

# BLOODSTOCK WORLD



## French AQPS system offers an easier route to jumping top tier

### FRIDAY VIEWPOINT

**Tom Pennington** on the impact of non-thoroughbreds to National Hunt racing and breeders

AMONG the range of topics discussed at the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association Expo 2012 at Leopardstown, none proved as emotive as that about jumps fillies and mares.

During an absorbing debate, RTE presenter and breeder Robert Hall hit on a key issue, France's system of offering opportunities for AQPS mares, saying: "They [the French] are teaching us a lesson – the majority of France's good jumpers are out of mares who have run in and won AQPS bumpers."

AQPS stands for 'autre que pur-sang', which translates as 'other than thoroughbred' and until recently it was considered undesirable. How things have changed.

Bloodstock agent Anthony Bromley, a name synonymous with numerous French recruits, has encountered great success buying from the provinces and believes the AQPS system can be highly beneficial for the development of jumpers.

"The AQPS programme in France definitely helps," he says. "They can compete against their own breed and it means they're not forced to race too early over jumps. It helps trainers – as it allows them to be more patient with their horse and they can reap the benefits when the horses mature."

The system involves Flat races for three-year-olds, but they can't race over hurdles until they turn four on January 1. There are both hurdles and chases for these horses. Such races offer healthy levels of prize-money on a par with those for thoroughbreds.

The AQPS breed emerged towards

the end of the 19th century, when French breeders began to cross cart horse mares with thoroughbred stallions to produce a fast hardy horse – unlikely as it sounds, their descendants are excelling on the racecourse.

Perhaps that is the key to AQPS success: mares with those tough bloodlines are bred with select stallions chosen for their soundness and racing ability – usually stakes performers over 1m and beyond on the Flat or who have excelled over jumps.

The first prominent AQPS-bred horse was Isopani, trained by future Flat champion trainer Andre Fabre and the first of 11 AQPS horses to win the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris. Others include The Fellow, winner of the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 1994, and the King George-winning duo First Gold and Edredon Bleu.

Since 2009, the BHA has allowed horses that had competed in AQPS races to run in British novices' hurdles and bumpers. This has led to an explosion of AQPS runners in Britain, one of which is the highly touted Sprinter Sacre, purchased by Bromley and a strong favourite for the Racing Post Arkle.

However, Bromley does not believe that a combination of thoroughbred blood and that descending from cart horses is a guarantee of success, arguing that after so many generations of breeding "ultimately most of these AQPS horses are virtually thoroughbred and there isn't much difference between the two types." The key is not necessarily their breeding, but the exclusive opportunities they are offered on French racecourses. It is a proven way of bringing young French jumps along.

The increased success of AQPS horses has dovetailed with the fine-tuning of the breed. To qualify for inclusion in its stud book – introduced

and would have stayed forever.

**Why was Beneficial chosen?** Just for a change. I had twice sent her to Overbury and normally I use Coolmore stallions.

From day one I thought he was the nicest foal I have ever bred so it was very disappointing when he only made 5,200gns at the sales.

**Can Monksland win at Cheltenham?**

I think he has a great chance in



**Sprinter Sacre: the Racing Post Arkle favourite is from the AQPS sphere**

in 2005 – an AQPS must possess a minimum of 87.5 per cent thoroughbred blood.

The influx of AQPS horses from France is no doubt a concern for British and Irish breeders who produce traditional National Hunt stores, and it is also a potential problem for Flat owners and trainers, to whom the jumps market is a valuable way of covering their

expenses by moving on horses who might show better form over obstacles.

Who knows? British and Irish breeders may be forced to re-evaluate their approach to matings? As Hall also said at the Expo: "The French have a fabulous system for the mares, with more of an emphasis on speed. Speed is desirable and in turn would make fillies more desirable."

## Date change for Arqana yearlings

THE Arqana August Sale is to revert to its traditional slot of a weekend alongside racing at Deauville this year as the auction house seeks to "capture a maximum number owners" to the four-day sale, writes Nancy Sexton.

The move means that the sale will be staged from Saturday 18 to Monday 21 August, thereby coinciding with the Prix Morny card at Deauville on Sunday August 19. Last year, it was moved away from Prix Jacques le Marois weekend to run over four days from Monday August 22 to Thursday August 25.

"We decided to shift the August sale to back over the Prix Morny weekend for two reasons," said Alexandra Saint-Martin head of marketing and communication at Arqana. "Firstly, to take advantage of the dynamic atmosphere generated by racing and capture a maximum number owners."

"Secondly, it allows professionals to head

to the York meeting at the end of the sale in time to make it for the beginning of the Ebor Festival."

The Ebor Festival runs from August 22 to 25.

However, Arqana will retain the sale format that was introduced in 2011. Part 1 will comprise two select evening sessions held over the weekend while Part 2 follows with afternoon sessions on Monday and Tuesday.

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Don't miss our eight-page jumps supplement in today's paper

Mahler. She is now in foal to Beneficial.

My other mare Cush Ramani is in foal to Getaway.

**A festival sire to follow?**

Beneficial! He is the leading National Hunt sire at the moment and just keeps producing winners.

**Monksland: "has a great chance at Cheltenham"**

### CHELTHENHAM BREEDER Q & A

**Contender Monksland**

Syo bay gelding Beneficial-Cush Jewel (Executive Perk)

Con Troy, breeder of Monksland

**Tell us a about yourself**

I'm from Grange in Ardmore, County Waterford. I was a dairy farmer but have given it up.

