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Auke Smid, winner Barcelona 2008

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Last weekend the moment for THE flight was almost due, the flight a lot of pigeon fanciers are looking forward to and preparing for all year. Of course we're talking about the pigeon racing flight from Barcelona, the Spain Flight in Europe with the biggest distance. People speak with honor about the winning fanciers and pigeons. For most fanciers only taking part in the flight will be wishful thinking let alone doing a prize race. Since last year this doesn't count for Auke Smid from Zwaagwesteinde, the winner of the 2008 on Barcelona with Stichting Marathon Noord.

Auke raced last year with two pigeons on Barcelona, for the first time in his pigeon career. It turned out very well because both pigeons flew prize, with a 52<sup>nd</sup> National for his first. Because he was scared to lose his last year's first Barcelona pigeon, it was kept home and only one pigeon was basketed this year. Barcelona was also the pigeon's first time.

To be able to basket, Auke needed to drive a short distance himself to the basketing centre in Steenwijkerwold. It was apparently worth the effort, he must have had a lot of faith in his only warrior.



The pigeons were released in Barcelona on a Friday morning at 9.45 under good circumstances. On their way in France they got a mild South West to South East wind. On the short distance, around 1000 km, it was possible to arrive in the night. This in the past almost never happened on Barcelona. However there was a pigeon that was an exception to the rule. The International winner Danny Vagenende from Smetlede (B) saw a pigeon sitting on his roof at night. He thought it was a laggard, where did we hear that before? Early the next morning, it turned out to be a two years old hen from Barcelona. After some attempts to get her inside and connecting the detecting system, he clocked the pigeon at 5:03 pm on a distance of 1076 KM.

At that time Auke was, on a distance of 1354 KM from Barcelona, still waiting for his pigeons of Montauban. Just before twelve a pigeon came right from the west and he thought it was a pigeon from Montauban. A time pigeon from Barcelona shouldn't be arriving until 13.30, he was supposing. The misses didn't get home yet because 'it was still too early'. It took a while before he got the message, the pigeon that didn't want to enter the 'right' loft, was from Barcelona. This was undoubtedly an early one. But putting a leading pigeon from Barcelona on a long distance like this one, is something one dreams about, it's exceptional.

However, Auke's dream became true, his 8 year old widower became 5<sup>th</sup> National (7041 pigeons), 15<sup>th</sup> International (23.695 pigeons). Auke has the biggest distance of the first 100 international prize winners on his name. This ranking also created the victory in Stichting Marathon Noord.

Enough reason to send a depute to the north to write the story about the winner. That's how Wim van Dorrestein, as member of the board and writer of this article, started heading for 'the outskirts of the pigeon world' Like Auke puts it. From our post Soest it was a trip of more than 180 km. (v.v.) but worth the effort.

Auke started with pigeons in 1979 together with his wife, "to be one of them..." like he says. He is from a pigeon nest and was always confronted with conversations about pigeons at the parental home. But he felt like an outsider because he didn't own pigeons himself. That's how Auke and Ria started with pigeons, Auke said: "Just wait and see". They have a son, a daughter and 5 'grand children'. The daughter is interested in the pigeon sport and was present during the arrival of the Barcelona pigeon. Auke is 58 years old and worked as a road builder, he needed to stop working because of a lung disease. That's the reason why hygiene in the lofts is the condition to be able to breed the pigeons, without harming his health. The first years he played the complete program but since the beginning of the nineties he's specialized in the overnight flight. In the early days, the grand champion Dictus Kooistra from Friesland was his big role model. Because they knew each other from work, Dictus gave Auke good advice.



There are 3 cots of 10, 5 and 3 meter with the front positioned to the east. They have a lean-to roof and are covered with roofing-tiles. They are cleaned every day. In wintertime, between 80 and 100 pigeons populate the cot and 50 youngsters a year are raised. The youngsters are in the year of birth only trained by the owner, as yearling they are trained in the association. After that, as two-year-olds they start with the real work. It should be clear that this approach requires a strict selection, otherwise overpopulation lies in wait. The pigeons are fed a full portion Wielink mix, without any specialties.

The medical assistances simple and restricted to the obligated vaccinations and now and then a special treatment. "Which is only my own peace of mind "like Auke says, "I don't know if it's necessary".

In this region are no vets specialized in pigeons, for medical support we have to drive some time. Some years ago I drove the pigeons to De Weerd in Breda, because I needed some advice, but that's an exception, according to Auke.

The winning pigeon is the widower 2000-4202308 ([Pedigree](#)) the only one that came with Auke to Barcelona. The pigeon didn't look like he flew 1354 KM afterwards. But the week before the basketing he was standing out because he was pulling dragging twigs into the cot.



The (widowers) are released two times a day and are forced to stay outside during that time. In springtime a round of young is raised. The first two flights were played by a youngster, afterwards by a widowhood.

The "Barcelona", like this cock pigeon is called now obviously, joined the (vitesse/midfond) flights. The last one was a (midfond flight), two weeks before the (inkorven) of Barcelona.

The father of this cock pigeon is the kind of Comb. Keun en daughter, the mother of Gebr. Van Doorn. Both sides of the breeding are big names to be found like Jan Ernest and Jan Theelen, I could say they're made out of the rights stuff.

A pigeon that age has to prove himself like all the others. And that is evidenced by former performances including a 4<sup>th</sup> in sector of St. Vincent.

The blood in the vanes of the pigeons that populate the cot is a cross breeding of the combination T. Vertelman (en Zn.) from Hoogkarspel, J. Keun from Donderen, Gebr. Van Doorn from Someren and Martin Hensen from Volendam. At the switch to overnight flight 10 youngsters were sold at Van Doorn from Someren and J. Keun from Donderen. These two blood lines were crossbred and it created the basis of the pigeons in the Auke's cot. He's a member of the Stichting Marathon Noord three years now and hopes for more fanciers in the overnight flight in his region. "Because we are outsiders here", he says.



Wim van Dorrestein congratulated Auke with flowers from de Stichting Marathon Noord.

We were happy to be the guests of a sympathetic pigeon fancier; we wish him and his wife a lot of success, fun and health.

Heimen Huisman

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