

Exclusive Topics for Horse Racing in Japan

— Spring Edition —

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The Japan Racing Association

JRA's 2024 racing season will start in earnest in March with Classic trials for three-year-olds, as established horses begin to prepare for the spring G1 events. The 2023 season will be remembered as one of JRA's most significant years, with Equinox achieving a top rating of 135 to become the World's Best Racehorse and the Japan Cup race being recognized as the world's highest rated race with a rating of 126.75. The quality of horse racing in Japan is now among the highest in the world. As part of our ongoing efforts to support coverage of JRA events, we are pleased to update readers on last year's stars and this season's key runners in this special Spring edition of our international newsletter.



Equinox



Owner: Masashi Yonemoto, CEO of Silk Racing Co., Ltd. (center)
Trainer: Tetsuya Kimura (right)
Jockey: Christophe Lemaire (left)



JRA President and CEO: Masayoshi Yoshida (left)

Two Wins and Three Runner-up Efforts by Japanese Runners in Riyadh

Since the inception of the Saudi Cup meeting in 2020, where several Japanese runners have already enjoyed success, an increasing number of Japanese horses have made the Middle East an important early-season destination. Many even run in meetings in both Saudi Arabia and Dubai during their trips overseas. This year, counting the undercard races also held on the big day in Saudi Arabia, 21 Japanese entrants ran at King Abdulaziz Racetrack on February 24.

Ushba Tesoro (JPN, H7, by Orfevre), winner of the 2023 Dubai World Cup (G1, dirt, 2,000m), almost gave Japan back-to-back victories in the Saudi Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m), impressively gaining ground after racing off the pace early on to make his move into the final turn, but finished second by a head to Senor Buscador in the final strides. **Derma Sotogake (JPN, C4, by Mind Your Biscuits)**, runner-up in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1, dirt,



2024 Saudi Cup

2,000m), **Crown Pride (JPN, H5, by Reach the Crown)**, winner of two graded titles overseas, and 2023 Best Dirt Horse **Lemon Pop (USA, H6, by Lemon Drop Kid)** all chased the pace in mid-division but failed to threaten, finishing fifth, ninth and 12th respectively. **Meisho Hario (JPN, H7, by Pyro)**, winner of three major NAR titles, was scratched as a precaution after connections decided his recovery from tying up (severe cramping) on arrival in Saudi Arabia was unsatisfactory.



Forever Young,
winner of 2024 Saudi Derby

In the Saudi Derby (G3, dirt, 1,600m), **Forever Young (JPN, C3, by Real Steel)**, winner of the Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun (Listed, dirt, 1,600m), registered his fourth career victory in as many starts since his two-year-old debut. He is the third Japanese winner of this race after Full Flat in 2020 and Pink Kamehameha in 2021. **Satono Phoenix (JPN, C3, by Henny Hughes)** and Sapporo Nisai Stakes (G3, 1,800m) winner **Set Up (JPN, C3, by Declaration of War)** disappointed to 10th and 11th respectively.

Remake (JPN, H5, by Lani) avenged his third-place finish in last year's Riyadh Dirt Sprint (G3, dirt, 1,200m) with remarkable closing speed from mid-field to take command 100 meters out and win by 1 1/2 lengths. It was the third title for a Japanese horse after Copano Kicking in 2021 and Dancing Prince in 2022. **Jasper Krone (USA, H5, by Frosted)**, winner of two graded sprint titles on turf, was fourth after setting the early pace and **Keiai Dorie (JPN, H7, by Espoir City)** was sixth.



Remake,
winner of 2024 Riyadh Dirt Sprint

La La Christine (JPN, M6, by Mikki Isle), winner of the 2023 Kyoto Himba Stakes (G3, 1,400m), was the top Japanese runner with a second in the 1351 Turf Sprint (G2, 1,351m), where the mare closed in on eventual winner Annaf from mid-division but just missed by 3/4 length. **Win Greatest (JPN, H7, by Screen Hero)**, winner of the 2023 Swan Stakes (G2, 1,400m), and **Aguri (JPN, H5, by Caravaggio)**, winner of the 2023 Hankyu Hai (G3, 1,400m), followed in fourth and sixth respectively. **Bathrat Leon (JPN, H6, by Kizuna)** failed to defend his title from last year, getting off to a slow start and then running into trouble to disappoint to tenth.

