Exclusive Topics for
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The Japan Racing Association

Two Races Upgraded to G1 Status

(contributed by Kenichi Nomoto, Nikkei)

The JRA racing program upgraded two races to G1 status for the first time in 11 years in 2017. The two races were the Osaka Hai (Hanshin Racecourse), a 2,000-meter race for older horses (4-year-olds & up), which is held the week before the Oka Sho (Japanese 1000 Guineas), and the Hopeful Stakes (Nakayama, 2,000m) for two-year-olds, which is held at the end of the season.

The Osaka Hai was upgraded as a new target in the spring for those specializing in 2,000 meters. The traditional G1 events for older horses during the spring are the 3,200-meter Tenno Sho (Spring) at Kyoto Racecourse and the 2,200-meter Takarazuka Kinen at Hanshin, but an increasing number of runners are focusing on middle distances, opting to pass up the long-distance Tenno Sho (Spring). Moreover, the Takarazuka Kinen has struggled to attract top horses due to its often bad weather and heavy track in the June rainy season.

The newly upgraded Osaka Hai was contested between 14 runners, including 2016 Horse of the Year **Kitasan Black (JPN, H5, by Black Tide)**, who became the inaugural winner of this new G1 race to score his fourth career G1 title. He then continued with another impressive performance in the Tenno Sho (Spring), which he won for the second year running, but was heavily defeated to ninth in his third start of this spring, the Takarazuka Kinen.

Kitasan Black in the 2017 Osaka Hai

The other upgraded G1 event, the Hopeful Stakes, will be held on December 28. Until last year, the Asahi Hai Futurity Stakes and the Hanshin Juvenile Fillies were the only two JRA-G1 events for two-year-olds. Both races, 1,600 meters over turf, are held at Hanshin Racecourse. The Hopeful

Rey de Oro in the 2016 Hopeful Stakes

Stakes, which began as a 2,000-meter G3 race under the name "Radio Nikkei Hai Nisai Stakes" at Hanshin Racecourse, was moved to Nakayama Racecourse, renamed and upgraded to G2 status in 2014. The Hopeful Stakes victor of last year, **Rey de Oro (JPN, C3, by King Kamehameha)**, subsequently became the winner of the Three-Year-Old Classic, the Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m).

December 28 is the last work day before the New Year's holiday, so the plan to hold the Hopeful Stakes on a weekday (Thursday) is an unorthodox decision by the JRA that is attracting much attention and hopefully business for the race.

JRA International Simulcasting Enters Second Year

(contributed by Kenichi Nomoto, Nikkei)

Nearly a year has passed since JRA's first international simulcast with the 2016 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m), which generated sales of nearly 4.19 billion yen. However, none of the following races exceeded that figure and total sales of 12 races in the past 12 months amounted to 13.49 billion yen, meaning that the Arc accounted for 31% of the total. The other simulcast races were as expected – five races in Hong Kong that regularly attract many Japanese runners, three races in Dubai, two in the U.S.A., one in Australia and only one in Europe (the Arc).

The 2017 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, for which JRA also executed an international simulcast, included JRA's Best Three-Year-Old Colt **Satono Diamond (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** and **Satono Noblesse (JPN, H7, by Deep Impact)**, both owned by Hajime Satomi and trained by Yasutoshi Ikee, who finished 15th and 16th, respectively. With ace runner Satono Diamond already raising concerns after being defeated to fourth in his prep Prix Foy (G2, 2,400m) prior to the Arc, expectations

Satono Diamond
in the 2017 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe

for the big day at Chantilly were somewhat muted compared to last year, resulting in wagering falling to 3.44 billion yen. To improve its international simulcasting wagering system, JRA announced it will expand betting channels, currently internet-only, by adding cash wagering.

Meanwhile, the breeding business continues to flourish, rising to nearly the 1990s level. The Japan Racing Horse Association (JRHA) commemorated the 20th Select Sale on July 10 and 11. Record gross sales of 17.32 billion yen (excluding tax) were more than 16% above last year. Also, the sell-through rate of yearlings and foals exceeded 86%. Thoroughbred sales organized by the Hidaka

horse Breeders Association (HBA) rose to 2.88 billion yen, up 23% from last year, in the Selection Sale held on July 17, and by 36% to 5.06 billion yen in the Summer Sale on August 21 thru 25; the sell-through rate for the former was 81% and the latter was 78%.

