

GLADWIN, JARVIS & FAMILY

**1st Open BICC AGEN INTERNATIONAL 2019.
(56th Open International against a field of 22,768 birds)**

1st OPEN BICC ALENCON 2015 against 4,634 birds

I first wrote about this excellent partnership when they won 1st Open BICC Alencon in 2015. Since that time they have won scores of club and Fed prizes and have appeared regularly on the results sheets of the BICC.

The 2019 season saw the partners go one better when their great Frans Zwols racing hen, now named 'Tip Top Tora', after flying a whole day in 90 degree heat, crossed the unforgiving English Channel as the light was fading on the night, to be timed at her Essex loft early on the second morning to win 1st Open BICC and 56th Open International beating more than 22,000 continental pigeons into the bargain.

What is even more remarkable about this International performance is the fact that only six pigeons were clocked on the day in mainland Europe out of an entry of 22,768 birds and they didn't have the English Channel to cross in ever fading light when their energy levels had bottomed out.

Here's what I wrote in that initial report on the partners following their Alencon win with the BICC in 2015:-

The 2015 BICC Alencon National attracted an entry of 4,634 birds for this 200+ mile race. The convoy was liberated by Chief convoyer Trevor Cracknell in excellent conditions at 7am on Saturday 17th May. Given the excellent flying conditions, the

pigeons made light of the task romping home with velocities in the low 1400's. Heading the list of timers was a cock racing to the Leigh on Sea lofts of Gladwin, Jarvis & Family. The partners have an excellent record at club, Fed and National level flying into Essex and so, I asked John Gladwin if he would answer a few questions about his time in the sport, his pigeons and methods. I should point out that John is the son of Pam and John Gladwin senior. As many will know, Pam has been a hard working scribe for the fancy press for many years now and John senior is an RPRC councillor and former Vice President of the RPRC."

THE BEGINNING

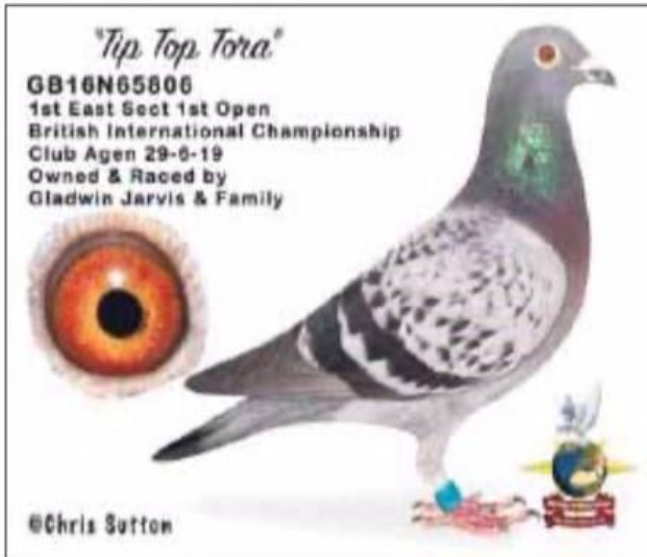
John was born into pigeon racing as his grandad and mum & dad have all been involved in pigeons. However it was at the age of 7 or 8 that he really started to take an interest in the day to day activities around the loft.

John was obviously influenced greatly by his family but at that time there were also some exceptional fanciers in the local club (Rayleigh). From a very early age John was encouraged to mark pigeons on a Friday and do the clocks on the Saturday. This meant that he learnt a lot very quickly from some great fanciers.

At the age of 21 John moved into his first house and straight away converted an old 6ft x 3ft garden shed into a loft by adding a sputnik trap and some YB perches. At the same time he also bought two 12ft x 8ft pigeon lofts from a club mate who had to pack in due to ill health. However, with the garden being so overgrown and trees needing to be removed before the lofts could be erected, he had to use the little shed to house his team of pigeons. Management of the birds was pretty simple with a form of Roundabout flown, in that he used to race both the hens and cocks but the hens were exercised and trained all week to one section with just poles in and on a race day they trapped to the cocks section. Young birds were raced to the perch and at that time they were raced on the Natural system although in the first couple of seasons they were on a form of Darkness. This was because the old birds were mated very



John & Theresa Gladwin proud owners of 1st Open BICC Agen International.



1st Open BICC 56th Open International Agen against 22,000+ birds.

early so that he had youngsters in the nest that were so old that he was just able to ring them. So with long nights and short days the young birds were in effect on a form of 'Natural' Darkness if you will.

John and the family have been at their present address since March/April 2008. He settled a few old birds and missed the first couple of races but still managed to win the second ever race at the new address with the broken birds and to a new loft.

