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Major classic trials

This is the time of year when classic trials are in the spotlight, and Germany is no exception. Last Monday we saw a good trial at Cologne for the German 1,000 Guineas (at Düsseldorf on May 26th, the German classics all being run several weeks later than the equivalent races in the U.K.). This was won in tremendous style by Team Valor's Axana (Soldier Hollow), trained by Andreas Wöhler, winning this race for the fourth time in six years, and the trainer seems to have a very strong hand to play this season. Axana's performance was certainly the best by a German three-year-old so far this year; this is also the opinion of the handicapper who has bumped her up by six kilos (almost a stone) to a GAG of 94 (= international 108), making her currently the top-rated filly in Germany. She is also early favourite in betting on the German 1,000 Guineas, and second favourite for the Preis der Diana (Oaks) on August 4th, also at Düsseldorf. However plenty of water will flow down the Rhine before then, and it is not even certain that she will be Wöhler's top candidate, while there is a strong likelihood of a foreign challenge for both those classics.

Axana was bred by Sergej Penner, and was bought in for only 15,000 euros when she was offered at the BBAG Yearling Sale in 2017. She is Soldier Hollow's sixteenth group race winner. She also has a good pedigree, although her dam Achinora (Sleeping Indian) was nothing special, not were her first three foals. However her dam Via Borghese (Seattle Dancer) was pretty smart, winning eleven races including a Group Two in USA, and the next dam Angela Serra (Arctic Tern) was also a Group Two winner and bred seven winners, including three group race winners.

Axana ran three times last year in Penner's colours, winning twice, including a listed race at Hanover, and was then bought by Team Valor, who have had plenty of success with German fillies, and transferred to Wöhler. The trainer confirmed that the 1,000 Guineas will be her next race, but added that she will be even better over a longer trip.

Also at Cologne we saw two promising three-year-old winners from the Ullmann-Schlenderhan stable, trained by Jean-Pierre Carvalho. First the filly Ismene (Tertul-



Axana, impressive winner in Cologne. Foto: Dr. Jens Fuchs

lian), who made all the running for an easy win over a mile. She is in the Italian and German Oaks and as she is out of a Monsun mare should probably stay middle distances. Half an hour later, totally different tactics were employed on the debutant So Chivalry (Camelot), who came with a smooth run from second last place to lead in the final furlong and win in good style over eleven furlongs. That was a very encouraging performance, and the trainer explained that So Chivalry had been very difficult to train because of problems with his testicles. The Union-Rennen on June 10th could be his next race, a top trial for the German Derby, which is his obvious main target and was won by his close relation Shirocco in 2004.

There were also some decent three-year-olds on show at the Easter meetings at Hoppegarten and Hanover. At the Berlin track, Andreas Wöhler, enjoying a real purple patch at present, introduced a very promising newcomer in Jaber Abdullah's homebred Storyinword (Toronado); he only won by a narrow margin but ran very green and Wöhler said he was "just a baby and will come on a lot for that." His dam Shy Lady (Kaldoun) was also trained in Germany and won the listed Oppenheim-Rennen, then one of the most prestigious juvenile events. Storyinword is the tenth winner out of Shy Lady and his siblings include Group One winner Zafeen and other smart performers. Also at Hoppegarten, Gestüt Auenqueller's homebred Global Cloud (Soldier Hollow) ran out an easy winner of the fillies' maiden over ten furlongs. She is a member of Auenquelle's best family and is closely related to Group One winners Gonbarda and Legatisimo. Rather surprisingly, she is not in the Preis der Diana, but she is in the Group Two Derby-Trial, also at Hoppegarten, and according to local trainer Roland Dzubasz will run there.