

Report on “Tocht der Tochten”; a unique Blokart raid along the Dutch coast

By Tjeerd and Rosemarijne Bouma & Johan and Amber Das

This is the story of a 1day BLOKART raid from Hoek van Holland (entrance harbor of Rotterdam) to Den Helder (most northern place along the Dutch coast) along the Dutch coast over more than 100 kms. After enjoying several championships throughout Europe and the great experience of the Mongolian raid, this Dutch coastal raid has given us again a new perspective on the incredible possibilities a BLOKART offers, as long as you use your imagination. But in the end it always comes down to the same idea:

Blokarting is having FUN with FRIENDS

The name of the raid is a jokingly reference to the famous 200 km long Dutch skating trip “De Elf Steden Tocht (Eleven Cities Skating Tour)” that runs along 11 cities in the province in Friesland. This trip is only skated a few times per century (it requires substantial frost period to get all channels frozen) and is regarded as the most demanding skating trip in the Netherlands.

The BLOKART-raid was organized by Richard and Sandra, the people behind www.blokartclub.nl.



They took a big effort in organizing this trip, as it can only be done provided that (1) the low tide falls on the middle of the day, (2) there is enough westerly winds to be able to BLOKART more than 100 km over beaches of variable quality, and (3) if there is sufficient logistic support to transport people and BLOKARTs to pass the places where the beach is cut through by channels (i.e., harbor of Scheveningen and the North Sea

channel towards the harbor of Amsterdam). Richard and Sandra advertised the raid on [the European BLOKART-forum](#) to offer the possibility to join in to everybody that is interested, and arranged a bus and truck (the latter with help of Peter Verbeek) to transport all enthusiasts with their BLOKART gear.

Based on the tide, Richard and Sandra reserved a number of potentially suitable days for the raid. Two days before the date, they would check the weather forecast and e-mail around if the trip was on or to be cancelled. After 1 cancellation in 2007, all things were perfect for the 12th of January 2008. This was however a difficult call, as Thursday morning the wind was forecasted to turn north, which would make this Northerly trip impossible. In the evening though all forecasts had been changed to a strong steady westerly wind, so that the raid was definitely on!!!

[Tjeerd] Friday the 11th, after a busy day at work, I picked up my daughter Rosemarijne (10 years of age), BLOKART with shadow, a 3 m² and 4 m² sail and two large bags with plenty of dry clothes, and set-off from my city Goes to Ede (near Arnhem), where we would spend the night with our dear friends the Das Family. Together with Johan and Amber (10 days older than Rosemarijne, and very close friends), Rosemarijne and me would depart around 6.45 AM ☺ to meet the other participants around 7.15 in Utrecht. The idea of having a bus-trip from Utrecht to Hoek van Holland alone was enough to make both our daughters excited about this adventure. Getting all 31 BLOKARTs, sails, 2 shadows, plus clothing materials of the 33 participants into the luggage compartment of the touring bus required some effort ... In the bus we were surprised by an excellent lunch package, home prepared by Sandra and her family.