The present old bird racing loft was bought when he moved to the new house, from in many peoples' opinion the best fancier in the UK, if not Europe – Mark Gilbert. Mark had won a number of Nationals and the first of his International wins to this loft so the theory was it had to be a good, well designed loft that



The wing of 'Tip Top Tora' 1st BICC Agen International.

allowed the birds to come into form. The loft is 76 foot long and 6 foot wide and up until 2014 this housed all of John's race birds, both old and young, but after deciding to race North Road and South Road in 2013 it became apparent that the teams for the two roads needed housing in different sections. Trying to get the birds ready for a race with different marking days and different distances was very hard, with some birds on a two or three-week race schedule and others going each week. So a new 24ft x 8ft young bird loft was bought from Parkhall lofts at Blackpool in 2014.

And so to the present day and in 2019 the partners started the old bird season with 60 old birds. 16 were ear marked for the long races, ie 464 miles+ events. Six hens were for the inland sprint events and 38 were aimed for the middle distance

Channel events in the UBI Combine, BICC, BBC and NFC races.

Around 90 y/bs were reared for their own personal use. In addition to the old bird and young bird lofts there is also a 60ft x15 foot stock loft with a corridor through the middle and sections each side and 24 foot stock loft which is split into two sections and these two stock lofts house the stock birds which are part of Formula 1 Lofts. The 60ft x15ft loft was added in 2016 just after the partners introduced Frans Zwols complete team of pigeons, this included all his race and stock birds and meant that 136 stock birds were added to the team overnight.

MANAGEMENT

The old bird race team are housed in sections fitted with gridded floors with a big gap underneath the grills for the droppings to fall into. The y/b's are kept on a deep litter as John believes that this helps them build up immunity to disease. Some of the old bird sections also have gridded floors in the nest boxes others don't and John has not noticed any difference in results either way. All the y/b's are on gridded box perches. The lofts are kept clean and dry but never spotless as he likes the birds to be exposed to a bit of dirt and germs etc, as it helps keep their immunity levels high and so it is easier to keep them healthy. When cleaning twice a day, every day, John always found the



OB section.

YBs would be ill after one or two races. However since not cleaning the YB floors from weaning until the YBs are moved to the old bird section each year he has found that the birds are much healthier.

At this point I'll let John explain the set up at Formula 1 Lofts:- "As already mentioned we have the stud (Formula 1 Lofts) side of things which means we have a lot more stock birds than most people would have or need. At the moment we have around 90 pairs of stock birds which is high, even for us, but as I said we bought all of Frans Zwols team and as some of the old originals are getting older we are also putting children of the very best to stock to keep the winning lines and find the new generation of super star breeders within this wonderful family of pigeons."

Old birds have been raced on Roundabout in 2019, from 2016 until 2019 John raced the birds on a 100% celibate system, having tried a few on this system for the first time in 2015 with great success. John does tend to pair a few up for the longer races as he believes sometimes hens especially on their first eggs of the season can perform very well and can also handle the three or four days in the basket better.

The stock birds are not paired on a particular date but tend to



John & Theresa Gladwin with Alan Armstrong 1st Open BICC Alencon.

required at the start of the season until they are flying well around home. Old birds are exercised twice a day, young birds tend to be once a day until YB racing is near and then they are allowed out twice a day or trained once and exercised at home once per day. In an ideal world John would like to give about 10/12 old bird training spins before the first race if the aim is to race them inland first. If they are going across the water for their first race then about 15 tosses would normally be ideal. Having said that, in 2019 the birds had very little road work and they have still raced well. There are no hard and fast rules regarding the training regime as John believes that each week, and certainly each year is different, and you need to be able to adapt and amend the system in line with the birds' needs.

The training schedule employed here varies with the distance that the birds are asked to compete from. When aiming to do well sprinting on

be mated when the partners have the time and it looks like there will be a few nice days of weather. The race birds are rarely bred from for their own use so are usually mated in line with stock birds to act as feeders and normally take the second round of eggs from some of the main stock pairs.

With a developing interest in International racing, John made the decision to mate the prospective International candidates in late March/April to try and delay form and the moult until as late as possible in the season.

PRE RACE PREPARATION

The birds are got fit at home by loft flying twice a day in the early season and once deemed to be fit enough are given a few training spins. For 2019, due to a combination of events the birds were trained a lot less than normal.

Old birds are left to fly as they please but YBs are flagged if

the south road, John used to take them twice a day to five miles and no loft flying after the first race. For the north road some of the best years were enjoyed when the birds were only trained to about 12-15 mile before the first race and no training thereafter.

