

# Exclusive Topics for JAPAN AUTUMN INTERNATIONAL 2020 - 2nd Edition -



October 2020

The Japan Racing Association

The coronavirus pandemic continues to cause significant disruption around the world with horse racing in Japan being no exception. Since the end of February, both the JRA and regional racing have been operating behind closed doors by holding races without the usual crowded stands full of cheering race fans. To help prevent the spread of disease, travel between training centers and racecourses was restricted from the end of March through early April when the government declared a state of emergency.



2020 Takarazuka Kinen



Jockeys' Quarters

Horse owners were initially allowed to attend meetings, but then the owners' association agreed to a voluntarily refrain from attending races from the end of March. Since then, races have been held in front of empty stands. From the latter half of April, horses have been allowed to enter lower class races only at tracks near their training stables. Jockeys also have been prohibited from moving between racetracks on the same weekend, when races typically are held at three different locations. To avoid unsafe numbers of jockeys staying at jockeys' quarters, where they normally are required to check in the day before racing, jockeys can request advance permission to go to their races directly from their homes or hotels.

The potential impact on business caused by banning spectators from tracks was a major concern. Wagering at tracks and off-track betting windows combined accounted for 29.6% of total sales in 2019, so a major downturn was predicted. Indeed, total sales in the first four weeks decreased 10%. The decline was especially notable for graded races that generate sales among non-regular wagers.



However, unlike many other sports that had to be canceled, horse racing came to be viewed as an exciting choice of entertainment among the many people forced to stay home and look for things to do, resulting in many new internet bettors. As a result, sales began to recover from late March and daily totals actually started showing year-over-year increases from mid-May. Symbolic of this trend was turnover for the Takarazuka Kinen race, which reached the ¥20 billion mark for the first time in three years. Annual sales were up as of August 8 and recorded an annual increase of 1.5% as of October 4. The increase rate slowed in the latter half of August but started trending upward again from the second week of September, which resulted in total sales of nearly ¥206.75 billion over 18 race days (nine racecards each at Nakayama and Chukyo)—up solidly by 7.3% from last year.



Online Betting site



Almond Eye in the 2020 Victoria Mile

Meanwhile, the pandemic has impacted other sectors of the horse racing industry, including horse sales and racing activities abroad. Travel restrictions have forced many international races to be canceled. The Dubai World Cup Day in late March, for example, was called off just six days prior to the big day owing to the pandemic. Twenty Japanese horses from the JRA and NAR, including **Almond Eye (JPN, M5, by Lord Kanaloa)**, who had

already made the long trip to Dubai, had to be rushed back to Japan ahead of the scheduled closing of airports in Dubai.

With the prolonged spread of this unique disease, no Japanese horse was entered in another race abroad, not even in Hong Kong or France’s Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m), which had become regular destinations for aspiring globe trotters. The only exception was **Deirdre (JPN, M6, by Harbinger)**, who had been stationed in Europe since April 2019, but the Harbinger mare was below form and failed to contend in either the Arc or the Nassau Stakes (G1, 1,980m), the latter of which she won last year. The Japanese government in October began to gradually ease its travel restrictions, but it is still unclear if horses will be able to travel to Hong Kong for the International Races in December.



Deirdre in the 2020 Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe

Regular horse sales scheduled between April and May were called off or held online. JRA’s “Breeze Up Sales” were held solely online and the Hokkaido Training Sale organized by Hidaka Horse Breeders Association (HBA) in May was canceled altogether. Sales resumed in July, but entries have been limited to preregistered buyers. The two-day Select Sales held by the Japan Racing Horse



2019 Breeze Up Sales

Association on July 13 and 14 totaled ¥18.76 billion, down 8.6% from last year but still the second highest figure ever. Total sales of yearlings by the HBA in August and September exceeded ¥10 billion for the first time. Moreover, the fact that JRA and NAR business has remained sound has eliminated concerns over possible reductions in prize money and/or subsidies.

(contributed by Kenichi Nomoto, Nikkei)

JRA's graded fall events leading to the Japan Autumn International Series kicked off on October 10 under a new guideline that allows a limited number of spectators selected by lottery to purchase reserved seats online. The Mainichi Okan (G2, 1,800m) held at Tokyo Racecourse on October 11 was won by 2019 Asahi Hai Futurity Stakes (G1, 1,600m) winner **Salios (JPN, C3, by Heart's Cry)**, who dominated a field of older horses by three-lengths. The Heart's Cry colt will either head to the Mile Championship (G1, 1,600m) on November 22 or the Hong Kong Mile (G1, 1,600m) on December 13.



Salios in the 2020 Mainichi Okan



Glory Vase in the 2020 Kyoto Daishoten

The Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m), held at Kyoto Racecourse on the same day as the Mainichi Okan, was a close match between 2019 Hong Kong Vase (G1, 2,400m) champion **Glory Vase (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)** and 2017 Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m) victor **Kiseki (JPN, H6, by Rulership)**, with the former managing to hold off the latter by a 3/4 length. **Glory Vase** will aim for the Japan Cup (G1, 2,400m) on November 29.

**Kiseki** will next run in the Tenno Sho (Autumn) (G1, 2,000m) on November 1.

The last leg of the three-year-old fillies Triple, the Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m), was held on October 18 and saw **Daring Tact (JPN, F3, by Epiphaneia)** make history in becoming the first undefeated Triple Crown filly. She also is just the sixth filly to land a Triple, the last before her being **Almond Eye** in 2018. She will face older foes of the opposite sex for the first time in the coming Japan Cup.