Older Horses Begin Preparation Towards Fall G1

Real Steel (right) and Satono Aladdin
in the 2017 Mainichi Okan

The Mainichi Okan (G2, 1,800m) at Tokyo Racecourse on October 8 attracted a field of elite runners aiming at autumn G1 titles. The race was won by 2016 Dubai Turf (G1, 1,800m) winner **Real Steel (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)**, who was returning from a seven-month break but still managed to prevail by a neck after coming from mid-division to take command in the last 100 meters. This year's Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m) victor, **Satono Aladdin (JPN, H6, by Deep Impact)**, and **Greater London (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)**, who was fourth in the Yasuda, both closed impressively to mark the fastest last three furlongs, finishing second and third, respectively. 2016 Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m) champion **Makahiki (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** came in sixth. **Soul Stirring (JPN, F3, by Frankel)**, the Yushun Himba (Japanese Oaks, G1, 2,400m) winner and race favorite, broke from the innermost stall and was pressed from behind, ending up in front through most of the trip, then weakened at the stretch to finish eighth.

They will be joined at the Tenno Sho (Autumn) by other G1 winners who are heading straight to the 2,000-meter G1 test, including Horse of the Year **Kitasan Black**, Takarazuka Kinen winner **Satono Crown (JPN, H5, by Marju)**, and **Neorealism (JPN, H6, by Neo Universe)**, who is coming off a victory in the Hong Kong's Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,000m).

Four weeks later, the Japan Cup (G1, 2,400m) on November 26 will feature key runners from the Tenno Sho (Autumn) as well as last year's runner-up **Sounds of Earth (JPN, H6, by Neo Universe)** and third-place finisher **Cheval Grand (JPN, H5, by Heart's Cry)**. Both ran in the Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m) on October 9 at Kyoto Racecourse. **Cheval Grand** appeared in good form in the race, positioned second from the rear early and made use of his strong charge to finish third, 0.1 second behind winner

Smart Layer
in the 2017 Kyoto Daishoten

Smart Layer (JPN, M7, by Deep Impact). Sounds of Earth had little to show after racing three-wide in mid-division and disappointed to 13th.

JRA announced in September that if the 2017 Japan Cup winner has also won any of the designated

overseas G1 events, the feat will earn $2 million, double last year's bonus.

Autumn's major dirt races commenced with the Mile Championship Nambu Hai (dirt, 1,600m) at NAR's Morioka Racecourse on October 9. **Copano Rickey (JPN, H7, by Gold Allure)** won for the second consecutive year, giving him 10 career titles at the highest level on dirt to tie the record held by *Hokko Tarumae (JPN, by King Kamehameha)*. He will look to break the record in his next start in the JBC Sprint (dirt, 1,200m) on November 3. February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m) victor **Gold Dream (JPN, C4, by Gold Allure)** finished fifth and **Kafuji Take (JPN, H5, by Precise End)**, who was third in the February Stakes, finished fourth.

Crocosmia
in the 2017 Fuchu Himba Stakes

The Fuchu Himba Stakes (G2, 1,800m), which serves as the main step-race and trial towards the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,200m) on Nov. 12, was held at Tokyo Racecourse on Oct. 14. This year's Dubai turf winner **Vivlos (JPN, F4, by Deep Impact)**, Victoria Mile (G1, 1,600m) victor **Admire Lead (JPN, F4, by Stay Gold)** and 2016 QEII Cup champion **Queens Ring (JPN, M5, by Manhattan Cafe)** dominated the top three on the odds list but ended up finishing second, third and fourth, respectively. They were beaten by fifth favorite **Crocosmia (JPN, F4, by Stay Gold)** who led throughout the race and prevailed by a neck for her first grade-race victory.

Also bidding for the QEII Cup title will be multiple grade-race winners **Rouge Buck (JPN, M5, by Manhattan Cafe)** and **Smart Layer (JPN, M7, by Deep Impact)**, who have continued to demonstrate their abilities against males with victories in the All Comers (G2, 2,200m) on Sept. 24 and the Kyoto Daishoten on Oct. 9, respectively. They will be joined by 2015 Best Three-Year-Old Filly **Mikki Queen (JPN, M5, by Deep Impact)** and some top three-year-old fillies who will be coming from their starts in the Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m) on Oct. 15.

