave birds dropped in over the next hour or so, after which I photographed the first three pigeons and Mark verified his latest timings. We then learned that no other birds had been timed in and at that moment he had taken the first eight positions in the BICC National result from a 562 mile race. It was truly amazing and a real privilege to experience the moment, as the Dutch birds had only managed to move him down to 4th, 5th and 7th International from 12119 birds.

I left around 10am and in the two hours it took me to drive home Mark clocked another 20 super pigeons with them continuing to arrive during the morning. Roll on Barcelona, as this team is going there and they are something really special, also roll on Agen as Mark has another team for that race too, which is no doubt equally as good and being prepared for St Vincent!

The breeding of the first pigeon home and 4th International Pau is from a son of "Kanibal Barcelona" which scored 4th International Barcelona against 25750b in 2010, when paired to an Etienne Meirlaen hen which is the mother of 1st National Agen. The dam is direct daughter of "Southfield Supreme" 1st International Dax 17400b when paired to "Tocher George" half sister to "Euro Diamond". Second bird home being 5th International Pau is from a son of "New Laureaat" Golden Wing winner and super Barcelona racer between 2011-2013 when he was paired to "Silvie" 3rd International Barcelona 20669b. On the dams side he father is "New Witbuik" 6th International Barcelona 25320b when paired to "Silvie" as described above. Third bird home on the day from 562 miles and 7th International Pau 12119b is bred from "New Laureaat" Barcelona Golden Wing 2011-2013 and "Olympic Romee" 1st Olympiad Marathon Racer. The dams sire is "Kanibaal Barcelona" when paired to a daughter of "New Laureaat" and "Cindy". Roll on the next International race, it is going to be a very interesting season.





GB17N01491 "Southfield Barry"

Any news or views please email biccpressofficer@gmail.com and if you are in the first three of your section from any BICC race, be sure to email me some details to include in my report, within 5 days of the race. Chris Sutton 01530 242548 or 07792 356330.