



From left to right:
Bleske 167
Sjaantje 220
Toosje 695

HS Twister (Lightning RF x Stadel)

Production proof 169 daughters in 131 herds
(DairyCo breeding+, Interbull August 2008)

kg milk	% fat	% prot.	kg fat	kg prot.	PIN	PLI
+58	-0.03	+0.06	-0.10	+6.5	£9	£102
Longevity:		641 (exceptional)				
SCC:		-11 (exceptional)				
Calving ease:		101 (average)				
Temperament:		104 (very good)				
Milking speed:		98 (average)				
Type Merit:		+1.94				

Twister: a red-and-white winner

His breeder: "I originally had black-and-white cows, but I like to try new things"

From an originally black-and-white family of cows, Piet and Margaret Hoek-Spaans have bred one of the most promising red-and-white sires of the latest bull proof run. HS Twister is a descendent of the Geertje family, proven to produce no-nonsense cows under difficult conditions.

"A few years ago I said that what I'd really like to do is breed a sire for AI. But people told me my cow families weren't special enough." Dutch producer and breeder Piet Hoek-Spaans can laugh about this anecdote now though, because his wish came true after the latest bull proof run.

His bull HS Twister is one of the most promising newcomers in red-and-white circles, thanks to a pedigree that never fails.

This son of Lightning comes from the Geertje family of cows, which the Hoek-Spaans family have had at home since 1989, when they bought the Den K Kirkboy daughter Geertje 24.

The first generations from the Geertje family at their farm in Oudendijk, North Holland, were black-and-white cows, but through Mapel-Wood Ideal daughter Geertje 26, Poos Best Red brought red-and-white genes into the family.

"I like to try new things," says Piet. "We

originally had black-and-white cows, but when I joined the business we also had Montbéliarde, Brown Swiss, Jersey and Shorthorn. We've stopped using them, though. During the past four years we've only used red-and-white or red-factor sires. I get the feeling that the better bulls have been on the red-and-white sire card recently."

Dream origin

"A few years ago, for the red-and-white breeding programme, we were mainly visiting businesses in the south and east of The Netherlands," is how Holland Genetics' Henk Verheij starts his story about HS Twister. "At present, in our search, we're looking for good red-and-white sire mothers everywhere – even in the north of Holland."

Henk came across Geertje 40's trail. "What made her stand out was her mother Geertje 32, as well as first-class production for a Spektrum daughter, she scored so

well with 86 points," he says. "Geertje 32 was a medium-sized cow who was very strong in type. Spektrum is not known as a leg improver, but with Geertje 32, it was all correct. That was a cow which, as a commercial breeder, you'd like to have a whole barn full of – no problems at all."

Piet, who milks 140 cows with help from his wife Margaret, praises the Spektrum daughter too. "She has had eight lactations here, for which nine inseminations were required. That's a good family trait – they're always so fertile."

It was agreed that the Stadel yearling Geertje 40 would be inseminated with Labelle son Lightning, and when the sire calf was born – HS Thunder, later renamed HS Twister – Henk took the calf to Holland Genetics.

"Geertje 40 was perfect, but didn't shine out as a fresh heifer," Henk remembers. "Her production started off as normal, and it was not by any means self-evident that Twister would be used as an AI sire."

Geertje 40 was given 86 points, and completed a first 322-day lactation of 8,047kg of milk with +4.09% of fat and +3.61% of protein. "Twister was an early Lightning son from a Stadel, and because of his dream origins, we used him

anyway. Looking back, you can see that Twister has the milk and legs of Lightning and the frames and udders from Stadel."

Polled sires

At the Hoek-Spaans' farm, five of Twister's daughters make the trip to one of two milking robots each day.

"They do that willingly, they don't take much time and they're in good condition," says Piet.

The herd has been milked by the robots for seven years now and is also fed by an automatic feeding system. "The cows are looked after well," Henk says, "but they're not given it on a plate. They have to do well for themselves. That gave me even more faith in the cow family. And that's one of the reasons why we also

have a Canvas heifer out of Geertje 40 under an AI contract now."

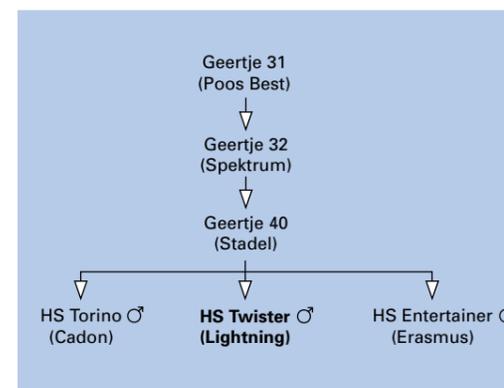
Geertje 40, Twister's mother, is now in her fifth lactation and still runs with the herd. Her frame is nice, certainly, but her legs are sickle shaped. "That comes from her grandfather, Spektrum, but she still walks well with good locomotion," says Piet.

He's still open to trying new things. So he's not only testing the automatic feeding system, but also trying different breeds. He's now inseminated more than 40 cows with polled sires Aggravation Lawn Boy and his half-brother Aggravation Ducky.

"Geertje 40 is pregnant by Lawn Boy," Piet says. "Using polled sires means I have animals in the stall no-one else has straight away. Then AI organisations might be interested too."

The AI interest in Geertje 40 is not limited to Twister, however. Her son by Erasmus, HS Entertainer is at AI Samen, and there is also interest in her two-year-old Cadon son HS Torino. Piet is using him as a sire for natural service at the moment. Full of pride, Piet shows the powerful, strongly built Torino. "It would be nice if he had a chance too. But it's nice to try things out."

Jaap van der Knaap



Cows built to last

"Twister's daughters are long cows, well balanced, with a nice clean rump angle," says Henk. "They may be a bit on the large side for some producers, but as well as a lot of dairy strength, they also have enough width. You can also see from their satisfactory condition that they can go easily into production."

"The udders are nicely shaped, even if the rear udders are sometimes rather high. We are now using Twister as a sire of sons."

Twister finds himself at the top of the red Holstein type rankings. The first four bulls in his sire stack have excellent daughter fertility figures. Couple this with low somatic cell counts, good milking speed and temperament and you have the reason for his exceptionally high longevity score.

Twister breeds tall, deep bodied cows with good body condition and wide front ends, tremendous dairy strength and great udders and feet and legs. Twister is an ideal bull to use on daughters on Kian, Beautiful, Jerom, Pericles, Classic and Canvas. He is available from Avoncroft priced at £17 per straw of conventional semen and SiryX sexed semen is also available priced at £34 per straw.