



Exclusive Topics for JAPAN CUP 2007 and JAPAN CUP DIRT 2007 – Special Edition –

JRA's Countermeasures against the Outbreak of Equine Influenza

Horse racing in Japan suffered a severe blow from the outbreak of Equine Influenza (EI) which spread out in August this year. The disease, which appeared in Japan for the first time between December 1971 through January 1972 and affected 6,782 horses around the nation, made another major breakout after 36 years. Thanks to systematic control measures applied since the first epidemic, most horses that were affected only experienced a mild degree of the flu. However, the extensive transportation of racehorses in recent years made the highly contagious disease all the more widely spread throughout the nation, affecting any exchange races within Japan as well as overseas.

The first sign of EI was detected on August 15th. A rapid test performed to identify the cause of multiple horses running a fever both at Ritto and Miho training centers showed that the horses were positive for EI. Immediate measures were taken to ban any horse transport between the JRA facilities and outside farms and initial intentions were to continue racing under restricted conditions within each facility. However, the time required to grasp the overall situation forced race meetings at Niigata, Kokura and Sapporo during August 18 and 19 to be postponed. Fortunately, the spreading subsided thereafter and with situations under control, JRA decided to resume racing beginning from the week-end of August 25, under the condition that all horses undergo a simple test prior to the race. With the exception of one horse being tested positive at Sapporo on the August 26, none have proved positive since.

Meanwhile, EI affected horses based in NAR tracks took a few days to surface. All but three regional tracks (Fukuyama, Kochi, and Arao) that rarely have any contact with outside circles were found to be infected and a total of 25 race days at seven racetracks combined were postponed. The equestrian horses are also not freed of the situation, and many events including October's equestrian events of the National Sports Festival in Akita prefecture, were ruled out.



Horse transport bans between JRA facilities and outside farms were gradually lifted since September 4. However, exchange races between JRA and NAR did not resume until October and NAR-based horses partly permitted to JRA races at the end of the October. Also, an affected horse was also found among one of JRA's jockey school horses at Shiroy, giving JRA no choice but to close down the facility until all suspicion is cleared for reopening. Incidentally, Meisho Samson, who aimed to challenge the Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m, FRA) and Delta Blues and Pop Rock, the winner and runner-up of the 2006 Melbourne Cup (G1, 3,200m, AUS), were all forced to cancel their overseas endeavor and alter their racing agenda within Japan.

Later findings determined that the type of virus to be "H3N8" the same type of flu virus sporadically occurring in Europe and North America. Mandatory vaccine policy that requires shots, twice as a year and once every six-month thereafter has helped limit the extent of damage in Japan. However, the condition was much more serious and wide-spreading in Australia where EI was an unknown disease until infected only a few days after the outbreak in Japan, therefore flu shots were uncommon. This case brings home JRA and its horseracing circles how serious contagious diseases accompany active racehorses as well as stallions and broodmares traveling at a global scale. Obviously, an adequate restructure of epidemic prevention is imperative.

The Close Outlook of 2007 Japan Cup and Japan Cup Dirt

With the Copa Republica Argentina (2,500m) over on November 4, the results of all the conceivable prep races in Japan towards the Japan Cup are on the table and the possible Japan Cup/Japan Cup nominees listed. Compared to a record low two foreign horses in the 2006 Japan Cup, this year's race will be contested with four foreign-trained runners in the Japan Cup and three in the JC Dirt. With the absence of a particular "star runner" like Deep Impact in this year's running, the outcome of the 2007 Japan Cup could involve any of the proven runners including contestants from overseas. As for the Japan Cup Dirt, the three-year-old generation will be the ones to watch out of the Japanese runners.

JAPAN CUP

The ace runner among the Japanese group is no doubt **Meisho Samson (4c, by Opera House, JPN)**, who won both the Tenno Sho Spring (G1, 3,200m) and Tenno Sho Autumn (G1, 2,000m) and became only the fourth horse to achieve the double Tenno Sho title in the same year. Although the outbreak of the equine influenza during the



summer prevented the talented colt from his overseas challenge in the Arc de Triomphe (G1, 2,400m, FRA) and forced his racing schedule to be altered within Japan, his fourth G1 victory in the first start of the fall campaign in partnership with star jockey, Yutaka Take in the Tenno Sho Autumn confirmed his status as the most prominent middle-distance turf runner. From a good break from the innermost barrier, the '06 JRA Award champion three-year-old kept close to the pace and took advantage of an opening in the inside when Cosmo Bulk made his move at the stretch and cruised to the front while several runners on the outside were heavily affected by Eishin Beauty, who angled out sharply and interfering their path.

The fourth place finisher, **Pop Rock (6h, by Helissio, JPN)**, who gave an impressive runner-up effort in the Melbourne Cup (G1, 3,200m, AUS) and the Arima Kinen (G1, 2,500m) last year, would welcome the extra distance from his last run in the Tenno Sho.

Admire Moon (4c, End Sweep, JPN), who was sent to post second favorite behind Meisho Samson in the Tenno Sho Autumn after a four-month break, finished a disappointing sixth after being forced to race wide at the stretch. The colt was purchased by Darley Japan Farm (DJF) from former owner, Riichi Kondo in July. He plans to retire to stud after this Japan Cup.

Vodka (3f, by Tanino Gimlet, JPN) who became the first filly in 64 years to claim the Japanese Derby title was found to have a minor injury in her right hind and was scratched from the Queen Elizabeth II Commemorative Cup (G1, 2,200m) on November 12, but is currently listed among the nominees for the Japan Cup.

