

## BICC Le Mans 1 National 2019 – Race and Winners Report

At 6:15 on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> of July the British International Championship Club liberated 3417b at Le Mans. The race controllers reported that “at first light the view over Le Mans was one of clear blue skies presenting a perfect liberation sky. Visibility in the channel exceptional and winds over the race route light and variable but will change to a light NNW as the day progresses”.



First open in this national race was the husband and wife partnership Mel and Sue King and this is a loft that has been consistently at the top of National results and amassed the phenomenal total of Nine National wins along with over thirty-nine section and three Classic wins. They live in Blandford Forum, a market town in the northern district of Dorset, close to the river Stour and have flown at this address for the past 36 years. Their Vandenabelle family have bred some fantastic pigeons for them over the years and now their stock loft mostly contains their own tried and tested winners, which will perform at all distances right out to Tarbes, 535 miles.



**Sue and Mel King 1<sup>st</sup> BICC National Le Mans 1 2019**

When I asked them what was left for them to achieve Mel stated that they will continue to keep trying to win Nationals but with the main aim of winning Tarbes Grand National,

although he would not sacrifice his whole season just for one race, hence they also have a smaller loft holding twelve pairs that are loosely raced on the roundabout system, with the aim to set the hens up for the National Flying Club Grand National. In fact, in 2016 they were 1st section C, 5<sup>th</sup> Open from Tarbes taking their total of four section wins from the NFC Grand National race to date. When asked which system they preferred, Mel quickly said classic widowhood, as they can go through the whole season in top form.

### *"Stourcrest Skanda"*

**GB17N12048**  
**1st West Sect 1st Open**  
**British International Championship**  
**Club Le Mans 6-7-19**  
**Owned & Raced by**  
**Mr & Mrs M King**

The



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widowhood team are paired at the end of January and are allowed to rear two youngsters. When they are 14 days old the hens are removed and the cock continues to rear them alone, which bonds them solidly to the box. Early season training consists of just one toss from 10 mile and one from 20 then into the first race. The number of pre-season training tosses have reduced over the years due to the growing population of birds of prey in the area and it is far safer to just give them loft exercise these days. Mel said that they can lose more from training than racing and when they do train them he releases them in the sections of eight birds to minimise the risk to the whole team. A Falcon strike can cause panic, with birds crashing into trees etc in order to avoid capture and a larger release of pigeons could injure more of his team.



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Once racing begins they are let out for exercise twice per day and they fly really well around the loft. The widowhood system suits them because the cocks are resting when he is at work and if he is late home for any reason, Sue will take over. Sue normally takes care of the young birds and will help Mel with cleaning or training etc. She is just as immersed as Mel with the pigeons and involved the local club as Race Secretary. The widowhood cocks are fed in a communal trough, although a food pot is in each and every box. Mel likes them to feed together so they get used to competing for the space and will not be too shy when spending time in the race baskets. The pots in the boxes are used when they return from the race whilst fastened in with the hen, or for any extra feed the day before marking for the race. They are fed a light mixture upon return but the super widowhood mix from Gem is used for the rest of the week. Mel used to break them down early in the week but now just feeds the same every day.



The hens are not shown to the cocks before they go to the race, they are just allowed a few minutes with the nest bowl and on return he leaves them with the hens until the last one is home, although sometimes, if they have to go to the club for clock strike late in the afternoon, everything is cleared away before they leave, even if one or two are not home in time. When the birds land from the race they have to go over the ETS pad which is situated just inside the loft behind two small openings and into a small corridor, with the sections being dowelled. The floor is a tight wire grid and when I visited, the birds were lounging around with the windows wide open relaxing in the sun and were very content.



For years, Mel and Sue have named their winning pigeons on the theme of Greek Deities and over those years, have used most of them up. The latest National winner is now named "Stourcrest Skanda" which is a Hindu god of war and he is another home bred two year old widowhood cock, line bred back to their old M & D Evans Vandenabeele "Shadow" bloodline. The sire is a full brother to their 1<sup>st</sup> section 5<sup>th</sup> open NFC Tarbes winner. He is a son of a Caseart cock which won amongst other prizes, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> section NFC Cholet & 4 section NFC Saintes, when paired to "Stourcrest Electra" daughter of "Dione" our daughter of "Shadow". "Electra" was 2<sup>nd</sup> open CSCFC young bird and has bred several top birds. The dam of "Stourcrest Skanda" is from a full brother to "Electra" and also a winner on the road when paired to a direct M & D Evans hen bred from "Ice Man" x "Lucky International". Many more National and Classic wins will be achieved by this partnership in the future too. Their approach is consistent and they have developed a family of birds that respond to their dedication to routine.



As usual I received the weather report from our adviser Steve Appleby who said "As expected at first light the view over Le Mans was one of clear blue skies presenting a perfect liberation sky. On checking the flight path, a large area of patchy drizzle was identified over the Le Havre area. This soon migrated away eastwards clearing our line of flight. Consequently, the race team decided on a 06:15 liberation, our convoyers reported and immediate clearance of the B.I.C.C. convoy. Visibility in the channel was exceptional as can be seen from the beach webcam on the French coast. Winds at the race point were light and variable but as the convoy raced north they picked up a light northerly which was sustained across the Channel and England. During the day a weakening weather front carrying some patchy light drizzle moved from the north, slowly southwards across the country and was located south of the Midlands in the afternoon.

Other news is that the new website handled over 7,000 viewings of the Early Times Saturday and Sunday around 6,000 and not a single hiccup or access problem. All new websites have their teething problems, but I think we are definitely on top of the first race web problems now.

Any news or views to me Chris Sutton on 01530 242548 or [biccpressofficer@gmail.com](mailto:biccpressofficer@gmail.com) anyone wishing to be included in these reports please feel free to email me the details. Other news