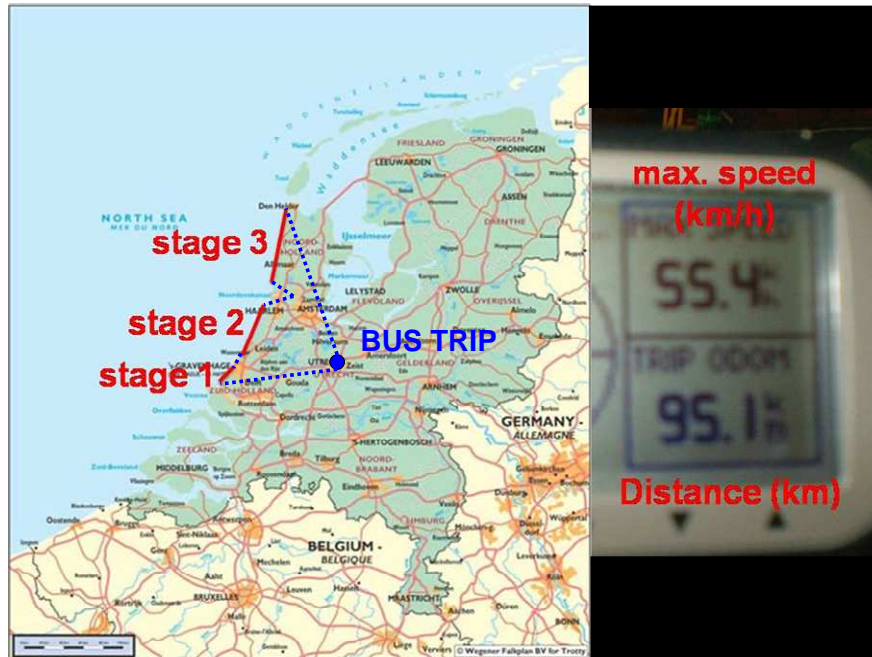
When we arrived in Hoek van Holland, the weather was windy ☺ and chilly. During setting-up, we even encountered a small hail storm. We were lucky that the police was on action for a better pay, so that the passing policeman didn't bill us nor prevented the start of the raid. At the beach we also met the classic Mercedes UNIMOG truck, which would follow us on the beach during the raid. Yes, one of those other perfect arrangements made for this trip!

Setting the Blokart up proved a bit more difficult than anticipated:

[Tjeerd] "First we needed to get our daughters water and cold proved, which a job that requires attention to the details is. After mounting both our BLOKARTs with shadow, I went to look for the 4 m² sail. Nowhere to be found! Even after looking underneath each of the 31 BLOKART bags in the luggage compartment of the touring bus I still couldn't find it. Found my 3 m² in the bus, but again no 4 m². Did I loose it in the hectic packing of the bus in Utrecht ??? Where could it be ??? Suddenly Johan comes up if we shouldn't finalize my BLOKART by putting up the sail. He had put the bag on my car about 20 minutes ago ☺. So a few minutes later, we are just in time for the group picture, and the start of the trip."

The first part of the trip went excellent: nice sturdy beach floor (we only got stuck once but were quickly restarted by help of Lieven), good wind, so speeds up to 55 km/h with the daughters in the shadow. We continued all the way from Hoek van Holland to Scheveningen harbor. There we were greeted by the chauffeurs of the touring car and an

additional truck that was going to transport our BLOKARTs so that we didn't have to take it apart every time. As soon as all participants had arrived (a few people had fallen behind after getting stuck in a softer part of the beach), sail from the BLOKARTs, loading the BLOKARTs in the truck, people in the bus, and up to the other side of the harbor.



This bus intermezzo was great, as it allowed us to provide Amber with a set of dry clothes. Some waters had been able to pass Ambers protective sailing suit. Rosemarijne was still dry and warm, except for her hands, as she didn't have neoprene gloves causing her to suffer in soaking wet normal gloves. After the girls had warmed up again, they decided to continue the raid ☺. We are lucky to have two tough girls!

On the North side of Scheveningen harbor we unloaded the bus and truck and it took only a few minutes before we were ready to depart again, and this second part of the raid went from Scheveningen to IJmuiden. The start at Scheveningen was great, again after having had some positive attention by the local police. Passing the famous old Kurhaus, Blokarting underneath the touristy pier of Scheveningen, we draw quite a bit of attention from the tourists that are always around that place. They saw a long line of colorful BLOKARTs coming by, and were surprised by the 2-person versions of us and our daughters!