Among other older candidates, **Inti Raimi (5h, by Special Week, JPN)**, who was runner-up in the Derby as a three-year-old and won back-to-back in the Asahi Challenge Cup (G3, 2,000m) and the Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m) this fall, is one of the hopefuls. Inti Raimi had been in a long slump since the fall of his three-year-old season and had been winless for 28 months but is making an upward turn towards this year's Japan Cup. Trainer Sasaki Shozo hopes to claim the JC title again after Tap Dance City five years ago.

The runner-up of the 2006 Japan Cup, **Dream Passport (4c, by Fuji Kiseki, JPN)** will also make his appearance for his second attempt in the race. Although sidelined from racing since fracturing his right fore after his runner-up performance in the Hanshin Daishoten (G2, 3,000m) in March, the Fuji Kiseki colt, who makes his first comeback in this race, has already proven his ability as a three-year-old, finishing within the



money in all three legs of the Triple Crown as well and other contests against older G1 company. It is only a matter of how much he can return to his true form for the race.

At this stage, other probable candidates would include, **Cosmo Bulk (6h, by Zagreb, JPN)**, who makes his fourth entry in this race. He still proves strong potential this year with another impressive performance overseas, finishing second in the Singapore Airlines International Cup (G1, 2,000m), but forced to race out in the Tenno Sho Autumn, finished within the frame in fifth. **Rosenkreuz (5h, by Sunday Silence, JPN)** and Melbourne Cup winner, **Delta Blues (5h, by Dance in the Dark, JPN)** who finished 11th and 12th in the Tenno Sho Autumn respectively, are also among the list of runners this year.

JAPAN CUP DIRT

While many of the key dirt runners are troubled by injuries, the three-year-olds are rising to prominence. The JBC Classic (2,000m, dirt) held at Ooi Racecourse on October 31 and considered one of the most important prep races towards the Japan Cup Dirt.

Vermilion (5h, by El Condor Pasa, JPN) won the race by an overwhelming 4-length. Ridden by Yutaka Take, the multiple grade-race winner who had already scored a G1 win in January with Christophe Lemaire came through the center of the track from racing mid-field and drew off to his fifth career grade-race win with ease, despite concerns about his condition prior to his first start seven months after his return from Dubai.

Second in the JBC Classic, **Furioso (3c, by Brian's Time, JPN)** is owned by DFJ and based at Masayuki Kawashima's yard of Funabashi Racecourse. Having won the Japan Dirt Derby (2,000m, dirt) in July, the JCB Classic was his first test against older grade-race company. Furioso maintained his position within the pace and took the lead at one stage at the stretch although succumbing to Vermilion in the end. His preparation for his fall campaign was also affected by restrictions involving his return to training due to the outbreak of influenza but he has adjusted well and is hopeful of improving his form even more towards his next start.

Sunrise Bacchus (5h, by Henessy, JPN) and **Blue Concorde (7h, by Fusaichi Concorde, JPN)**, who finished third and fourth respectively in the same prep race, are also headed to the Japan Cup Dirt this year. Both horses were forced wide around the final turn and were unable to turn in their best performances. They are also the first two



finishers in this year's February Stakes (G1, 1,600m, dirt) held at Tokyo Racecourse, but the extra furlongs in the Japan Cup Dirt remains an issue for both runners.

Aside from those that ran in the JCB Classic, **Dragon Fire (3c, by Brian's Time, JPN)** is another prominent three-year-old, who has had only eight starts so far, coming off a four-win streak. He also topped a field of older grade-race company in the Sirius Stakes (G3, 2,000m, dirt), splitting horses from being checked at the straight and drawing off to a length victory. The Japan Cup Dirt will be his first attempt against G1 caliber, but his potential equals to last year's winner, Alondite (4c, by El Condor Pasa, JPN), who is currently ruled out of racing with a fractured leg.

Meisho Tokon (5h, by Mayano Top Gun, JPN) is also on an upward trend. Since winning his dirt race debut in August last year, he has scored six wins out of nine dirt race starts and has only been out of the money once. His only poor performance was in the February Stakes (11th) over a considerably muddy track. He is being carefully prepared for the coming race since his latest victory in September in the Elm Stakes (1,700m) and is already proven over distances exceeding 2,000 meters.

Prospective runners from the field that ran in another prep race, the Musashino Stakes (G3, 1,600m), is the winner **Eishin Lombard (5h, by Victory Gallop, USA)**, who made-all to capture his first grade-race victory, runner-up **Wild Wonder (5h, by Brian's Time, JPN)** and fourth place finisher **Field Rouge (5h, by Croco Rouge, JPN)**. Wild Wonder has won three starts including two grade-race titles although still to experience the longer distance. Field Rouge, third place in last year's Japan Cup Dirt, has finished within the frame in all his starts at Tokyo Racecourse including a fifth in this year's February Stakes. Though yet to capture a grade-race victory, he has already landed two wins during the summer at Hakodate, Hokkaido.

Former turf runner, **Fusaichi Ho O (3c, by Jungle Pocket, JPN)** makes a bid to claim this year's Japan Cup Dirt. Scoring four straight wins since his debut on turf including three grade-race titles, the three-year-old colt was third in the Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, 2,000m) and will be tested on dirt for the first time under French jockey, Olivier Peslier.

Note: All ages are as of November 2007.