

The Day I Almost Ran Out of Words

by

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It has been a while since I last wrote. The fact of the matter is that I am still suffering my bout with writer's block, and lately it seems like it is getting worse. I was asked to write something at work the other day, and what should have taken me 15 minutes ended up taking well over an hour to complete. I cannot begin to tell you how frustrating this can be.

I wanted to take this chance to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I also want to remind each of you how important this time of year is to the family, and how important it is that we remember to be a part of this wonderful time of year. While I realize that pigeon racing is a fulltime job, it still shouldn't come before your family, yet, unfortunately, it often does. Therefore, when this time of year rolls around, it is important to put the pigeons aside take advantage of this time with your family.

I am probably thinking more about family this year because my oldest son, Nick, is now a senior in high school and rapidly nearing college age. It seems that I blinked and he grew up! Although he is only 16 years old, at 6'1" and a trim 215 pounds, he is no longer a boy. This year, he has taken up wrestling in high school, and considering his lack of experience, he has still managed a 14-4 record in varsity matches. Although wrestling shares many commonalities with Jiu-Jitsu, it is still a very different sport and one that I have never totally understood. Over the last several months, Nick has been through many long hours of training and traveling to and from tournaments, and he has done so without complaining or asking for any help from me.

Nick is not the first or the last person to do something like this, and I am not trying to make this sound like a superhuman effort; however, it is still a worthy effort, none-the-less. As parents, we like to think we know what we are doing, and each of us has an idea of how we would like this child raising experiment to turn out, but, in the end, it is still largely up to them. For Nick, this might be the first time in his life where it have been totally up to him, and, as he is handling the situation quite nicely, it makes me think that it may be time to step back and start letting him handle other things as well. Enjoy your children while they are children because they seem to grow up rather quickly!

Now back to pigeons! As many of you probably know, I recently sold all of the Hofkens to a friend and future student. As my Hofkens were an excellent family, selling them was a very difficult thing to do! At the same time, it gives them a chance to benefit someone

else, and it made room in my loft for some outcrosses that I believe will better fit my Horemans family. I am making this change because from the start, I had some serious misgivings about a two family system, and over the last year I have conducted several experiments that I think support my concerns. Still I am pleased that I had the opportunity to start with two families, as it gave me a great opportunity to learn some things that I think will become very important down the road! I am sure that we will take more about it in the near future.

I really can't believe that it is already time to mate the pigeons for the earlier money races in 2007. Still, I am quite excited to do so, because I am on a quest. I have focused my interests on the multi-race average speed money races, and I am extremely pleased with the preliminary results of this new endeavor. While average speed doesn't seem like a new concept, it is usually applied to loft results and not the results of individual pigeons. However, when the average is based on the individual pigeon, one soon finds out that very few pigeons have any consistency from race to race. Pigeons that are first one week are often last the next and vice versa. It is my view that this method of calculation could save the sport in that it virtually eliminates any advantage loft location or the boost that certain medications might provide.

It is my understanding the both the Germans and the Taiwanese have adopted this system, and ultimately, I can see where it might lead to better pigeons and far fewer losses. However, initially there would be some growing pains, because initially, homing instinct would become more important than speed. However, once the better homing pigeons were identified, the speed would again start to increase but with homing instinct as a much larger component of that speed. With better homing instinct as a component of speed, losses would very likely be dramatically reduced.

From a personal standpoint, I am excited to say that 2007 has the potential to be a very enjoyable year for me. First, I am very excited to get going in both my hybrid and inbreeding programs. With the help of Dave Hunsicker, I now have several new directions to explore. During my last several articles, I wrote a significant amount about my "Verbart 46" hen, which I obtained from Ed Lorenz but was originally bred by Dave. Recently, Dave was nice enough to let me use one of his last remaining "Verbart 46" cocks, and fortunately, the pigeon lines up nicely with the "Verbart 46" hen. However, I will have to wait until 2008 to see how these pigeons work with the Horemans. Dave has been an important figure in the American sport for many years, and I can't thank him enough for his recent help.

Also, it appears that I will be speaking at the Texas Center Convention in July 2007. The convention will be held in Louisiana, so it ought to be nice and humid. Apparently they are going to schedule a fair amount of time for me to speak, so I am already thinking about the changes that I intend to make to my presentation. If you can make it, I would enjoy seeing you there. It should be lots of fun.

Also, it now strongly appears that I will be making a return trip to Denmark in October of 2007. This time around, I am going to devote the full three weeks to Denmark itself,

because on the last trip, all of the traveling around really got to me. After a very compressed schedule with numerous speeches and grading sessions, that often started very early in the morning and didn't finish up until well after midnight, I will confess to being exhausted by the time I got home.

There was one stretch in there where Steven van Breemen and I got a total of about 5 hours of sleep in a three day period. Looking back on the pictures, you can see the exhaustion in our faces. There was one picture of Eddy Noel, his partner, Steven and I where we are standing outside of the loft, and we look half dead, and that was on the morning of the second of the three days. I then graded over 500 pigeons until 7:00 p.m. that night, and I lectured until 1:00 a.m. We didn't get to bed until 3:00 a.m., and then it was up at 6:00 to drive to back to Holland for a noon grading of another 500 pigeons.

I am really looking forward to my trip to Denmark, as I will get to see many of the friends that I made while I was there. It looks like I will be giving a number of seminars on the two islands of Funen and Zealand, and the mainland peninsula of Jutland, and, this time, it also looks like I will be doing a number of half day loft visits to grade pigeons. I am really looking forward to staying in the little Inn near Kalundborg, which is in the northeast corner of Denmark. I really had an enjoyable stay there the last time. It was very peaceful to sit and have breakfast while looking out over the little fishing village on the edge of the bay.

As several people have been hinting that I am not writing enough articles lately, let me say that I really hope that it becomes easier to write again in the near future, and, let me say that when it does, I will get back to writing more often. I have heard that if you write nothing for three months, this affliction sometimes passes; however, between work and email, there is simply no way that is going to happen.

In closing, I would once again like to thank everyone for their support over the course of the year, and I hope to write again soon.

Until Next Time!

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