In the Neom Turf Cup (G2, 2,100m), 2021 Hopeful Stakes (G1, 2,000m) champion **Killer Ability (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)** demonstrated a good turn of pace from mid-pack to lead briefly before being beaten by Spirit Dancer to second by a length. **Studley (JPN, H6, by Harbinger)**, following an eighth in the Japan Cup, finished ninth while **Hearts Concerto (JPN, C4, by Heart's Cry)**, third in last year's Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m), was 11th.

Two-time G3 winner **Echt (JPN, H7, by Rulership)** was the best of four Japanese runners in the Red Sea Turf Handicap (G3, 3,000m), finishing fifth. **Breakup (JPN, H6, by Novellist)**, winner of the

2022 Copa Republica Argentina (G2, 2,500m), **Libyan Glass (JPN, C4, by Kizuna)**, fourth in last year's Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m), and **Iron Barows (JPN, H7, by Orfevre)**, winner of the 2023 Stayers Stakes (G2, 3,600m), were well back in ninth, tenth and 12th respectively.

Ten Japanese runners have been transferred from Saudi Arabia to Meydan Racecourse in Dubai, including **Breakup, Iron Barows** and **Libyan Glass** for the Dubai Gold Cup (G2, 3,200m); **Jasper Krone** for the Al Quoz Sprint (G1, 1,200m); **Forever Young** and **Satono Phoenix** for the UAE Derby (G2, dirt, 1,900m); **Keiai Dorie** and **Remake** for the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1, dirt, 1,200m); and **Derma Sotogake** and **Ushba Tesoro** for the Dubai World Cup (G1, dirt, 2,000m), all on March 30. However, **Breakup** had to be withdrawn after sustaining a leg problem.



Wilson Tesoro

Another 14 Japanese runners will join those from Saudi Arabia for the Dubai World Cup meeting. **Wilson Tesoro (JPN, H5, by Kitasan Black)**, one of four Japanese contenders in the Dubai World Cup, won three consecutive NAR graded events and scored runner-up efforts in both the Champions Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m) and Tokyo Daishoten (G1, dirt, 2,000m) last year. The five-year-old bay opened his current season in the February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m), where he disappointed to eighth after chasing a fast pace in second.

Also coming off the February Stakes for the Dubai World Cup is **Dura Erede (JPN, C4, by Duramente)**. The colt claimed the G1 Hopeful Stakes (2,000m) title as a two-year-old and scored a runner-up effort on dirt in the UAE Derby in his three-year-old debut. Following three disappointing starts on turf, finishing no higher than eighth, he was switched back to dirt and produced back-to-back third-place finishes at the highest level in the Champions Cup and the Tokyo Daishoten, both times holding on well from racing in second. In his kickoff start in the February Stakes as a four-year-old, he chased the pace in fourth but faded in the last furlong and finished 12th.



Dura Erede,
winner of 2022 Hopeful Stakes



Liberty Island,
winner of 2023 Shuka Sho

Among the four Japanese runners nominated for the Dubai Sheema Classic (G1, 2,410m) is **Liberty Island (JPN, F4, by Duramente)**, who became JRA's seventh winner of the Triple Crown for fillies last year. She also proved her quality against a mixed field of G1 runners, finishing second by four lengths to Equinox but beating the rest of the field, especially the third, fourth and fifth-place finishers, who dominated the top three spots in the following Arima Kinen (G1, 2,500m).

Justin Palace (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact), who claimed his first G1 title in the Tenno Sho (Spring) (G1, 3,200m) last year, proved not only his stamina but also his speed when he finished second to Equinox in the Tenno Sho (Autumn) (G1, 2,000m) and posted the fastest finish (33.7sec./3 furlongs). Sent to post favorite in the Arima Kinen, he missed his break and disappointed to fourth so the key to success in the upcoming race, where a fast pace seems unlikely, is a strong start to secure a good position to attack.



