

# Exclusive Topics for JAPAN AUTUMN INTERNATIONAL 2024 2nd Edition



October 2024

The Japan Racing Association

The Japan Racing Association proudly celebrated its 70th anniversary this year. Horse racing in Japan, suspended during World War II, resumed in 1948 under the direct management of the national government before the newly formed JRA took over in September 1954 to handle all aspects of the sport. On September 30, a ceremony was held in Tokyo to commemorate the occasion and to recognize key members of the horse racing industry for their contributions.



Equinox, winner of 2023 Japan Cup

In a glorious start to this milestone year, the 2024 season opened with two historic JRA developments. First, Equinox (JPN, by Kitanasan Black), recently retired to stud after capping a remarkable racing career with an overwhelming victory in the 2023 Japan Cup, topped the World's Best Racehorse Rankings compiled by the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), becoming just the second Japanese horse to do so and the first in nine years after Just a Way (JPN, by Heart's Cry). And second, for the first time ever, the Japan Cup led the World's Top 100 G1 Races based on the average ratings of the race's top four finishers.

In another notable development, JRA tested a new schedule at Niigata Racecourse over a two-week period between July and August, the hottest months of the year, as an experiment to address climate change. Normally, four races are held generally between 10am and noon, followed by a 50-minute break and then races 5–12, the last post time at around 4–4:30pm. During the test, however, the first race started at 9:35am, allowing five races to be completed by 11:35am, followed by a break of about 3.5 hours before races 6–12, the latter starting at 6:25pm.

To accommodate the extended hours, measures were taken to keep the crowd entertained and to ensure a smooth return home, mostly by public transport. On the stable side, especially for those running in the second half, most of the horses returned to their respective training centers at Miho and Ritto around midnight. While their connections generally appreciated being able to work during much cooler hours of day, some jockeys complained that it was difficult to maintain concentration over the longer hours.

However, the main races were arranged for TV broadcasting at around 3:30pm, as in the past, generally the hottest time of day, so further measures may need to be taken if temperatures continue to rise due to climate change. With much work still to be done, JRA announced in September that it will develop new solutions for extended hours to be tested at Niigata and Chukyo racecourses over a four-week period in 2025.

The new “Dirt Triple Crown” for three-year-olds began this year. The NAR-hosted series to determine the combined NAR/JRA winner, held at Oi Racecourse, included the Haneda Hai (Listed, dirt, 1,800m) in April, the Tokyo Derby (Listed, dirt, 2,000m) in June and the Japan Dirt Classic (Listed, dirt, 2,000m) in October. All three were dominated by JRA runners, including **Amante Bianco (JPN, C3, by Henny Hughes)**, **Ramjet (JPN, C3, by Majestic Warrior)** and **Forever Young (JPN, C3, by Real Steel)** in that order. Japanese dirt runners have shown significant strength in recent years, even overseas, including in the 2021 Breeders’ Cup Distaff, where Marche Lorraine (JPN, by Orfevre) became the first Japanese horse to win a dirt G1 in the USA, the 2023 Dubai World Cup won by **Ushba Tesoro (JPN, H7, by Orfevre)**, and this year’s Kentucky Derby, in which **Forever Young** nearly reached the pinnacle of U.S. dirt racing with a third-place finish.

However, no Japanese runner has ever won the most coveted title in Europe, the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m). This year it was hoped that **Shin Emperor (FR, C3, by Siyouni)**, a full brother to 2020 Arc victor Sottsass, would win the title for Japan, but he never broke out of midfield and finished 12th.

Meanwhile, Japan is looking forward to welcoming **Auguste Rodin (IRE, C4)**, an Irish-bred son of Deep Impact trained by Aidan O’Brien, to this year’s Japan Cup (G1, 2,400m) on November 24, which is likely to be his final run before retiring to stud.