For the middle/long distance south road birds John likes to give them a number of tosses up to 40 miles before the first race and then the channel races and in the past he would also train them during their off week or raced inland on the Saturday in between channel races. However, in 2019 the birds had hardly any training and the distance birds only had one training toss after the first inland race.

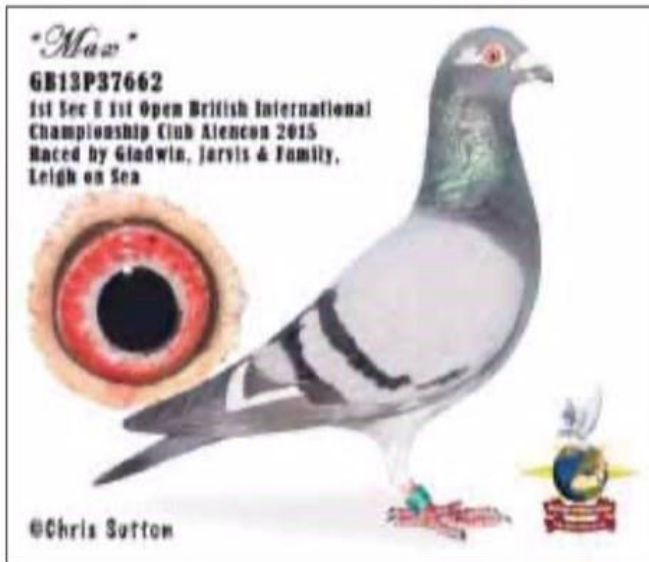
On the other hand, John likes to train the YBs throughout the season with them having two or three tosses each week. He likes the young birds to have as much work as he can get into them before the first race. Unfortunately, due to time and work



'Amour' top Zwols breeder at Formula 1 Lofts.



'Dreamy' one of the top stock hens at Formula 1 Lofts.



'Max' 1st BICC Alencon for Gladwin, Jarvis & Family.

constraints, this will normally only mean 10/12 training spins starting at five mile and going up to about 35 miles.

All YBs go on the Dark system as John firmly believes that you cannot win races throughout the young bird programme these days unless the youngsters are on dark or light system. He has yet to see any ill effects for them as yearlings, in fact he has won with yearlings right through to 512 miles that were on Darkness as young birds.

SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR TARGET RACES

When I asked John if there was any specific training programme set out for specific National/International races this was reply:-

"No, not really, like all forms of racing the birds have to be of high quality, fit and healthy if you want to succeed and you need



YB loft with deep litter.

a bit of luck that the pigeons hit top form at the right time for the main races. This we try and bring on at the right time for the birds desired races by the pairing date, training/racing programme running up to the main races. The one thing I think differs from inland racing compared to National/channel racing is the rest between races required for the birds to hit top form. I think inland birds need to go week in week out but when birds are flying the Channel they seem to need more of a rest between races in order to hit top form."

FEEDING

All birds are fed in the hopper on the floors, when John is able. He likes to feed by eye and watch what the birds need, but due to work commitments, John's wife Theresa gives them the food so he has to leave it in a pot for her for each section each day, as he jokingly said "If I left Theresa in charge of the food, I would have a team of Turkeys to race."

Many different mixes have been used over the years but John likes Bamfords for breeding and Versele Laga for racing. The base feed this year has been Superstar and



View of garden with OB and YB lofts.

The Outstanding Frans Zwols of

Formula One Lofts

Leigh on Sea

Grandad's Dream

1st Club, 1st Fed.
1st Combine Thurso, 512 miles;
2nd Club, 30th Fed, 40th Amal
Raton, 4,000+ birds;
4th Club, 18th Fed, 33rd
Combine
+ more prizes

Max

1st Section, 1st Open B.I.C.C
Abercon, 4,637 birds;
35th Sect, 112th Open
B.I.C.C Guernsey
114th Sect, 167th Open
B.I.C.C Tours

Gaynor's Gift

1st Club, 1st Fed,
1st Essex & Kent Amal
Wetherby 3/5/14 - 5,505 birds
Bred by Formula One Lofts
Raced by
Mr & Mrs Ashenden

Amal Cock

Amal Cock (Fed results achieved in the East London Fed) :
1st Club Wetherby, 177 miles, 1st Fed;
1st Club Ripon, 191 miles, 1st Fed (by 7 minutes);
2nd Club Markey Raton, 129 miles; 10th Fed;
3rd Club Howark, 133 miles, 2nd Fed;
1st Amal Wetherby, 4,750 birds;
4th Amal Ripon, 4,475 birds (against the wind)
Plus many more prizes in Club & Fed

EAST LONDON BIRD OF THE YEAR 2015

Photos & Montage Design by JANE STONE 01773 802441

Gerry Plus from Versele Laga for all races with fat mix added in run up to the longer races.

