

NAR Racing

The biggest difference between racing conducted by the JRA and Racing by Local Governments is that JRA returns a percentage of its revenue to the national treasury, whereas Racing by Local Governments contributes to the finances of the individual local government. Also, the majority of race meetings by local governments is conducted on weekdays during the day. The National Association for Racing (NAR) oversees the 16 racing organizers throughout the country.

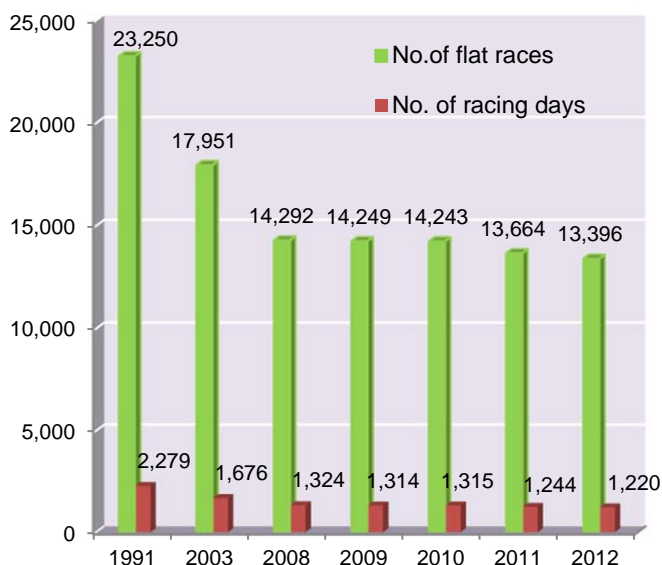
Races

All races held by NAR are flat races on dirt surface, with the exception of Ban-ei (Draft Horse Racing) at Obihiro Racecourse and turf races held at Morioka Racecourse – the only racecourse in local government racing with a turf surface.

In 2012, there were a total of 1,220 racing days, with 13,396 races held by local governments at the 16 racecourses. A total of 133,500 horses ran, with an average of 10.5 races per horse, in 2012.

Jump racing and harness racing, which had been run in the past, are currently not conducted due to declining numbers of available horses and jockeys.

Number of Race Days and Flat Races



Ban-ei (Draft Horse Racing)

Ban-ei racing is a unique kind of racing that is held only in Hokkaido by local government racing. It consists of draft horses weighing from 800 to 1,200 kg competing by pulling a sled with a jockey and a prescribed heavy load over a 200-meter dirt track that has two humps along the course.



History

The origin of draft horse racing dates back to Hokkaido's pioneer days, when contests of strength between horses used to transport lumber were held for celebrations and festivals. Dosanko (Hokkaido breeds) and other plow horse breeds native to Japan were used at the time. Belgian, Breton and Percheron lineage horses were then used after their subsequent introduction from Europe. Today, cross breeds between these three varieties, called "half breeds," or with native breeds are predominate, while purebreds are on the decline. The organized racing system was inaugurated by the racing authorities in 1946 and has continued to the present.



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Racing Calendar

Race meetings can last up to six days for racing conducted by government-designated prefectures and municipalities. A total of 1,374 meetings were held in 2012 in NAR.

NAR racing is conducted mainly on weekdays. There are differences in the schedules of racecourses in the metropolitan areas of Kanto, Tokai, Kansai and Hokkaido, and those of racecourses in other regions. Racecourses in major urban areas and Hokkaido hold their races on weekdays in order to avoid competition with JRA. On the other hand, in regions that are largely unaffected by JRA meetings, racing is primarily held on Saturdays and Sundays, when it is easier to attract local fans.

JBC races and other racing series

Based on the model of the BC (Breeders' Cup) in America and created from an initiative by breeders, the first JBC (Japan Breeding Farms' Cup) races were held at Ohi Racecourse in 2001. It consists of three races – the JBC Classic, Sprint and Ladies' Classic. As total prize money, the Classic offers ¥120 million, the highest amount in racing by local governments, while the Sprint offers ¥90 million and the Ladies' Classic ¥61.5 million, an unprecedented sum for racing by local governments.

Racing by local governments holds several different "Derby" races for three-year-olds on the local circuit. The interest in these Derby races were relatively low, partly because the prize money is lower compared to that of JRA's Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby) and nationwide recognition was low. Therefore, in order to raise awareness and interest, the six districts which held these separate Derby races collaborated and adjusted the racing calendar so that the Derby races are held over a continuous 6-day period at six different racecourses. Since 2007, this event has been tagged "Derby Week Series" to raise its profile and NAR has taken measures to expand nationwide off-track sales.

Also, NAR also conducts a series of races for fillies and mares, named "GRANDAME-JAPAN." The most outstanding fillies/mares are selected from each age group and they compete over a period of time, vying for the top spot – and incentive money – in their respective groups. Another series of races in the local circuit is the "Super Sprint Series," which began in 2011. It is a number of sprint races run over a track with only one bend.

Prize Money (purse)

Similar to JRA racing, prize money is generally allocated to the owners of the first five finishers in NAR racing. However, there is a huge disparity between the purses offered by different organizers. The highest purses are paid in thoroughbred races, and the largest first-place purse is ¥80 million for the JBC Classic. The total prize money in Racing by Local Governments in 2012 was ¥14.8 billion.

The system for distributing prize money to trainers, jockeys and grooms are similar to that of JRA racing.

International Relations

NAR first held its international invitation race in 1978, and ever since, it has been active in inviting jockeys from overseas to take part in their racing. The international invitation races known as the "Ladies Cup" was held for four consecutive years in the 1980's, with female jockeys from Europe, the USA, Canada and Japan competing with one another. During the five-year period from 1989 to 1993, NAR conducted the "International Queen Jockey Series," in which Japanese female jockeys rode together with female jockeys invited from the USA, Canada, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand, as part of an international friendly among female jockeys. From 1982 to 1997, Niigata Racecourse was the host to the "Japan-Korea Challenge Cup" races, in which jockeys from the two nations were invited to race in each other's racecourse.

In 1995, Ohi Racecourse formed a friendly relationship with Santa Anita Park in the USA, inviting jockeys from the California circuit to ride in Japan. The friendly jockey series lasted for several years, and for the first time in 2011, the Tokyo Metropolitan Racing Association held the "Santa Anita Trophy" race as the international invitational race at Ohi Racecourse to commemorate 25 years of night racing. In 2013, Tokyo City Keiba (Ohi Racecourse) and the Korean Racing Authority initiated the first-ever "Japan-Korea international invitational race," inviting each organization's horses to run in Ohi Racecourse and Seoul Racecourse, respectively. The two-race series was first held at Seoul Racecourse in August, with three Japanese runners.