Justin Palace,
winner of 2023 Tenno Sho (Spring)



Stars on Earth,
winner of 2022 Yushun Himba

Stars on Earth (JPN, M5, by Duramente) has been extremely consistent, finishing no worse than fourth in 12 career starts, including victories in two Classics for three-year-old fillies. In the 2023 Japan Cup, her first start in six months, she finished third a length behind second-place **Liberty Island** despite carrying 2kg more. In the following Arima Kinen, the Duramente filly overcame the disadvantage of an outside post position to move quickly to the front and finished second by a close half-length.

Shahryar (JPN, H6, by Deep Impact), after finishing fifth in last year's Dubai Sheema Classic, was heavily defeated to 11th in his comeback start in August, the Sapporo Kinen (G2, 2,000m). Following surgery for an epiglottic entrapment, he was a solid third in the Breeders' Cup Turf (G1, 2,400m), but was then forced to pull out of the Hong Kong Vase after being diagnosed with a suspected arrhythmia. The son of Deep Impact returned to action in the Arima Kinen, finishing fifth by two lengths, and is hoped to bounce back to form to reclaim the Dubai Sheema Classic, which he won in 2022.



Shahryar,
winner of 2022 Dubai Sheema Classic



Namur,
winner of 2023 Mile Championship

Four Japanese runners are entered in the Dubai Turf (G1, 1,800m). **Namur (JPN, M5, by Harbinger)** finished tenth, third and second in her Triple Crown starts as a three-year-old and finally captured her first long-awaited G1 title last year in her eighth attempt, the Mile Championship (G1, 1,600m). The Harbinger filly also was third in the Hong Kong Mile (G1, 1,600m) last year, besting four other Japanese contenders.

Matenro Sky (JPN, G5, by Maurice) was given a chance to challenge the Dubai Turf title after claiming his first graded title in the Nakayama Kinen (G2, 1,800m) on February 25, when he raced in third position before surging to a two-length victory. The Dubai Turf will be his first start at the top level, but he has a record of 3-2-2 out of eight starts at 1,800 meters.

The remaining two Japanese entries in the Dubai Turf are both five-year-olds sired by Heart's Cry. **Do Deuce (JPN, H5, by Heart's Cry)** was supposed to start last year but was pulled due to lameness in his left foreleg. Struggling to return to form, he was seventh by 1.4 seconds in his comeback start, the Tenno Sho (Autumn), then fourth by 0.9 second in the Japan Cup. In the Arima Kinen, however, partnering with his regular rider Yutaka Take, who also was returning from injury, **Do Deuce** made headway from the back, advanced to third between the last two corners, assumed command 100 meters out and claimed his third G1 victory, after winning the Asahi Hai Futurity Stakes (G1, 1,600m) as a two-year-old and the Tokyo Yushun as a three-year-old.

Danon Beluga (JPN, H5, by Heart's Cry) demonstrated a good turn of speed in last year's Dubai Turf, negotiating traffic soon after the last turn and closing impressively to finish second by a 3/4 length. He scored two fourths and a sixth thereafter, all three beyond 2,000 meters, but is hoping for a long-awaited G1 victory in Dubai at 1,800m, the same distance as his first grade-race victory.



Matenro Sky,
winner of 2024 Nakayama Kinen



Do Deuce,
winner of 2023 Arima Kinen



Danon Beluga,
winner of 2022 Kyodo News Hai

Don Frankie (JPN, H5, by Daiwa Major) will join **Keiai Dorie** and **Remake** in the Dubai Golden Shaheen. When he won his first grade-race victory in the Procyon Stakes (G3, dirt, 1,400m) last July, he became the heaviest JRA winner ever at 594kg. Coming off a ninth in the February Stakes, the speedy five-year-old is expected to perform well and hopefully capture his first G1 title at 1,200 meters, where he is 2-1-0 out of three starts.