BLOODLINES

I'll let John outline the bloodlines currently at use in the loft and which have given the partners so much success.

"At Formula 1 Lofts around 90% of our pigeons are Frans Zwols which we first introduced in 2010/2011 before buying out Frans in late 2015 when he retired from the sport. In addition, we have a few exceptionally well bred birds from some of the best fanciers and pigeons in Europe. The Frans Zwols are by far the best family of pigeons I have ever had and are winning out of turn in all races in all parts of the UK and far beyond North and South road both long and short distances at National, Combine and Amalgamation level – even in One Loft races. They really are a wonderful all round family of pigeons.

We inbreed with some especially for the stock lofts and some we have found crossing the different lines of the Zwols works very well, however when crossed into another family this can also produce devastating results. As the Frans Zwols work very well crossed as they are a family built around four or five pigeons."

"I first encountered the Zwols strain when I visited the top Welsh National winning loft of Dai Davies and Kim Coombs a couple of years back and this is what I wrote about them then:- The Zwols pigeons were all of a type, just on medium sized with good muscle development but certainly not "muscle bound" as in many sprint pigeons. In fact they handled more like middle distance 350)500 milers and I feel sure that they will do 500 miles on the day in good conditions." GW

FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN THE SPORT

"I am very lucky that I have some great friends and family in the sport or interested enough to help out when required, people like my wife (Theresa) who these days does more than I do with the birds and is always running about for me. My partner in Formula 1 Lofts, John Cowlin, my mum & dad and even my brother-in-law who does not race pigeons, but has been known to take pigeons training and pick up lost birds for me. He has also been known to build bases for lofts and was a big help when the Thames brought our new transporter even taking the



'D'Artagnan'



YB loft.



YB section.

lorry back and forth to Germany at short notice. I also have some great friends all over the UK, Europe and America etc which I am lucky to call friends. I am also very lucky to be in one if not the best clubs in the country Hullbridge which has great members in both terms of what they have won and in terms of being special people and great fun who all support encourage and inspire each other to push on and achieve better and better results."

PERFORMANCES

Here's what John had to say on this subject:-

"I have been lucky enough over the years to have had quite a few good performances, some that spring to mind for different



John holding 'Tip Top Tora'.

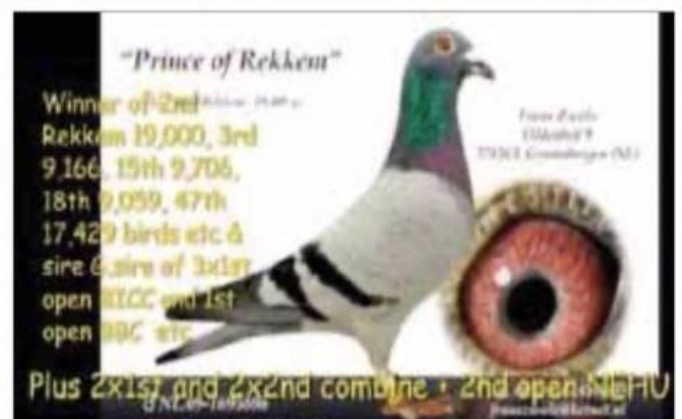
reasons being 1st Combine Thurso 512 miles with 'Grandads Dream', as the name suggests this was my grandads dream so this win meant a lot to me. First Open BICC Alencon in 2015, was another with our good cock 'Max', 1st Open BBC YB National in 2018 as my wife Theresa predicted he would come and I did not really take any notice, yet he won the race by a long way. Another top result, although we did not manage a win but I think was a great team performance was from Ripon YB in the North Road Combine in 2013 when we took 2nd, 3rd, 4th,

5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 19th & 21st, these 13 birds were clocked over a 10 minute period with 105 members sending 1,361 birds flying 197 miles. The first birds velocity was 1208ypm. In total we had 21 birds in the top 100 of the result (I think this was one of my best results). We also won 1st Open NFC Gold Ring. Then of course this season winning 1st National Agen and 56th Open International was a real dream result and one that will stay in the memory for a very long time I think.

"I have been lucky enough to own, race and breed some world class pigeons. Especially since we brought Frans Zwols life times work, as these included such iconic pigeons as 'Tip Top Junior', 'D'Artagian' who is responsible for many top pigeons including 'Max' and 'Grandads Dream' among many other top winners including 1st Combine Falaise. The 'Queen' and 'Prince of Rekkem' two massive pigeons in the Frans Zwols strain. The 'Prince' since coming to us is responsible for 2x1st BICC National wins and 1st Open BBC National, when paired to 'Dreamy'. I should also mention 'My Little Darling' who was such a good inland pigeon, winning many races for me and lots and lots of pool money before being retired to stock after the 2018 season."