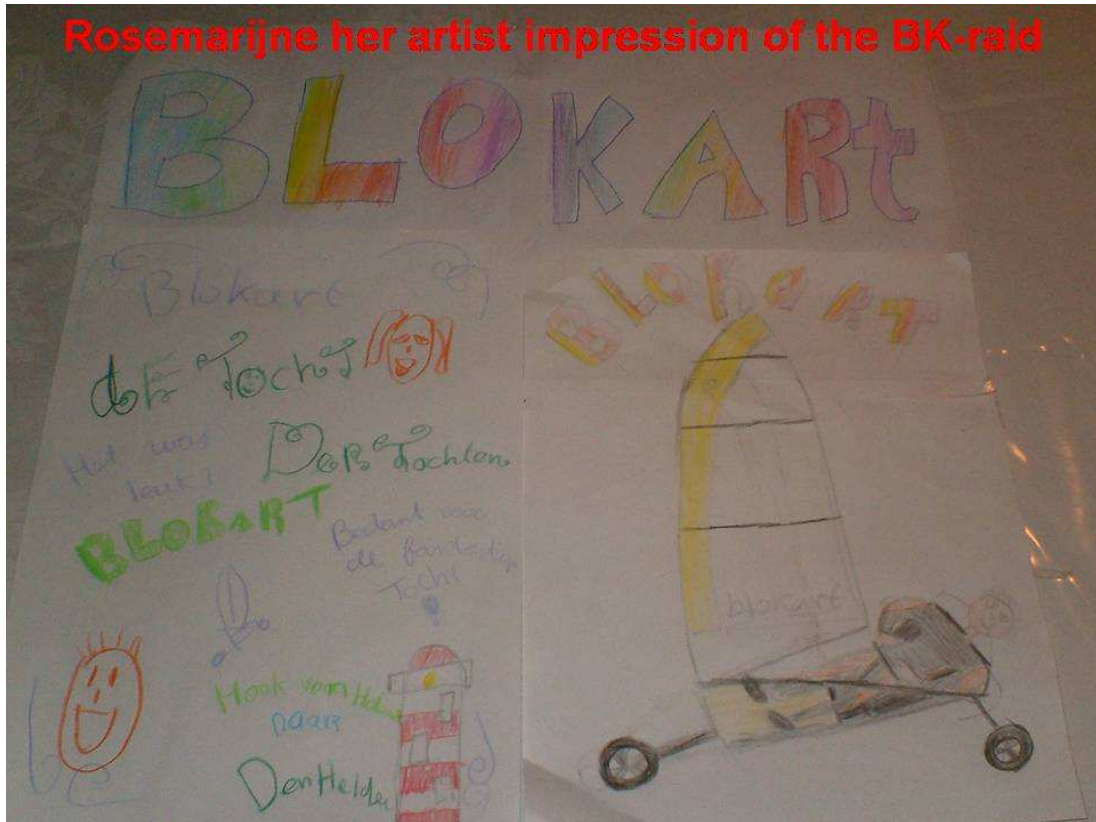
[Tjeerd] "As good as the start was, as difficult it became for me further on. The wind had diminished slightly in strength, and we got stuck in the softer parts of the beach over and over and over again, falling behind the group. The reason for this falling behind was threefold: I went in many occasions to high onto the beach, in order to try to avoid the deeper wet spots to keep Rosemarijne as warm and dry as possible (she hates Blokarting through water, since I gave her once an accidental cold shower without providing her by proper sailing gear), the shadow does notably slow down the BLOKART when riding on a slightly softer underground, I still have to improve on my BLOKART skills by going more often for a ride (hope Ingrid reads the web report ;-).

It was thanks to the GREAT help of Lieven Marques, who returned several times to rescue us that we were able to catch up with the group. Lieven advised us to drive more closely to the water line. Fortunately, Rosemarijne agreed that going for a wet route was better than being stuck all the time. He also gave me some very useful tips about passing the pools of water. The only time his advice caused some problems was in the area where the water front was lined with fisherman. I know that I drove over a basket with fish (I stopped to put it straight) but I'm not aware of having caught a fishing line, as Lieven later claimed I did. Thanks to Lieven his advice, Rosemarijne and I managed to catch up with the group again. Driving along the lower water line did however get Rosemarijne and me soaked till our underpants, as was also the case for Johan and Amber. So when we arrived in IJmuiden (which happened to be in the middle of a beach sail competition), both girls were cold, cold and very cold. Luckily a hot chocolate, some food and dry clothing helped out. The entire luggage we had taken proved not to be for nothing, and next time we probably even bring some more for the girls. Luckily both girls share the same size. This part of the trip was very heavy, but also fun !!!”