Don Frankie,
winner of 2023 Procyon Stakes

Igniter (JPN, H6, by Espoir City), another Dubai Golden Shaheen contender and two-time NAR Horse of the Year, is also coming off the February Stakes, where he finished 11th.

Other Japanese runners scheduled to start in the UAE Derby in Dubai include **Ballon d'Or (JPN, C3, by New Year's Day)**, who has two wins on dirt and is coming off a sixth in the Hyacinth Stakes (Listed, dirt, 1,600m), and **George Tesoro (JPN, C3, by Best Warrior)**, who also has two wins and marked a second in his latest start in the Shoryu Stakes (dirt, 1,400m) on March 10.

One week after Dubai World Cup Day, **Obamburumai (JPN, C4, by Discreet Cat)** is scheduled to run in the Doncaster Mile (G1, 1,600m) at Randwick Racecourse in Australia on April 6. The colt scored a big win in the AUD 10 million (USD 6.6 million) Golden Eagle (1,500m) in New South Wales last November. Four Japanese runners challenged the Doncaster Mile in the past, the best so far being Real Impact with a second in 2015. **Obamburumai**'s next destination, if invited, will be the Champions Mile (G1, 1,600m) in Hong Kong on April 28, provided that his condition is good to go after the Doncaster Mile. Two-time graded winner and Mile Championship fourth-place finisher **Elton Barows (JPN, C4, Deep Brillante)** is also likely to aim for the Champions Mile, although in his last start the four-year-old colt struggled to seventh over a soft track in the Nakayama Kinen.

Also heading to Hong Kong this spring is two-time G2 winner **Prognosis (JPN, H6, by Deep Impact)**, who was runner-up in his first Hong Kong challenge in the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,000m) last year. He finished third behind Equinox and Justin Palace in the Tenno Sho (Autumn) and then returned for the Hong Kong Cup (G1, 2,000m) but was fifth. He claimed his third grade-race victory by five lengths in his kickoff start of this season, the Kinko Sho (G2, 2,000m) on March 10, raising hopes for his first G1 title in the coming Queen Elizabeth II Cup.



Obamburumai,
winner of 2023 Golden Eagle



Elton Barows,
winner of 2023 Mainichi Okan



Prognosis,
winner of 2024 Kinko Sho

Horses nominated to run in the U.S. Triple Crown were announced in February. While the final selections among 45 registered JRA-based horses (10 more than last year) are yet to be determined, the list includes the aforementioned **Ballon d'Or, Forever Young** and **Satono Phoenix; Gonbade Qabus (JPN, C3, by Bricks and Mortar)** and **Ramjet (JPN, C3, by Majestic Warrior)**, respective winners of the Saudi Arabia Royal Cup (G3, 1,600m) last October and the Hyacinth Stakes in February; and **Amante Bianco (JPN, C3, by Henny Hughes)**, who was listed with **Forever Young** in the Kentucky Derby Future Wager Pool 3 and 4.

Spring G1 Campaign for Four-Year-Olds and Up in Japan

With Equinox's retirement and some of Japan's top horses flying to Dubai in March, the first two G1 events this spring at middle and long distances for older company feature four-year-old classics winners. **Sol Oriens (JPN, C4, by Kitasan Black)**, who won last year's Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m) and went on to steadily finish second in the Tokyo Yushun and third in the Kikuka Sho, finished eighth in his first challenge against older foes in the Arima Kinen. The colt

opened the current season in the Nakayama Kinen (G2, 1,800m) on February 25, where he broke from 12th with the fastest late speed but had too much ground to make up and finished in fourth, 0.5 second behind winner **Matenro Sky**. The son of Kitanasan Black will go for his second G1 title in the Osaka Hai (G1, 2,000m) on March 31.

