

T D N & A

TDN recently caught up with Nicolas de Watrigant, founder of Mandore International. Mandore International was the leading buyer at the recent Arqana Yearling Sale in Deauville, purchasing 22 horses in total, including the sales topper, a €1.2-million son of Sea the Stars (Ire).

You were extremely active at Arqana recently, purchasing the sales topper for Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Those are some rapid strides since your inception in 2007. Tell us a little bit about your history and about the key players in your organization.

NDW: My whole family is involved in racing. My father is a breeder and my brother is a trainer. I started in the industry as a gentleman-rider, and moved on to get experience at home/abroad with various stud



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farms--Mezeray, Niarchos, Shadwell, Arrowfield, Coolmore Australia, and Lane's End. I spent time with several trainers, too, including Luca Cumani. However, I found my vocation when working at Magic Millions in Australia. I learned so much about yearling selection from Tony Williams, as we looked at thousands of yearlings together.

I started my own bloodstock agency, Mandore International,

on returning to France [in 2007]. I had to start from scratch and work on finding new clients. I decided to focus on the Middle East--Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai--and also bought some yearlings for various French owners and trainers. Thanks to my uncle, I was introduced to the Tsui family, who have been great supporters since day one.

I work very closely with my father, my brother, and now my fiancée Meryl, who assists me very closely. I'm surrounded by a strong team of valued and enthusiastic professionals.

How did you come to represent the Al-Thani family?

NDW: A few years ago, I purchased a champion Arabian racehorse called Akim de Ducor for Nasser Al Attiyah. He was the one who first introduced me to Sheikh Joaan Al Thani.

What were you looking for last week on behalf of Sheikh Al-Thani? Was there anything specific, or just the best individuals you could find?

NDW: We're looking for racehorses. So first they have to be athletic, and then we look at the pedigrees and decide from there.

What are the Sheikh's goals for his racing stable?

NDW: The Sheikh has a great passion for horse racing and is looking forward to winning as many races, at the highest level, as he can. The horses purchased at Deauville will remain in training in France, and the number of horses will probably grow.

We reported on his first winner in France last week, with a 2011 Arqana yearling which won at first asking at Dax. Does he plan on having an international presence as well?

NDW: First yearling purchase, first runner, first winner was a pretty good start. In the years to come, his ambition is to compete in top-class races around the world.

While Al-Thani was perhaps your most prominent client, he certainly wasn't your only one. Tell us about some of the others.

NDW: As mentioned previously, I have been supported by Urban Sea's owner Mrs. Tsui. I am involved with the management and promotion of Sea the Stars. I've also had the trust of a number of breeders such as Mr. Jarlan, the Jeffroy family, and Haras d'Haspel. I bought a mare for Haras d'Haspel in July 2010 for €10,000, and just sold the yearling for €110,000. Also, there are various owners and trainers that I bought yearlings and horses-in-training for.

Will we be seeing you at Keeneland or Fasig-Tipton over the coming months?

NDW: I'll probably come over to Kentucky for the breeding stock sales later in the year.

Well, it's certainly been an exciting period for Mandore International. What does the future hold?

NDW: We have some pretty exciting projects for the future, and I hope to develop more relationships with America and Asia. I'd also like to put a racing syndicate together and try to find more people who want to share our passion of racing and breeding in France. It makes sense over here, with the value of prize money and premiums.