

Intention is clear – Basquin has grand plans for leading consignor Saubouas

PAUL BASQUIN'S Haras du Saubouas has been leading vendor at Arqana's Breeze-Up Sale at Saint-Cloud since 2007.

Basquin has 23 two-year-olds catalogued in today's auction and is hoping the trend will not be broken.

Based near Condom, in the Gers department of the Midi-Pyrenees, an area better known for armagnac and foie gras, Basquin (*right*) and his wife Virginie created the stud seven years ago. Spread over 80 hectares with 65 boxes and a five-furlong sand gallop, the farm is home to around 100 horses.

"I decided to set up in the south-west because I had family nearby, and although it's not known for its horse population it turned out to be a very strategic choice," Basquin says. "The climate is

much milder, so our horses have an advantage both physically and in terms of their coats. We are also close to the Pau and Mont-de-Marsan training centres."

Basquin describes himself as "self-taught" when it comes to horses, coming from a completely non-equine background. He says: "I'm a qualified agricultural engineer by profession, but was always passionate about racing and was lucky enough to have the opportunity to set up the farm.

"I spent some time abroad gaining experience before we started, including with Paul Nicholls. I then had the idea to centre our activity on pre-training, breaking and the breeze-up sales, as the latter was

an emerging market in France."

Today's consignment is a result of a rigorous selection process. "We try to buy yearlings from the sales in America, England and Ireland, as well as domestically, to give a bit of variety.

"It's also very important for us to have a good proportion of horses born and raised in France [eligible for premiums].

"Together with some investors we buy around 65 yearlings a year, up to a price of around €100,000, as above that it becomes too risky, and we concentrate on first-crop sires as well as established ones. The best then go to this sale, and the rest are either sold privately or the ones we can't sell are put into training.

"We're always aiming to improve the quality of our horses, and every

year take around 25 to the sales. From last year's crop we've had 18 wins, the best of whom is Mixed Intention [bought for €13,000 and re-sold for €50,000]."

Trained by Fabrice Vermeulen, Mixed Intention won the Listed Prix de la Californie at Cagnes-sur-Mer on the Polytrack in February and most recently finished second to Golden Lilac in the Group 3 Prix de la Grotte. The Elusive City filly is due to line up for the Poule d'Essai des Pouliches this weekend.

"The aim is to continue to be the number one French consignor, however we would like to diversify and start to send some horses to England as well in the future."

If Mixed Intention can win tomorrow it would surely be the icing on the cake for Haras du Saubouas.

Isabel Mathew