Sol Oriens, winner of 2023 Satsuki Sho



Tastiera, winner of 2023 Tokyo Yushun

Tastiera (JPN, C4, by Satono Crown) lost the Satsuki Sho title to **Sol Oriens** by 1 1/4 lengths but turned the tables by notching a win against the same foe in the following Tokyo Yushun. In the year-end Arima Kinen against older company, disadvantageous positioning in the stretch contributed to a sixth-place finish, but in the Kikuka Sho, the last leg of the Triple Crown Classics, a runner-up performance helped to earn **Tastiera** the Best Three-Year-Old Colt title. The four-year-old colt will enter the Osaka Hai in his first start of the current season.

Five-year-old **Pradaria (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)** scored his third grade-race victory in the Kyoto Kinen (G2, 2,200m) on February 11 and will join Kyoto Kinen runner-up and two-time graded winner **Bellagio Opera (JPN, C4, by Lord Kanaloa)** in seeking his first G1 title in the Osaka Hai. This year's Osaka Hai will also possibly see **Geoglyph (JPN, H5, by Drefong)**, the 2022 Satsuki Sho victor who is coming off a third in the Nakayama Kinen; **Harper (JPN, F4, by Heart's Cry)**, who consistently finished fourth, second and third in the respective legs of last year's Triple Crown for fillies; **Killer Ability**, the Neom Turf Cup runner-up; **Rouge Eveil (JPN, M5, by Just a Way)**, second in last year's Queen Elizabeth II Cup; **Rousham Park (JPN, H5, by Harbinger)**, a two-time graded winner who most recently was eighth in the Hong Kong Cup (G1, 2,000m) last December; and **Stunning Rose (JPN, M5, by King Kamehameha)**, winner of 2022 Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m), who was sidelined with peritendinitis in her left foreleg after finishing 12th in last year's Victoria Mile (G1, 1,600m).



Pradaria,
winner of 2024 Kyoto Kinen



Geoglyph,
winner of 2022 Satsuki Sho



Stunning Rose,
winner of 2022 Shuka Sho

This year's 3,200m Tenno Sho (Spring) on April 28 will miss defending champion **Justin Palace** due to an overseas endeavor, but all eyes will be on four-year-old **Durezza (JPN, C4, by Duramente)**, who scored his fifth-consecutive victory in the Kikuka Sho last autumn. After his usual long break

due to a fragile constitution, the colt began his four-year-old season on March 10 in the Kinko Sho, where he was second by five lengths to **Prognosis**.

Also targeting the Tenno Sho (Spring) are runners from the Hanshin Daishoten (G2, 3,000m) on March 17, including the five-length winner **T O Royal (JPN, H6, by Leontes)**, who won the Diamond Stakes (G3, 3,400m) in both 2022 and 2024; third-place **Blow the Horn (JPN, H5, by Epiphaneia)**, who won this year's Nikkei Shinshun Hai (G2, 2,400m); sixth-place **Savona (JPN, C4, by Kizuna)**, who was fifth in last year's Kikuka Sho; seventh-place **Deep Bond (JPN, H7, by Kizuna)**, who was runner-up in all three previous Tenno Sho (Spring) bids; and eleventh-place **Silver Sonic (JPN, H8, by Orfevre)**, who was third in last year's Tenno Sho (Spring).



Durezza,
winner of 2023 Kikuka Sho



T O Royal,
winner of 2024 Hanshin Daishoten



Blow the Horn,
winner of 2024 Nikkei Shinshun Hai

Other likely runners are American Jockey Club Cup winner **Chuck Nate (JPN, G6, by Heart's Cry)**, **Saliera (JPN, M5, by Deep Impact)**, who was second by a neck in the Diamond Stakes (G3, 3,400m) on February 17, and Amir Trophy (G3, 2,400m) runner-up **Zeffiro (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)**. Entries also could include top finishers in the Nikkei Sho (G2, 2,500m) on March 23 and the Osaka Hai.



