

# Exclusive Topics for Horse Racing in Japan

## - Summer Edition

July 2019

The Japan Racing Association

Overseas challenges by JRA horses in 2019 got off to a good start in Dubai. Only a year after Japan came home from overseas without a single G1 title for the first time in eight years, 2018 Horse of the Year **Almond Eye (JPN, F4, by Lord Kanaloa)** demonstrated her talent on the global stage by landing her fifth consecutive G1 victory, which also extended her winning streak to seven. Prior to this victory by the *Lord Kanaloa (JPN, by King Kamehameha)* filly, *Admire Moon (JPN, by End Sweep)*, *Just a Way (JPN, by Heart's Cry)*, *Real Steel (JPN, by Deep Impact)* and *Vivlos (JPN, by Deep Impact)* had each won the race in 2007, 2014, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

As announced previously, *Vivlos* retired from racing after finishing second behind **Almond Eye**. **Cheval Grand (JPN, H7, by Heart's Cry)** and **Matera Sky (USA, H5, by Speightstown)** turned in runner-up efforts in respective starts in the Dubai Sheema Classic (G1, 2,410m) and the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1, dirt, 1,200m).

Meanwhile, **Win Bright (JPN, H5, by Stay Gold)** claimed his first G1 title in Hong Kong's Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,000m). Past winners of this race from Japan include *Eishin Preston (USA, by Green Dancer)* in 2002 and 2003, *Rulership (JPN, by King Kamehameha)* in 2012 and *Neorealism (JPN, by Neo Universe)* in 2017. **Win Bright**, the son of *Stay Gold (JPN, by Sunday Silence)*, passed up the Takarazuka Kinen (G1, 2,200m) in preparation for his long fall campaign, which is expected to include the All Comers (G2, 2,200m) on September 22 and the Tenno Sho (Autumn) (G1, 2,000m) on October 27, followed by another trip to Hong Kong for the Hong Kong Cup (G1, 2,000m) on December 8.

Efforts abroad by JRA horses continued in Australia in April. **Kluger (JPN, H7, by King Kamehameha)**, who has yet to capture a G1 title in Japan, came off a fourth-place finish in the Doncaster Mile (G1, 1,600m) to turn in a gallant performance only a week later, finishing second behind Australia's pride, *Winx (AUS, by Street Cry)*, who won her final race to retire unbeaten in 33 consecutive starts. The two Japanese starters in the race prior to **Kluger** delivered no better than a fifth.

**Master Fencer (JPN, C3, by Just a Way)**, despite being sent off 17th favorite in a field of 19 in

the Kentucky Derby (G1, dirt, 2,000m), cleared the wire a respectable sixth to better the last three Japanese runners in past Derbies. He followed up as eighth favorite among 10 runners in the Belmont Stakes (G1, dirt, 2,400m) and finished fifth. However, he was unable to show his late speed on turf in his next challenge, the Belmont Derby Invitational (G1, 2,000m) on July 7, and finished 13th. On the same day at Belmont, **Jodie (JPN, F3, by Daiwa Major)** finished fourth in the Belmont Oaks Invitational (G1, 2,000m).



Win Bright  
in the 2019 Queen Elizabeth II Cup



Kluger  
in the 2019 Doncaster Mile



Master Fencer  
in the 2019 Kentucky Derby

**Deirdre (JPN, M5, by Harbinger)**, who won the 2017 Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m) and was fourth in the Dubai Turf and sixth in the Queen Elizabeth II Cup this spring, continued her overseas endeavor in the Prince of Wales's Stakes (G1, 1,990m) in England on June 19. Two Japanese horses had run in the Stakes in the past, both finishing sixth, and **Deirdre** ended up finishing sixth as well, albeit against a tough field of runners in this prestigious British G1. The *Harbinger* (GB, by *Dansili*) mare is registered to run in the Nassau Stakes (G1, 1,980m) on August 1 and the Irish Champion Stakes (G1, 2,000m) on September 14.



Deirdre  
in the 2019 Prince of Wales's Stakes

2017 Japan Cup victor **Cheval Grand** is also slated to run in the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes (G1, 2,390m) on July 27 as well as the International Stakes (G1, 2,050m) on August 21. Five horses from Japan have run in the former, among which *Heart's Cry* (JPN, by *Sunday Silence*), **Cheval Grand's** sire, came home with the best result in third place in 2006. *Zenno Rob Roy* (JPN, by *Sunday Silence*) was second in the 2005 International Stakes. As the 2019 Dubai Sheema Classic runner-up, **Cheval Grand** will possibly seek more overseas success in the Breeders' Cup Turf (G1, 2,400m) on November 2.

The Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1, dirt, 1,200m), scheduled on the same day as the Breeders' Cup Turf, could include **Matera Sky**, who proved competitive against America's top sprinters with a second in the Dubai Golden Shaheen and finished a close fifth in his comeback start in Japan, the Procyon Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,400m) on July 7. Two-time graded winner **Copano Kicking (USA, G4, by Spring At Last)** is also expected to start in the Breeders' Cup Sprint if he runs well in the Cluster Cup (dirt, 1,200m) on August 12. Otherwise he will head for the Korea Sprint (dirt, 1,200m) on

September 8. JRA's only active female jockey, Nanako Fujita, who rode the gelding **Copano Kicking** to fifth in the February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m), will continue to partner with him overseas.