Daring Tact in the 2020 Shuka Sho

A week later, in the Kikuka Sho on October 25, **Contrail (JPN, C3, by Deep Impact)** prevailed by a neck to also add his name to JRA history as the third undefeated Triple Crown winner, following



Contrail (left) in the 2020 Kikuka Sho

Symboli Rudolf (JPN, by Partholon) in 1984 and Deep Impact (JPN, by Sunday Silence) in 2005. Expectations are high for the son of Deep Impact to challenge older G1 rivals in the coming Japan Cup. However, his connections do not wish to overwork their talented young colt, so the plan for the remaining season will depend on how he recovers from his strenuous race in the Kikuka Sho.

Possible Japan Cup starters, other than **Glory Vase**, **Daring Tact**, **Contrail** and those coming off the Tenno Sho (Autumn), include:

- **World Premiere (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** has been struggling with health issues and has not resumed racing since finishing third last year in the Arima Kinen (G1, 2,500m).
- **Moza Bello (JPN, H6, by Deep Brillante)** and **Saturnalia (JPN, C4, by Lord Kanaloa)** finished third and fourth, respectively, in the Takarazuka Kinen (G1, 2,200m, June).
- **Curren Bouquetd'or (JPN, F4, by Deep Impact)** and **Mikki Swallow (JPN, H6, by Tosen Homareboshi)** were second and fifth, respectively, in the All Comers (G2, 2,200m, September).
- **King of Koji (JPN, C4, by Lord Kanaloa)**, winner of the Meguro Kinen (G2, 2,500m) in May, and **Perform a Promise (JPN, H8, by Stay Gold)**, victor in the Naruo Kinen (G3, 2,000m) in June, were third and sixth, respectively, in the Kyoto Daishoten.
- **You Can Smile (JPN, H5, by King Kamehameha)** and **Meisho Tengen (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** will enter the Copa Republica Argentina (G2, 2,500m) on November 8 as preps towards the Japan Cup.

The Fuchu Himba Stakes (G2, 1,800m), the trial race towards the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,200m) on November 15, was held on October 17. The winner was **Salacia (JPN, M5, by Deep Impact)**, who marked her first grade-race victory, while **Loves Only You (JPN, F4, by Deep Impact)**, race favorite and last year's Yushun Himba (Japanese Oaks, G1, 2,400m) victor, faded to fifth.

The Queen Elizabeth II Cup for top three-year-old and above fillies and mares will feature last year's champion **Lucky Lilac (JPN, M5, by Orfevre)**, looking to repeat after notching another G1 victory in this year's Osaka Hai (G1, 2,000m). Other prominent runners will include **Normcore (JPN, M5, by Harbinger)**, champion of both the 2019 Victoria Mile (G1, 1,600m) and this year's Sapporo Kinen (G2, 2,000m), and **Centelleo (JPN, M5, by Deep Impact)**, winner of the All Comers (G2, 2,200m) in September.



Salacia in the 2020 Fuchu Himba Stakes



Normcore in the 2020 Sapporo Kinen



Centelleo in the 2020 All Comers

This year's Mile Championship will feature **Gran Alegria (JPN, F4, by Deep Impact)**, winner of both the Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m) and the Sprinters Stakes (G1, 1,200m). **Vin de Garde (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)** won his first grade-race title in the Fuji Stakes (G2, 1,600m), one of the Mile Championship trials, on October 24. Following in second, third and fourth, respectively, were this year's NHK Mile Cup (G1, 1,600m) victor **Lauda Sion (JPN, C3, by Real Impact)**, 2018 NHK Mile Cup champion **Keiai Nautique (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)** and 2017 Mile Championship winner **Persian Knight (JPN, H6, by Harbinger)**.



Gran Alegria  
in the 2020 Sprinters Stakes



Vin de Garde in the 2020 Fuji Stakes

The Swan Stakes (G2, 1,400m), another trial being held on October 31, will be contested by 2019 Hong Kong Mile (G1, 1,600m) champion **Admire Mars (JPN, C4, by Daiwa Major)**. Last year's Mile Championship victor **Indy Champ (JPN, H5, by Stay Gold)**, after finishing third in the Yasuda Kinen, will make his comeback with a return to this year's Mile Championship.

Major dirt events this fall began with the Sirius Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,900m) on October 3, which was won by **Cafe Pharoah (USA, C3, by American Pharoah)**. The U.S.-bred colt, after notching his first grade-race victory in the Unicorn Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,600m) in June, disappointed to seventh as the race favorite in the Japan Dirt Derby (dirt, 2,000m, July), but bounced back to form this fall to score his second grade-race title in the Sirius Stakes.



Cafe Pharoah in the 2020 Sirius Stakes

The Mile Championship Nambu Hai (dirt, 1,600m) on October 12 was won by **Arctos (JPN, H5, by Admire Aura)**, who out-dueled February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m) champion **Mozu Ascot**





Arctos in the 2019 Procyon Stakes

(USA, H6, by Frankel) by a neck to score a record-breaking victory, covering the mile distance in 1:32.7. Last year's winner **Sunrise Nova (JPN, H6, by Gold Allure)** finished fourth while 2017 Best Dirt Horse **Gold Dream (JPN, H7, by Gold Allure)**, this year's Kashiwa Kinen (dirt, 1,600m) winner **Wide Pharaoh (JPN, C4, by Henny Hughes)** and last year's February Stakes winner **Inti (JPN, H6, by Came Home)** came in sixth, seventh

and ninth, respectively,

Horses starting in the JBC Classic (dirt, 2,000m) on November 3, the Miyako Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,800m) on November 8 and the Musashino Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,600m) on November 14 also are likely to aim for the Champions Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m).