Chuck Nate (center), winner of
2024 American Jockey Club Cup



Mama Cocha,
winner of 2023 Sprinters Stakes

The season's flat-turf G1 events will begin with the Takamatsunomiya Kinen (1,200m) at Chukyo Racecourse on March 24. This year's edition will welcome **Victor The Winner (AUS, G6, by Toronado)** from Hong Kong, the first foreign entrant in six years, who won the Centenary Sprint Cup (G1, 1,200m). With defending champion First Force retired and at stud, local fans will be looking to 2023 Sprinters Stakes (G1, 1,200m) champion **Mama Cocha (JPN, M5, by Kurofune)**, named JRA's

Best Sprinter in January, who will be seeking another G1 sprint title in her season opener.

Runners coming off prep races will include **Lugal (JPN, C4, by Duramente)**, winner of the Silk Road Stakes (G3, 1,200m) on January 28; proven graded winners **Namura Clair (JPN, M5, by**

Mikki Isle) and **Meikei Yell** (JPN, M6, by Mikki Isle), who finished second and tenth respectively in the Kyoto Himba Stakes (G3, 1,400m) on February 17; **Win Marvel** (JPN, H5, by I'll Have Another), victor of the Hankyu Hai (G3, 1,400m) on February 25; and **Toshin Macau** (JPN, H5, by Big Arthur), winner of the Ocean Stakes (G3, 1,200m) on March 2. The spring 1,200-meter G1 event will also feature **Mad Cool** (IRE, H5, by Dark Angel), runner-up in the 2023 Sprinters Stakes, and **Champagne Color** (JPN, C4, by Duramente), winner of the 2023 NHK Mile Cup (G1, 1,600m).



Lugal,
winner of 2024 Silk Road Stakes



Win Marvel (center),
winner of 2024 Hankyu Hai



Toshin Macau,
winner of 2024 Ocean Stakes

Last year's Victoria Mile for four-year-old and up females was won by Songline, who went on to defend her Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m) title and retire from racing as the 2023 JRA Award Best Miler. **So Dazzling** (JPN, F4, by Heart's Cry) landed her first graded title in the Kyoto Himba Stakes and is entered to run in the Takamatsunomiya Kinen prior to the Victoria Mile on May 12. Last year's Shuka Sho runner-up **Masked Diva** (JPN, F4, by Rulership), who finished second by a length to **Liberty Island** in the 2023 Shuka Sho, began this season at a mile in the Tokyo Shimbun Hai (G3, 1,600m) in February but finished sixth due to a poor break. She is scheduled to run in the Hanshin Himba Stakes (G2, 1,600m) on April 6, a Victoria Mile prep along with the Fukushima Himba Stakes (G3, 1,800m) on April 20.

Other notable candidates include **Harper**, **Rouge Eveil** and **Stunning Rose**, all previously mentioned, and **Conch Shell** (JPN, F4, by Kizuna), winner of the Nakayama Himba Stakes (G3, 1,800m) on March 9.



So Dazzling,
winner of 2024 Kyoto Himba Stakes



Masked Diva,
winner of 2023 Rose Stakes



Conch Shell, winner of
2024 Nakayama Himba Stakes

This year's Yasuda Kinen on June 2 could include G1 winners such as **Namur**, who is likely to proceed to this mile event after her Dubai Turf challenge. **Serifos** (JPN, H5, by Daiwa Major), the Mile Championship victor in 2022 but winless in all four starts last season, including two overseas, although he was second by 1-1/4 lengths in the Yasuda Kinen, will open the current season in the

Milers Cup (G2, 1,600m) on April 21, prior to the Yasuda Kinen. He could be joined by **Soul Rush (JPN, H6, by Rulership)**, runner-up in last year's Mile Championship, and **Corepetiteur (JPN, C4, by Just a Way)**, winner of the Kyoto Kimpai (G3, 1,600m) in January.



Serifos, winner of 2022 Mile Championship

Other likely contenders for this year's Yasuda Kinen are the aforementioned **Champagne Color** and **Sakura Toujours (JPN, H7, by Neo Universe)**, respective winners of the 2023 NHK Mile Cup and 2024 Tokyo Shimbun Hai (G3, 1,600m) in February, and selected runners from the Osaka Hai and the Victoria Mile.