Cheval Grand (left)  
in the 2019 Dubai Sheema Classic



Matera Sky (left)  
in the 2019 Dubai Golden Shaheen



Copano Kicking  
in the 2019 Negishi Stakes



Lys Gracieux  
in the 2019 Takarazuka Kinen

**Lys Gracieux (JPN, H5, by Heart's Cry)**, winner of the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,200m) last year, marked her second G1 victory in this year's Takarazuka Kinen. The *Heart's Cry* mare, who has already proved competitive abroad with a runner-up effort in the Hong Kong Vase (G1, 2,400m) last December and a

third the Hong Kong's Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,000m) this past April, was initially planned to run in the Breeders' Cup Filly

and Mare Turf (G1, 2,200m) on November 2. Following her Takarazuka Kinen victory, however, she was given the choice of running against the boys in the Breeders' Cup Turf or the Cox Plate (G1, 2,040m) in Australia on October 26, the latter of which she is likely to decline as she commences her fall campaign with the All Comers in Japan.

So far, only one Japanese runner each has entered the Breeders' Cup Turf (2012, *Trailblazer*, 4th) and the Breeders' Cup Sprint (2000, *Agnes World*, 8th).

While Japanese horses have gained respect on many occasions worldwide, the most sought-after and longest-awaited dream among Japanese racing fans remains the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m). When nominations for this year's race were announced in May, **Almond Eye** was not included among



Almond Eye in the 2019 Dubai Turf

the seven Japanese runners listed even though British Bookmakers had the filly as third favorite and a high-potential threat in the Arc after her impressive victory in the Dubai Turf. But her connections, after reviewing her condition after returning from Dubai, concluded in mid-April that it would be too much to ask the young filly to make another long trip, adapt to a completely different environment and face world-class competition on unfamiliar ground. **Almond Eye's** winning streak



was put to an end in her comeback race in Japan, the Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m), where she was disadvantaged right after the break but still put in a great effort to close in and finish a respectable neck-nose third. She is scheduled to kick off her fall campaign in the Tenno Sho (Autumn).



Blast Onepiece  
in the 2018 Arima Kinen

Meanwhile, 2018 Arima Kinen (G1, 2,500m) winner **Blast Onepiece (JPN, C4, by Harbinger)**, one of the first to be announced as a potential challenger in the Arc title, was the race favorite in the Osaka Hai (G1, 2,000m) but was beaten to sixth. He then passed up the Takarazuka Kinen in favor of the Meguro

Kinen (G2, 2,500m) on May 26, but was well beaten to eighth, again as the race favorite and carrying a top weight of 59kg. His next target is the Sapporo Kinen (G2, 2,000m) in August, after which his connections will make their final decision about flying the *Harbinger* colt to France or not.

**Kiseki (JPN, H5, by Rulership)**, the 2017 Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m) champion who used his abundant speed in last year's Japan Cup to set a rapid pace that led to a record winning time of 2:20.6, with him just 0.3 second behind in second, was runner-up again in his two starts this year, by a neck in the Osaka Hai (G1, 2,000m) and by three lengths in the Takarazuka Kinen. Returning from his summer break in July, the son of *Rulership* is booked to fly to France on August 20 and begin training for the Prix Foy (G2) on September 15, held on the same course where he will make his big challenge in the Arc.

**Kiseki's** trainer Katsuhiko Sumii also nominated two of his three-year-olds, **Saturnalia (JPN, C3, by Lord Kanaloe)** and **Roger Barows (JPN, C3, by Deep Impact)**, for the Arc, but recent starts by both runners in the Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m) gave their connections good reason to rearrange plans. **Saturnalia**, back-to-back G1 winner of the Hopeful Stakes (G1, 2,000m) and the Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m), was sent off heavy favorite in the second leg of the three-year-old Triple Crown but broke poorly and finished fourth, prompting his connections to withdraw the *Lord Kanaloe* colt from the Arc. **Saturnalia** will make his fall debut in the Kobe Shimbun Hai (G2, 2,400m) on September 22. **Roger Barows**, sent off an outsider 12th favorite, turned in an impressive finish from chasing the leader in second and prevailed to a neck-victory to become the year's Derby winner. The son of *Deep Impact* will fly to France with **Kiseki** in preparation for his overseas debut in the Prix Niel (G2, 2,400m) on September 15.



Kiseki  
in the 2017 Kikuka Sho

Saturnalia  
in the 2019 Satsuki Sho

Roger Barows  
in the 2019 Tokyo Yushun

Other three-year-olds nominated to run in the Arc included **No One (JPN, F3, by Heart's Cry)**, winner of the Fillies' Revue (G2, 1,400m), and **Lion Lion (JPN, C3, by Rulership)**, the Aoba Sho (G2, 2,400m) victor. Both, however, are likely to stay in Japan after finishing poorly in their following starts in the Yushun Himba (Japanese Oaks, G1, 2,400m, 18th) and the Tokyo Yushun (15th), respectively.

2018 Kikuka Sho winner **Fierement (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** gave his sire his first Tenno Sho (Spring) (G1, 3,200m) title and was officially announced to be challenging the Arc in June. The *Deep Impact (JPN, by Sunday Silence)* colt, lightly raced with just six career starts due to physical weakness, was given a break again following his victory and will make his comeback in the Sapporo Kinen in August, prior to his trip to France. Christophe Lemaire, who has partnered with the colt since his Kikuka Sho victory, will take the reins in the Arc.



No One (left)  
in the 2019 Fillies' Revue



Lion Lion  
in the 2019 Aoba Sho



Fierement  
in the 2019 Tenno Sho (Spring)