

Racing Pigeon Post

Backyard Marathon Challenge,

The Witnessing of The End Goal

The culmination of my first years fascination with the greatest race in the sport happened yesterday. To be at the liberation for the Barcelona International was everything I expected and more in a strange way. Just thinking that all these long distance marvels I had been reading about for the last 18 months had birds in those transporters was a uniquely satisfying feeling.





Here I was, little old me from Leicester, about to witness the start of the most talked about race in the world. People I know like Mick Lovell, Nic Harvey, Frank Kay, Mike Link; they all had pigeons in the baskets and crates just waiting to wing their way back, traversing the Pyrenees on their long, arduous journey back to the UK. The brave souls in Ireland that had sent, I thought about them, their birds, the feeling they would get if and when one landed on the loft in Dublin at some point in the next few days!

Then it hit me, this is what I was aiming for, this is where I want to be. I want 5, 10, 15 birds in those baskets in 2 or 3 years. It's a long road but it's already started, I will highlight where I am at with it in a moment or two.

The liberation site was a little disappointing to be honest, a car park-esque space in an industrial area to the North of Barcelona, thankfully Ovidio my guide had gotten me security clearance and I am indebted to him for helping me witness this event. Initially I felt a little underwhelmed, hoping for a liberation on the beach or at least on a site which complemented this most addictive city, but as time eased towards the liberation those thoughts left my mind and I was concentrating on the bigger picture, this was the Barcelona International.



With Ovidio my guide

We were ushered away from the vehicles as the strings started to be cut, preparing for a 9.30am liberation. Now the excitement was gathering amongst the small crowd who were allowed to attend the liberation. My initial plan was to film the liberation but Ovidio was filming it and I didn't want to miss this sight for the world so I just stood and watched, the horn sounded.







The convoyers and helpers started the release of the birds that had been their companions on the trip down to the city for the last 5 days. The sight was incredible, 25,000 pigeons spiralled up and out of the vehicles, it was like a tornado had started with the birds circling up and up until all of them had left the crates they had called home for nearly a week. The feeling was very surreal, much slower than I expected and strangely calm, no big crescendo at all. Once the birds had gathered into one large group they headed straight away from the sea, over or around the buildings, depending where in the flock they were, situated away from the beach area and then.....they were gone.... 25,000 birds out of sight in less than 2 minutes, you have to see it to believe it.

[Ovidio's Film](#) and in [Slow Motion](#)

BACK HOME

A good friend of mine said witnessing the liberation would inspire me and drive me on to succeed, damn he was right, he couldn't have been more right. As much as I have been excited by the Tarbes race and for a brief moment I considered changing all focus and having a real crack at that race instead, the sight I witnessed on Friday morning made my mind up.....it's Barcelona or bust!

The route to Barcelona really started this season with the compiling of a young bird team where hopefully 3 or 4 or 5 will make it to the Barcelona starting gate in the future. I feel getting the birds to the starting line is as big an achievement as getting one from the race. They must undergo intense preparation, being tested every step of the way and my practice season with 11 unraced yearlings started this year. After 5 or 6 tosses down to 66 miles I was left with 6 yearlings, on May 8th they were basketed for BBC Carentan, the first race of their lives. I am well aware that very few people, if anybody, expected me to get anything so to have 2 on the day and one later in the week certainly lifted my spirits and I was overjoyed! That was them done for the season and they will go back to the Nationals next season, all being well, to see if we can push them on to some further distances.

Following Carentan it was time to start concentrating on the young birds with the trials and tribulations that they bring, I have had my fair share of hiccups as we all do with babies but things now seem to be settling down and the training has started. I am now down to about 30 miles with them and if I can get a couple of races into them I will be more than happy to put them away for next season when the real work starts with what should be a full yearling team!

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