

# ▶ Van Gent

## Marathon Noord explained

Marathon Noord is a competition for the fanciers in The Netherlands with a minimum distance to St Vincent of 1030km. Only the first two assigned on the entry list are competing for the fancier, so everyone has the same chances. There is Morning Release Championship (ZLU) with the races Barcelona, Marseille and Perpignan and a Mid Day Release Championship (NPO National) with the races St Vincent, Dax and Bergerac. Besides these two Championships we organize the Criterium of Aces, there you must have both assigned pigeons on each race, so you have to time six pigeons over three races on time. Then we also have the Supercup, that are the competitions Morning Release (ZLU) and the mid day releases (NPO National) together.

### Combine van Tilburg, Nieuw-Vennep 1st Morning Release Marathon Noord 2020

The 2020 season was a special one. Due to the Covid 19 virus the season began six weeks later than normal and was squeezed into less weeks. For this championship three races in three weeks, Barcelona, Perpignan and Narbonne. Racing pigeons twice on the Marathon Noord races was impossible. So you must have a great racing team to accomplish this. The race team must be in great shape starting these weeks and keep it like that. No room for mistakes!

The best in 2020 are located in Nieuw-Vennep, just south of the airport Schiphol Amsterdam. In the partnership are Richard (51 years old) and Wesley (22). They live in one of the sections of Nieuw-Vennep that was developed in the 70s. They have a back yard of about 14 meters deep, in there is the loft of about nine metres in total. So racers, youngsters and breeders are in there.

They have a house in a row of 20 and around them are also houses. So living in a suburb and racing on a top level with pigeons.

They started on the morning release (ZLU) races in 2016. Before that they raced the NPO midday release races. They changed small things to the loft and in 2018 they had a super year. In 2019 it was less, they started with a 30th National Pau and a 212th National Agen, but then the hens were looking more at each other than at the cocks. And the cocks did not perform at all after this.

So they raced the double Widowhood system with cocks and hens.

In 2020 they did change some fundamental things. They started racing on the the Natural system with 28 couples. They had 10

the training trailer that is driving to 60kms each weekend in Noordwijkerhout. Training the Natural racers at home is difficult and therefore they use this method. The racers only train in the late afternoon, because the



breeding pairs and they have 50 youngsters for their own. They do co-breeding with Ger van Riek from Hillegom, which they think is an advantage for both sides and newly add pigeons will be tested at multiple lofts.

In 2020 they darkened the racers until the end of April and the longest day was extended until the return of the last race Narbonne. The racers were trained on widowhood and after that they were mated all together in one go.

So the first time on the Natural system in 2020. What they also did was deworming at the end of April with pills from Belgica de Weerd. They read that other top fanciers did this, so they also thought, let us do this.

During the week, the racers are trained at 30km for at least three times. They also use

boys have a very early start in the morning to go to work.

They give treatments against Ornithoses or Trichomonaises when the birds train short, do not come home as they should be or when they are not showing great. When they come home from a Marathon race, they do get a pill against Trichomonaises.

The youngsters are getting the youngsters programme of the club. They are not darkened and they do the whole young bird programme. We heard this before for instance with Tim Hage in Woerden.

### The pigeons that won the Championship

They basketed three pigeons for Barcelona (1252km). The first assigned did it and this cock is called 'Blue Fighter', direct Vincent

Vork. This is a very good racer and was born in 2016.

On Rieux-Minervois (1010km) (Perpignan was moved due to the weather) seven pigeons were basketed, five came in time for the result list. Their second racer was their first assigned, the 16-374. This hen did not perform on Widowhood but on the Natural system she was enormously motivated. On Pau she won the 74th National and on this race again an early prize. This hen was bred from a cock from Dirk Pennings and a hen of Jan Scheurs from his foundation cock the 459.

For Narbonne (1021km) they basketed 21 racers and 11 timed in the prize list. Their second arrival was the second assigned and is the nest mate of the hen that was top on Rieux-Minervois, the 16-375. On Narbonne they timed seven pigeons in 50 minutes.

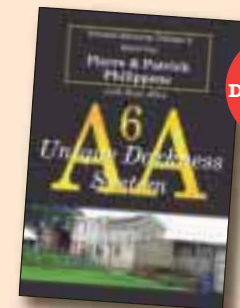
The strain of Van Tilburg is mainly Jan Scheurs combined with Dirk Pennings pigeons. There are also some birds from Vincent Vork and the Verweij-de Haan Combine. They look for pigeons locally and they do not get their pigeons from far away. Jan Scheurs ended his pigeon career last year and they bought his nest boxes and installed these in March 2020.

### Final thoughts

The guys say that they are focused and fanatic pigeon fanciers, which was confirmed by the mother of Wesley and wife of Richard. During the season a lot of time is put into the pigeons. They do a lot on feeling and guts, less on theory. They are not afraid to change system as you have noticed. Changing from total Widowhood to a Natural system was changing the way they were able to race the hens and cocks. Both sexes peaked enormously. With pigeon strains from their own region combined with a fully functioning loft. Why go somewhere far away to get pigeons when you can get them locally. This partnership is one we will see more of in the future. Winning this Championship is for a lot of fanciers a dream, for these two it is reality.

Arjan van Gent

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Van Tilburg 16-374.