The highlight of this spring's steeplechase calendar undoubtedly will be the Nakayama Grand Jump (J-G1, 4,250m) on April 13, which will feature **Meiner Grand (JPN, H6, by Gold Ship)**, the 2023 Nakayama Daishogai (J-G1, 4,100m) champion and 2023 Best Steeplechase Horse. The brown horse kicked off this season in the Hanshin Spring Jump (J-G2, 3,900m) on March 9 with a dominating seven-length victory over a 10-horse field. **Nishino Daisy (JPN, H8, by Harbinger)**, the 2022 Nakayama Daishogai winner, was fourth. Last year's Nakayama Grand Jump champion **Irogotoshi (JPN, H7, by Vincennes)**, who was sidelined after a sixth-place finish in the Tokyo High-Jump (J-G2, 3,110m) in November, made his comeback in the Spica Stakes (3 Wins Class, 1,800m) on March 17 but failed to reach contention and was 13th.



Meiner Grand,
winner of 2024 Hanshin Spring Jump



Nishino Daisy,
winner of 2022 Nakayama Daishogai



Irogotoshi,
winner of 2023 Nakayama Grand Jump

Three-Year-Old Classic Hopefuls

This year's three-year-old classics will commence with the Oka Sho (Japanese 1000 Guineas, G1, 1,600m) for fillies on April 7, followed by the Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m) for colts and fillies on April 14.

Undefeated **Ascoli Piceno (JPN, F3, by Daiwa Major)**, last year's Best Two-Year-Old Filly, after winning the two-year-old fillies' championship—the 2023 Hanshin Juvenile Fillies (G1, 1,600m)—will head straight into the Oka Sho with the runner-up from that race, **Stellenbosch (JPN, F3, by Epiphaneia)**. The Artemis Stakes (G3, 1,600m) winner **Cervinia (JPN, F3, by Harbinger)** will also make her three-year-old debut in the Oka Sho.



Ascoli Piceno,
winner of 2023 Hanshin Juvenile Fillies



Cervinia,
winner of 2023 Artemis Stakes



Sweep Feet,
winner of 2024 Tulip Sho

The first leg of the fillies' Triple Crown will also feature runners who performed well in one of the three trials: **Sweep Feet (JPN, F3, by Suave Richard)**, **Sekitoba East (JPN, F3, by Declaration of War)** and **Hawaiian Tiare (JPN, F3, by Lord Kanaloa)**, the top three finishers in that order in the Tulip Sho (G2, 1,600m) on March 2; winner **Catfight (JPN, F3, by Discreet Cat)** and runner-up **Teumessa (JPN, F3, by Harbinger)** in the Anemone Stakes (Listed, 1,600m) on March 10; and in the Fillies' Revue (G2, 1,400m), also on March 10, the top three finishers (listed in descending order): **Etes Vous Prets (IRE, F3, by Too Darn Hot)**, Hanshin Juvenile Fillies third-place finisher **Corazon Beat (JPN, F3, by Suave Richard)** and **Cecilie Plage (JPN, F3, by Bricks and Mortar)**.

Other notable runners likely to appear in the Oka Sho are **Ipheion (JPN, F3, by Epiphaneia)**, **Light Back (JPN, F3, by Kizuna)** and **Queen's Walk (JPN, F3, by Kizuna)**, respective winners of the Fairy Stakes (G3, 1,600m) on January 7, the Elfin Stakes (Listed, 1,600m) on February 3 and the Queen Cup (G3, 1,600m) on February 10. **Mi Anhelu (JPN, F3, by Duramente)**, winner of the Flower Cup (G3, 1,800m) on March 16, will possibly head to the Yushun Himba, the second leg of the Triple Tiara, on May 26.



Etes Vous Prets,
winner of 2024 Fillies' Revue



Ipheion,
winner of 2024 Fairy Stakes



Queen's Walk,
winner of 2024 Queen Cup

Meanwhile, the Satsuki Sho will welcome **Regaleira (JPN, F3, by Suave Richard)**, the first filly to beat male two-year-olds in the year-end Hopeful Stakes since the race was upgraded to G1 in 2017. She will now head directly to the first leg of the Triple Crown in an attempt to become the first filly winner in 76 years.

