

# Exclusive Topics for JAPAN AUTUMN INTERNATIONAL 2023 - 3rd Edition -



November 2023  
The Japan Racing Association

This year's Japan Cup (G1, 2,400m) on November 26 is expected to draw the attention of the global horse racing industry, due in no small part to the inclusion of **Equinox (JPN, C4, by Kitasan Black)**, the leader in Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings issued by the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities. Beginning with his first G1 victory last year in the Tenno Sho (Autumn) (2,000m), where he exhibited a powerful closing speed from racing mid-pack, the Kitasan Black colt proceeded to win the yearend Arima Kinen (2,500m), kicked off this season in March with his third G1 triumph on the international stage in the Dubai Sheema Classic (2,410m) then scored another win in his comeback start in June in the Takarazuka Kinen (2,200m).

Coming off four consecutive wins at the highest level, **Equinox** was the heavy favorite in last month's Tenno Sho (Autumn), where he stayed within striking distance behind a rapid pace, sitting third in a field of 11, remained strong as the two frontrunners faded in mid-stretch and then still managed to find another gear in response to jockey Christophe Lemaire, who urged the brown colt to pull away from all late chargers. The crowd roared in amazement at his record time, 1:55.2 over Tokyo Racecourse's 2,000-meter turf course (rated good to firm), which eclipsed the previous record set in 2011 by a full 0.9 second. **Equinox** has now successfully extended his G1 winning streak to five.



Equinox,  
winner of 2023 Tenno Sho (Autumn)

Previously, **Equinox** also set a track record in the Dubai Sheema Classic, where he won wire-to-wire in 2:25.65, 3-1/2 lengths in front of a quality field to boost his rating to 129. Since then, the race's second- to fourth-place finishers have not threatened his status as the world's top-ranked thoroughbred even though all three have subsequently won G1 titles: runner-up Westover took the Grand Prix de

Saint-Cloud and then turned in back-to-back seconds in Europe’s prestigious King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes and the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe; third-place finisher Zagrey won the Grosser Preis von Baden; and fourth-place finisher Mostahdaf took both the Prince of Wales’s Stakes and International Stakes.

All eyes will now turn to the Japan Cup, which has reeled in **Equinox's** connections by offering them a cool bonus of 200 million dollars if their star thoroughbred can follow his win in the Dubai Sheema Classic with a victory in the Japan Cup.



Liberty Island,  
winner of 2023 Shuka Sho

One rival with strong hopes of upsetting **Equinox's** Japan Cup aspirations is **Liberty Island (JPN, F3, by Duramente)**, who became the first triple crown filly in three years and seventh overall by claiming the Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m) on October 15. Since suffering her only defeat in her second career start, in October 2022, when she finished second in the Artemis Stakes (G3, 1,600m), the Duramente filly has won four consecutive G1 starts, beginning with the 2022 Hanshin Juvenile Fillies (1,600m) and then the fillies’

Triple: the Oka Sho (Japanese 1000 Guineas, 1,600m), the Yushun Himba (Japanese Oaks, 2,400m) and the Shuka Sho. After racing at a mile in her first four career starts, including her first two-year-old G1 and the Oka Sho, the bay filly erased any questions about extra distance in the Yushun Himba, where she made an early move from around sixth position and drew away for a huge six-length victory timed at 2:23.1, second fastest in the race’s history. With 2,400 meters no longer an issue, **Liberty Island** has every reason to be confident going into the Japan Cup, where she will carry 54kg, or 4kg less than **Equinox**. While reminiscent of the memorable pairing of Orfevre verses Gentildonna in the 2012 Japan Cup, where Gentildonna narrowly won by a nose, this year’s Japan Cup is generating even greater excitement.

The race will also include five-year-old proven starter **Titleholder (JPN, H5, by Duramente)**. A three-time G1 winner with plenty of stamina, having won wire-to-wire as a three-year-old in the Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m) and back-to-back G1 victories in the first half of last season in the Tenno Sho (Spring) (G1, 3,200m) and the Takarazuka Kinen (G1, 2,200m)—all convincingly—the son of Duramente was heavily defeated to 11th under dreadful track conditions in the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe.



Titleholder,  
winner of 2022 Takarazuka Kinen

Although **Titleholder** came back fresh in 2023 with a trademark runaway victory in the Nikkei Sho (G2, 2,500m) in March, he pulled up mid-race with a minor leg problem in the Tenno Sho (Spring). Fortunately, however, he returned for the All Comers (G2, 2,200m) on September 24 and finished second.



Do Deuce,  
winner of 2022 Tokyo Yushun

The only two runners to have beaten **Equinox** (7-2-0 out of nine starts) are Geoglyph, winner of the 2022 Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m), and **Do Deuce (JPN, C4, by Heart's Cry)**, who won the 2022 Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m) and is now scheduled to bid for the Japan Cup title. Following his derby victory, the Heart's Cry colt flew to France and came off a fourth in the Prix Niel (G2, 2,400m) to challenge the Arc, but he was heavily defeated to 19th. **Do Deuce** kicked off

this season with an overwhelming victory in the Kyoto Kinen (G2, 2,200m) in February, but withdrew from the Dubai Turf (G1, 1,800m) due to lameness in his left foreleg. Coming back in the Tenno Sho (Autumn), he had to change riders last minute when regular jockey Yutaka Take suffered an injury earlier that day, resulting in a seventh. Nevertheless, his connections have announced that they will start **Do Deuce** in the Japan Cup with living-legend Take on board.