MEDICATION & SUPPLEMENTS

There is no specific medication programme here. The birds are only treated if a Vet says there is something wrong. The aim over the last few years has been to treat as little as possible.



'Prince of Rekkem' top racer for Frans Zwols and now a top stock cock at Formula 1 Lofts.



The raing lofts.

VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT

"I think the sport needs to evolve with the times. ETS was a big step in the right direction but I think a major overhaul is required with the RPRA taking the lead. Parcels of land should be bought up and down the country and these should be the only official lib sites that can be used. This will help stop clashing as lib sites will be well spaced out and in contact with each other. Long term it will be an investment as parcels of land have a habit of becoming building plots over time.

I also think only two organisations should be allowed in each area for North Road and South Road racing. These should still go together on the same lorry(s) to the race points but have a league system in which the best flyers from league 2 go up to league 1 and the bottom of league 1 go down to league 2. This should have two effects

Vitamins and other supplements are only given if the birds have been treated for something. After a hard race or on very warm days they get electrolytes in the water on return from the race. During the winter John always treats with Parastop for 14 days and then uses cider vinegar or Naturaline in the water three or four times a week. For the longer races more fats are added to the mix along with some oils on the food from time to time.

However, John does like to use Matrix. He thinks that it is a great product which gives the birds all the grit and minerals they need in one go without having loads of little pots around the lofts. He is a great believer these days, having tried most supplements, that most have little or no positive effect on the birds performance, beyond grit, minerals, vitamins, cider vinegar, electrolytes and oils.

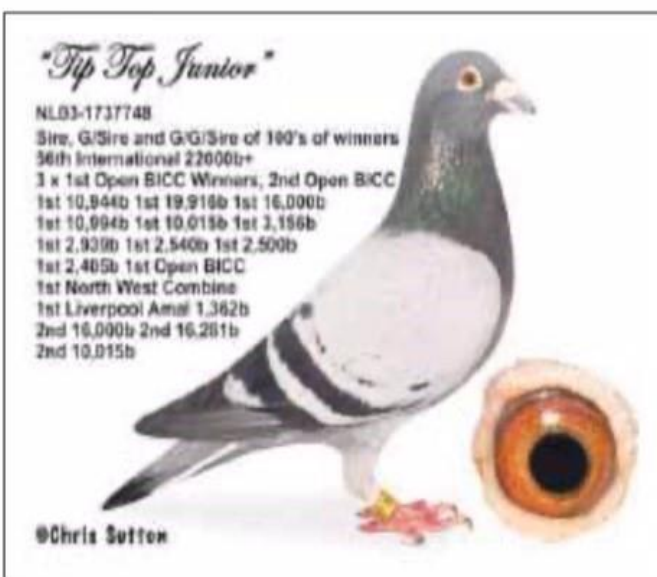
in that it will hopefully get people to support more races in the Feds as they want to stay in or move up a league and will give everyone a chance to compete at their own or a similar level each week. As pigeon racing is about the only sport when from race one a novice has to compete against the very best. You could not see a new player at darts having to compete against Phil Taylor or a new snooker player having to play Ronnie O'Sullivan each week. Any results should then state which league you were in to give more transparency as to what competition level the fancier is flying against."

THE IDEAL PIGEON

John has learned over the years that winners come in all shapes and sizes so he is never put off by the look or feel of a pigeon. The basket is always the decider either as a racer itself or how its children race if it is a stock bird. In fact he has often found that the more ugly or bad handling birds often seem to make the better pigeons and the nice ones are often the first lost. This was most noticeable when he brought the first draft of Frans Zwols, 23 of the 24 were pure class in every way, the other one left a lot to be desired and John was far from convinced about it. It was very small and grunted all the way home from Holland, driving him nuts on the way home. After much deliberation John decided to give it a chance and it has now become known as 'Tip Top 076' and has bred at least 30x1st including 2nd and 4th Open BICC, 2nd Combine, 2nd Section NFC and 'The A Ring Cock' winner of the 1st Section 1st Open NFC Gold Ring race etc.

There you have it then, "straight from the horse's mouth" so to speak, from a fancier who has succeeded at the highest level on both the North Road and South Road in sprint, middle distance and long distance races – the complete fancier.

My thanks once again to Chris Sutton for the pigeon portraits that accompany this article.



'Tip Top Junior' Champion Frans Zwols stock cock for the Gladwins.

Gareth Watkins