Regaleira, winner of 2023 Hopeful Stakes



She will be joined by 2023 Asahi Hai Futurity Stakes winner and Best Two-Year-Old Colt **Jantar Mantar (JPN, C3, by Palace Malice)**, who kicked off his sophomore season on February 11 in the

Kyodo News Hai (G3, 1,800m), where he crossed the wire in second with Asahi Hai runner-up **Ecoro Walz (JPN, C3, by Black Tide)** in fifth. The race was won by **Justin Milano (JPN, C3, by Kizuna)** by 1-1/2 lengths for his second victory in as many starts.



Jantar Mantar, winner of 2023 Asahi Hai Futurity Stakes



Justin Milano, winner of 2024 Kyodo News Hai



Shin Emperor, winner of 2023 Kyoto Nisai Stakes



Cosmo Kuranda, winner of 2024 Yayoi Sho Deep Impact Kinen

Hopeful Stakes runner-up **Shin Emperor (FR, C3, by Siyouni)** began his three-year-old season on March 3 in the Yayoi Sho Deep Impact Kinen (G2, 2,000m), the main trial race leading up to the Satsuki Sho. He finished second, 1-1/4 lengths behind winner **Cosmo Kuranda (JPN, C3, by Al Ain)**, with **Sirius Colt (JPN, C3, by Makfi)** third. Hopeful Stakes third-place finisher **Sunrise Zipangu (JPN, C3, Kizuna)** passed up the race due to discomfort in his right hind leg and will head directly to the Satsuki Sho.

Among those who earned Satsuki Sho berths in other trial races were **Mr G T (JPN, C3, by Duramente)** and **Ho O Purosangue (JPN, C3, by Kizuna)**, who finished first and second respectively in the Wakaba Stakes (Listed, 2,000m) on March 16, as well as **Sixpence (JPN, C3, by Kizuna)**, **Allegro Brillante (JPN, C3, by Deep Brillante)** and **Lucullan Feast (JPN, C3, by Isla Bonita)**, the top three finishers in that order in the Spring Stakes (G2, 1,800m) the following day.

The Satsuki Sho field is also likely to include **Noble Roger (USA, C3, by Palace Malice)**, **Danon Decile (JPN, C3, by Epiphaneia)**, **Byzantine Dream (JPN, C3, by Epiphaneia)** and **Sunrise Earth (JPN, C3, by Rey de Oro)**, respective winners of the Shinzan Kinen (G3, 1,600m), the Keisei Hai (G3, 2,000m) in January, the Kisaragi Sho (G3, 1,800m) and the Sumire Stakes (Listed, 2,200m) in February. Another probable is the aforementioned graded winner **Gonbade Qabus**.



Sixpence, winner of 2024 Spring Stakes



Danon Decile, winner of 2024 Keisei Hai



Byzantine Dream, winner of 2024 Kisaragi Sho

Noble Roger, who is scheduled to start in the Mainichi Hai (G3, 1,800m) on March 23, and **Gonbade Qabus** may head to the NHK Mile Cup on May 5 instead of the 2,000m Satsuki Sho. The G1 event will include runners from two trials—the New Zealand Trophy (G2, 1,600m) on April 6 and the Arlington Cup (G3, 1,600m) a week later—as well as Oka Sho and Satsuki Sho runners who are better suited to a mile rather than stepping up to the 2,400m Yushun Himba or Tokyo Yushun. **Danon McKinley (JPN, C3, by Maurice)**, who won the Falcon Stakes (G3, 1,400m) on March 16, will also run in the NHK Mile Cup.



Noble Roger,
winner of 2024 Shinzan Kinen



Gonbade Qabus,
winner of 2023 Saudi Arabia Royal Cup



Danon McKinley,
winner of 2024 Falcon Stakes