Among the Tenno Sho (Autumn) starters, Justin Palace, who won the Tenno Sho (Spring) and then finished second in the fall edition of this G1, is headed towards the Arima Kinen (G1, 2,500m) on December 24. Fourth-place **Danon Beluga (JPN, C4, by Heart's Cry)**, however, is expected to run in the Japan Cup if his condition is good. Also running in the Japan Cup will be **Deep Bond (JPN, H6, by Kizuna)**, second for three consecutive years in the Tenno Sho (Spring), and 2022 Japan Cup victor **Vela Azul (JPN, H6, by Eishin Flash)**. Whereas **Deep Bond** is coming off a close third (0.1 second behind the winner) in the Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m) on October 9, **Vela Azul** has been below form, with seventh in the Kyoto Daishoten being his best result from four starts since winning last year's Japan Cup. **Stars on Earth (JPN, F4, by Duramente)**, winner of the first two legs of the fillies' Triple last year, passed up this year's Tenno Sho (Autumn) with a leg problem but appears to have made a full recovery and her connections have announced their intention to start her in the Japan Cup.



Vela Azul,  
winner of 2022 Japan Cup



Danon Beluga,  
winner of 2022 Kyodo News Hai



Deep Bond,  
winner of 2022 Hanshin Daishoten



Stars on Earth,  
winner of 2022 Yushun Himba

Most of the prominent three-year-old colts opted to start in the Kikuka Sho on October 22, a little too close to the Japan Cup, so the Arima Kinen could be a possible yearend destination, if any, for winner Durezza, runner-up and Tokyo Yushun champion Tastiera, and third-place and Satsuki Sho victor Sol Oriens.

Other nominated and substitute horses include:

- **Chestnut Coat (JPN, H9, by Heart's Cry)**, a former JRA-based horse now trained at an NAR Hyogo facility, who won four times over turf and registered a second in the 2018 Nikkei Sho (G2, 2,500m) before shifting to NAR.
- **Echt (JPN, H6, by Rulership)**, winner of two grade-race starts including this year's Kokura Kinen (G3, 2,000m), and coming off an eighth in the Tenno Sho (Autumn).
- **Forward Again (JPN, G6, by Rose Kingdom)**, whose fourth and latest win was last year's STV Sho (3 Wins Class, 1,800m).
- **Impress (JPN, C4, by Kizuna)**, whose best effort at a graded level is a third in the Niigata Kinen (G3, 2,000m) in September.
- **Kurino Megami Ace (JPN, F4, by Espoir City)**, a former JRA-based filly now trained at an NAR Hyogo facility.
- **Panthalassa (JPN, H6, by Lord Kanaloa)**, winner of the 2022 Dubai Turf (G1, 1,800m) and the 2023 Saudi Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m), is also listed as a possible starter in the Champions Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m) just one week after the Japan Cup.



Echt,  
winner of 2023 Kokura Kinen



Impress,  
winner of 2022 Amagasaki Stakes



Panthalassa,  
winner of 2023 Saudi Cup

- **Shonan Bashitto (JPN, C3, by Silver State)**, the Wakaba Stakes (Listed, 2,000m, March) winner whose best effort in his four graded outings is a fifth in the Satsuki Sho.
- **Studley (JPN, H5, by Harbinger)**, a four-time winner on turf between 2,000 and 2,200 meters.
- **T O Royal (JPN, H5, by Leontes)**, winner of last year's Diamond Stakes (G3, 3,400m) but 10th in the Copa Republica Argentina (G2, 2,500m) on November 5, his comeback start following a fracture in his right hindleg.



Shonan Bashitto,  
winner of 2023 Wakaba Stakes



Studley,  
winner of 2022 Orion Stakes



T O Royal,  
winner of 2022 Diamond Stakes

- **Trust Kenshin (JPN, H8, by Heart’s Cry)**, 13th in the 2022 Japan Cup and coming off a long break following an equally disappointing eleventh in the Diamond Stakes in February.
- **Win Erfolg (JPN, H6, by Gold Ship)**, who scored two wins, both over 2,600 meters, in the allowance class.



Iresine,  
winner of 2023 Prix Ganay  
(Photo: scoopdyga)

Two foreign runners have accepted invitations to the Japan Cup. **Iresine (FR, G6, by Manduro)** from France, a two-time G1 victor, won the 2022 Prix Royal-Oak (G1, 3,100m) and this year’s Prix Ganay (G1, 2,100m). The Manduro gelding is coming off another group-race victory in the Prix du Conseil de Paris (G2, 2,200m) on October 15. His regular jockey, Marie Velon, took part in the World All-Star Jockeys in August and finished fourth overall, including scoring her first JRA win.

**Continuous (JPN, C3, by Heart’s Cry)** from Ireland, whose sire Heart’s Cry produced two Japan Cup winners—Cheval Grand (2017) and Suave Richard (2019)—won back-to-back group-race titles in the Great Voltigeur Stakes (G2, 2,370m) in August and the St Leger Stakes (G1, 2,910m) in September. He is coming off a fifth in the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe on October 1, where he was a neck behind fourth-place finisher Through Seven Seas from Japan, who himself was a neck second to **Equinox** in the Takarazuka Kinen.



Continuous,  
winner of 2023 St Leger Stakes  
(Photo: Edward Whitaker)