The bus trip had to go from IJmuiden to Egmond aan Zee. Because of an annual bike-race on the beach between IJmuiden en Egmond, unfortunately we could not get earlier on to the beach. Due to an accident in the tunnel underneath the Noordzee-kanaal causing a traffic jam, we had to make a bigger detour as planned. During this detour, the qualities of our bus and truck driver proved perfect. No problem to drive backward out of the traffic jam in front of the blocked tunnel; no problem to make a U-turn when we took the wrong entrance to the highway. They impressed us all by their incredible driving skills and flexibility; GREAT !!! This detour however, caused us a serious delay. The question was raised if we would still be able to make it to Den Helder before dark ???

In Egmond, the warmed up and almost dried up girls decided to stay in the bus, to chat, play and try all the possibilities of a walkie-talkie that Johan had brought with him. So both Dad's set of with an empty Shadow. A bit lonely and colder :-), but notably faster! We started with a great and fast drive from Egmond to the Hondsbossche zeeuwering, a famous 5 km long stretched dike. At the near end of the dike we re-grouped, and then went in small groups over it. On the other side of the dike we were guided via a narrow bike lane on to the beach again. The wind had notable slowed down, as even on the smooth surface of the dike, with an empty shadow, we were not able to top the 55 km/h that we did during early morning with the girls in the shadow. After regrouping at the other side of the dike, we went up to Den Helder. This was a beautiful trip, be it with some nasty wave breakers on the way. Some of them were quite treachery, as there were big loose stones behind them, out of sight. We agreed upon that next time we do a raid, we will always be sure to put a bottom protection plate underneath the blokart and shadow seat!!! Fortunately, it were only some axels, wheels and frame-parts that were bent or broken (one BLOKART had to be brought in by the UNIMOG), but nobody got hurt.

Rosemarijne her artist impression of the BK-raid



We were very happy to get to Den Helder and meet again with our girls. Although they had a great time, you could see that they were very happy to see us show up all in one piece.

[Johan] "Amber and me were awaited by my brother Herbert and his wife Ria – the two persons who supported us that afternoon by being on the outlook most of the afternoon in Callantsoog, but I missed completely, as we were all in a focused hurry and trying hard to get to the Den Helder Lighthouse in time, so in the end really nobody did notice driving by Callantsoog. ... Good thinking of them to move to Den Helder!"

Dismounting the BLOKARTs was a crime. Several BLOKARTs required the pulling of 4 or 5 people to get the mast out, the (bended) keel lose, axels out, etc, etc. Especially carbon mast pieces were difficult to dismount.

The trip back to Utrecht was quiet: people were relaxing from the great experience. We imagine they were dreaming about the entire beautiful coastline we had seen during our trip. This BLOKART raid did indeed offer a unique perspective on the Dutch coast: beautiful long empty beaches, with birds, shells. The wind, the quietness... This really was a GREAT experience that both daughters and fathers will never forget.

We really want to express our enormous appreciation and thanks to Richard and Sandra, and all the people that helped them in making this trip possible. Putting this BLOKART raid together took inspiration and energy, which both of them have plenty off. We can only hope they will make more of these experiences possible. At the Dutch site

www.blokartclub.nl you will be able to see more (for pictures go to “*photo gallery*” and for movies to “*filmpjes*”) about this raid and all activities possible with the beautiful BLOKART.

So the bottom line - why this report was written English:

This event shows that we not always have to go far away from home to be able to make an excellent Blokart-raid. We hope that more people in Europe will start thinking about the possibilities for 1-day BLOKART raids along a certain coast line or in other windy areas.

Looking forward to C U somewhere (in a raid ?) along a piece of (European) coastline!

Johan, Amber, Rosemarijne and Tjeerd

