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'There's a lot of those customers here' - Breeze-up season gets underway at Osarus



John Bourke (left) sends 14 horses to Osarus's La Teste Breeze-Up Sale

Credit: Laura Green

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Published on 8 April 2025 in [Bloodstock](#)
Last updated 17:43, 8 April 2025



Breeze-up sale season begins in Europe on Wednesday with proceedings kicking off at Osarus in southwest France. Horses are set to be put through their paces at La Teste racecourse at 9am local time (8am BST) before selling starts at 1pm.

The catalogue is significantly smaller than last year's, with 33 two-year-olds set to go under the hammer, down from 73 12 months ago. The vast majority of lots are supplied by Irish consignors, including the 14 juveniles that have made the 1,770km journey from John Bourke's Hyde Park Stud in County Westmeath.

"I'm glad to be back," said Bourke after watching his horses go through their practice breeze on Tuesday afternoon. "It's a gorgeous place, it's 25 or 26 degrees here today and there's a very laid back atmosphere around the place. I like coming here and we always bring our own homebreds and a few pinhooks."

The consignor, who is best known for breeding and selling the likes of Cachet and Haatem, pointed to his Goken colt (**Lot 1**) as "going very well" and also nominated fillies by Kameko (**11**), Nando Parrado (**15**) and Far Above (**4** and **24**) as the pick of his offering.

Bourke's draft is not only the largest numerically but contains several of the catalogue's more eye-catching pedigrees. First up comes the Al Wukair filly out of the Listed-winning Baino Rock (**2**); she is followed by a half-sister to Hong Kong Group 3 winner Doctor Geoff by first-season sire Supremacy (**23**); and the group is completed by the Raven's Pass brother to Dragon Stakes scorer Riflescope (**27**).

"I've taken a nice bunch of horses," he said. "We've sharper types and a couple of nice scopier types as well. They'll all suit the French racing over six and seven furlongs. We've had a lot of success with the horses we've sold here, they've gone on to win plenty of races in France and Spain and there's a lot of those customers here."

Other well-bred lots include CAJ Stables' Muhaarar colt out of Gooseley Lane, already named Derni Chop, whose seven winning siblings include the dam of Goken (**13**). Other stallions represented include Cotai Glory (**8**), Dark Angel (**20**) and Havana Grey (**5**).

Last year's sale saw a clearance rate of 73 per cent as 53 lots sold. Those transactions generated receipts totalling €726,850, which was up 17 per cent year-on-year. The average price was €16,155, down six per cent, while the median dipped by 13 per cent to €13,000.

Osarus sets in motion four straight weeks of breeze-up sales, with key events taking place at Tattersalls, Doncaster, Tattersalls again and Arqana.

"It's been a long winter and this is the first kickoff so it would be great to get as many sold as possible," said Bourke. "Then we're straight into the Craven and Doncaster. I have two nice lots by Mehmas going to Doncaster, including Cachet's sister. I think I have a nicer bunch than normal, so I'm hoping that'll follow through into the racetrack results."

Although the wider economy might not be a source of much optimism at present, Bourke said he was hopeful of a solid trade this breeze-up season, particularly if some of the syndicates that have enjoyed success in recent times look to reinvest.

"I think the sales will be good enough this year, but trade will be as selective as always," he said. "The syndicates are doing well at the moment, teams like Middleham Park and Highclere do a great job and I think outfits like that are very important to the game and the market."

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