(Contributed by Kenichi Nomoto, Nikkei)

The Sprinters Stakes (1,200m) on September 29, JRA’s first fall G1 event, was won by ninth-favorite **Lugal (JPN, C4, by Duramente)**, who claimed his inaugural G1 title after being sidelined for a half year with a fracture. The son of Duramente will run in the Hong Kong Sprint (G1, 1,200m) on December 8.

Lugal, winner of 2024 Sprinters Stakes





Chevalier Rose,  
winner of 2024 Kyoto Daishoten

Prep races towards the Tenno Sho (Autumn) (G1, 2,000m) on October 27 and the Japan Cup kicked off earlier this month. **Chevalier Rose (JPN, H6, by Deep Impact)**, eighth favorite in the Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m) on October 6, picked up his first graded title in the race and is expected to aim for the Japan Cup over the same distance. This year's winner of the Takarazuka Kinen (G1, 2,200m), **Blow the Horn (JPN, H5, by Epiphaneia)**, showed little in the same race and finished last, but will head to the

Japan Cup as planned.

**Sixpence (JPN, C3, by Kizuna)** scored a narrow victory in the Mainichi Okan (G2, 1,800m) on October 6, bouncing back nicely from a ninth in the Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m) in May. The Kizuna colt is likely to run in the Mile Championship (G1, 1,600m) on November 17.



Sixpence, winner of 2024 Mainichi Okan



Cervinia, winner of 2024 Shuka Sho

**Cervinia (JPN, F3, by Harbinger)** validated her victory in the Yushun Himba (Japanese Oaks, G1, 2,400m) by winning the Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m) on October 13, scoring her second G1 victory and becoming the fifth filly and first since Mikki Queen in 2015 to complete an Oaks-Shuka Sho double. The Harbinger filly will face a mixed field of older G1 rivals in the Japan Cup, where she will bid to become the first three-year-old filly to win the title since Almond Eye in 2018. Shuka Sho runner-up **Bond Girl (JPN, F3, by Daiwa Major)** has been given the rest of the season off, but is expected to aim for the Victoria Mile (G1, 1,600m) next year.

**Brede Weg (JPN, F4, by Lord Kanaloa)** won her comeback start, the Fuchu Himba Stakes (G2, 1,800m) on October 14, coming off a long 11-month break following her victory in the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,200m) last year. **Scintillation (JPN, M5, by Lord Kanaloa)** was second and 2024 Victoria Mile third-place finisher **Masked Diva (JPN, F4, by Rulership)** was third. **Brede Weg** has been given another break before resuming her fall campaign in either the Mile Championship or one of the Hong Kong International Races. **Masked Diva** was diagnosed with a tendon injury in her left foreleg and is due to be retired from racing.



Brede Weg,  
winner of 2024 Fuchu Himba Stakes





Lemon Pop,  
winner of 2023 Champions Cup

2023 Best Dirt Horse **Lemon Pop (USA, H6, by Lemon Drop Kid)** claimed his second straight Mile Championship Nambu Hai (dirt, 1,600m) title on October 14. **Peptide Nile (JPN, H6, by King Kamehameha)**, winner of this year's February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m), was second by 3/4 length. Both horses will run in the Champions Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m) on December 1.

In the Fuji Stakes (G2, 1,800m) on October 19, a trial race for the Mile Championship along with the Swan Stakes (G2, 1,400m) on October 26, was won by **Jun Blossom (JPN, H5, by World Ace)**. Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m) third-place finisher **Soul Rush (JPN, H6, by Rulership)** was second and 2022 Mile Championship winner **Serifos (JPN, H5, by Daiwa Major)** was fourth. All three will head to the Mile Championship.



Jun Blossom, winner of 2024 Fuji Stakes



Urban Chic, winner of 2024 Kikuka Sho

**Urban Chic (JPN, C3, by Suave Richard)** claimed the last leg of this year's Triple Crown, the Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m) on October 20, following his victory in the St. Lite Kinen (G2, 2,200m). The possibility of top finishers in the Kikuka Sho running in the Japan Cup is slim as the two races are held close together, so the Armina Kinen is a more likely next start.