The Fuji Stakes (G3, 1,600m), a step-race towards the Mile Championship (G1, 1,600m) on Nov. 19, was held at Tokyo Racecourse on Oct. 21. The winner was race favorite **Air Spinel (JPN, C4, by King Kamehameha)**, who scored his third grade-race title – all at one mile. Two-lengths behind in second was **Isla Bonita (JPN, H6, by Fuji Kiseki)**, who won the 2014 Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m). This year's

Air Spinel in the 2017 Fuji Stakes

Satsuki Sho runner-up **Persian Knight (JPN, C3, by Harbinger)** finished fifth. **Logotype (JPN, H7, by Lohengrin)**, the 2016 Yasuda Kinen victor, had to withdraw due to poor health. The Swan Stakes (G2, 1,400m), another step towards the Mile Championship, will be held on Oct. 28.

Red Falx
in the 2017 Sprinters Stakes

Red Falx (JPN, H6, by Swept Overboard) defended his title in the first autumn G1, the Sprinters Stakes (G1, 1,200m) held on Oct. 1. The sprint champion will now aim for another G1 title by stepping up in distance in the Mile Championship. Sprinters Stakes runner-up **Let's Go Donki (JPN, M5, by King Kamehameha)** will head to the Hong Kong Sprint (G1, 1,200m) on Dec. 10 after another start in the Swan Stakes. Third-place finisher **Once in a Moon (JPN, F4, by Admire Moon)** also will aim for the Hong Kong Sprint if selected, or otherwise will run in Japan in either the Keihan Hai (G3, 1,200m) on Nov. 26 or the Hanshin Cup (G2, 1,400m) on Dec. 23.

Snow Dragon (JPN, H9, by Admire Cozzene), who was fourth in the Sprinters, is entered to run in the Capella Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,200m) on Dec. 10. Takamatsunomiya Kinen (G1, 1,200m) winner **Seiun Kosei (JPN, C4, by Admire Moon)**, who was heavily defeated to 11th in the fall sprint G1, will run in the Swan Stake. Connections of **Big Arthur (JPN, H6, by Sakura Bakushin O)**, the 2016 Takamatsunomiya Kinen (G1, 1,200m) victor and sixth-place finisher in the Sprinters Stakes, have announced their intention to retire the son of *Sakura Bakushin O (JPN, by Sakura Yutaka O)* to stud.

Results of Last Leg of Three-Year-Old Triple Crowns

The last leg of the three-year-old fillies' Triple Crown, the Shuka Sho, was won by third-favorite **Deirdre (JPN, F3, by Harbinger)**, who was on an upward trend after two previous wins. She was guided by the skillful hands of jockey Christophe Lemaire, made use of her powerful turn of speed at the stretch to pin down **Lys Gracieux (JPN, F3, by Heart's Cry)** and **Mozu Katchan (JPN, F3, by Harbinger)** in the closing stages and

Deirdre in the 2017 Shuka Sho

pulled away for a 1-1/4 length victory. The top finishers of this race are expected to aim for the Queen Elizabeth II Cup next. **Aerolithe (JPN, F3, by Kurofune)**, who was the race favorite in the Shuka Sho despite it being her first test at 2,000 meters, disappointed to seventh and will be given the rest of the season off.

The last of the Three-Year-Old Classics, the Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m), was won by race favorite **Kiseki (JPN, C3, by Rulership)**, who demonstrated a terrific run over the waterlogged turf by circling wide from mid-field and assuming command 200 meters out, giving him his first grade-race victory and G1 title. Other than the winner, the soggy course created

Kiseki in the 2017 Kikuka Sho

unexpected results as tenth-choice **Clincher (JPN, C3, by Deep Sky)** finished two-lengths behind the leader in second, followed by 13th-favorite **Popocatepetl (JPN, C3, by Deep Impact)** in third. The winning time of 3:18.9, more than 10 seconds slower than usual, shows how much energy the runners had to exert over the rain-sodden 3,000-meter course; the next move for each runner, including the winner, will likely be decided with great care.