NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RACING, JAPAN (NAR)

MEMBER PROFILE | OCTOBER 2026



The **Asian Racing Federation (ARF)** is a regional federation comprising 28 national racing authorities and racing-related organisations from across Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Middle East.

This *Member Profile* features the National Association of Racing, Japan (NAR), showcasing NAR's key milestones, races and initiatives.



MESSAGE FROM MR HIROSHI SAITO
PRESIDENT & CEO
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RACING, JAPAN



We, the National Association of Racing (NAR), are a governing body established under the Horse Racing Act which serves as the central coordinating authority for racing by local governments.

As a public corporation, our mission is to promote the fair, impartial and smooth operation of racing by local governments, while also contributing to the improvement and breeding of horses and the advancement of livestock industries.

To enhance the overall quality of dirt racing, including racing by local governments, we reorganised our race series in 2024, establishing a structured system for dirt races and inaugurating the 3YO Dirt Triple Crown. Top horses from various local jurisdictions have since gathered to compete in these highly competitive races.

We aim to clearly define dirt racing by local governments and provide a platform where highly capable horses can perform according to their aptitude, delivering attractive and high quality races.

As part of this initiative, we are advancing plans to obtain international grading for principal races by local governments. Through the promotion of dirt racing, we aim to contribute to the global advancement of horse racing as a whole.

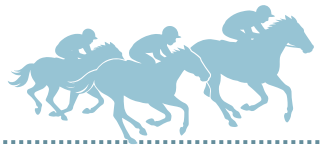
Get in Touch: https://www.goracing.jp/english/ intl@nar.keiba.go.jp

2025 FACTS AND FIGURES

1,300
Race Meetings



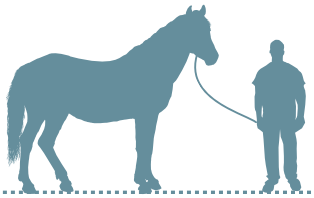
364
Race Days



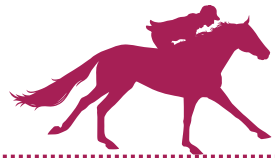
15
Racecourses



430
Trainers



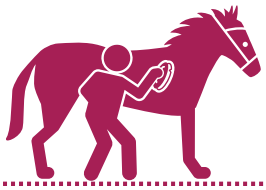
275
Jockeys



6,068
Owners



2,458
Stablehands



2.68M
Attendees



$7.035B
Sales Break Down (USD)



74
Off-Track and
Off-Course Betting



KEY MILESTONES

1946 Promulgation and enactment of law concerning racing by local governments

1962 Amendment of horse racing law and establishment of NAR

1969 Invitational race for jockeys from ARF members held at Oi racecourse during 8th ARC in Tokyo

1986 First night race, "Twinkle Race", held at Oi racecourse

1997 Introduction of race classification system

1998 Principal races by local governments listed in Blue Book

2001 First Japan Breeding Farms' Cup (JBC) held at Oi racecourse



Twinkle Race at Oi Racecourse

KEY MILESTONES CON'T

2006 First overseas G1 win by NAR-affiliated horse, Cosmo Bulk (JPN), in G1 Singapore Airlines International Cup

2010 International quarantine stable established at NAR's Racing Education Center

2011 Tokyo Daishoten run as international G1 race

2017 Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun (L) designated as the Road to the Kentucky Derby

2019 Multilingual NAR website launched in English, Chinese, Korean and French

2021 Oi Racecourse introduced left-handed racing and is the only racecourse worldwide with races in both directions

2024 Race system reorganised, introducing a structured dirt race framework and 3YO Dirt Triple Crown



2025 Tokyo Daishoten



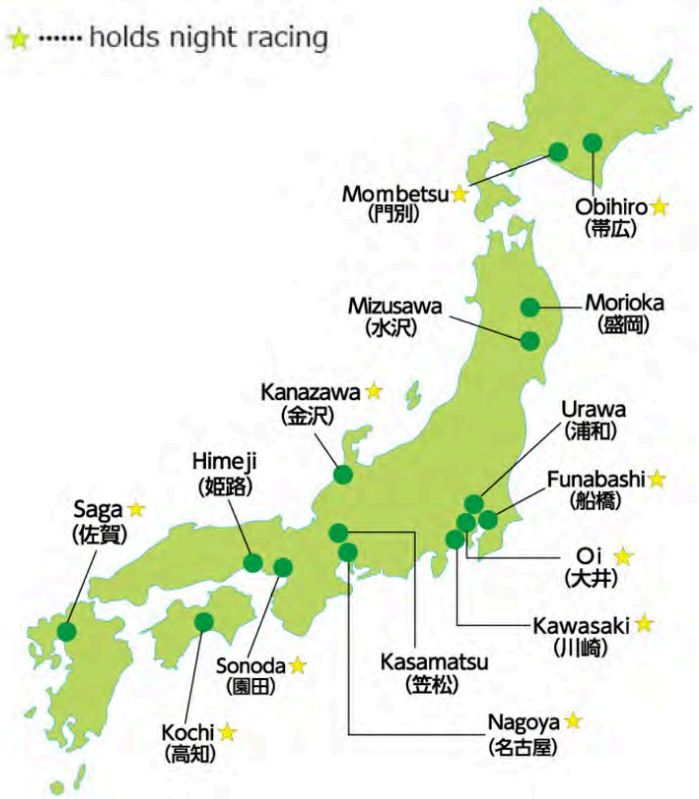
2024 Haneda Hai - first leg of the 3YO Dirt Triple Crown

OPERATING FRAMEWORK

There are two types of horse racing in Japan: racing by local governments at the prefectural or municipal level, or partial cooperatives formed by municipalities; and racing conducted by the Japan Racing Association (JRA).

Racing by local governments is conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, with the objective of contributing to the improvement of horse breeding, the development of the livestock industry and the support of local government finances.

There are 14 organisers of racing by local governments (two prefectures, two cities and 10 partial cooperatives) which operate 15 racecourses across 12 prefectures. Races are held almost every day of the year and in addition to daytime races, the organisers also offer night races and Ban-ei horse racing—the world's only form of draft horse racing in which horses compete by pulling sleds.





NAR facilitates races by registering owners and horses; training and licensing trainers and jockeys; and training and dispatching race officials. It also helps to ensure the fairness of racing; coordinates and advises on race scheduling and programming; operates a betting system shared by racing organisers; and collects feedback from race organisers, implementing any adjustments and conducting joint publicity initiatives as needed.

NAR is funded through a portion of the sales revenue from each racing organiser. These funds are then divided into two types of grants: the first is used for projects aimed at the improvement of horse breeding and the promotion of the livestock industry; whilst the second is used for projects to ensure the fair and smooth operation of racing by local governments. Since 2005, NAR has also combined its grants with those received from JRA to subsidise racehorse breeding initiatives including, amongst others, the introduction of stallions, broodmares and a pedigree registration programme.

KEY INTERNATIONAL RACES



TOKYO DAISHOTEN (G1)

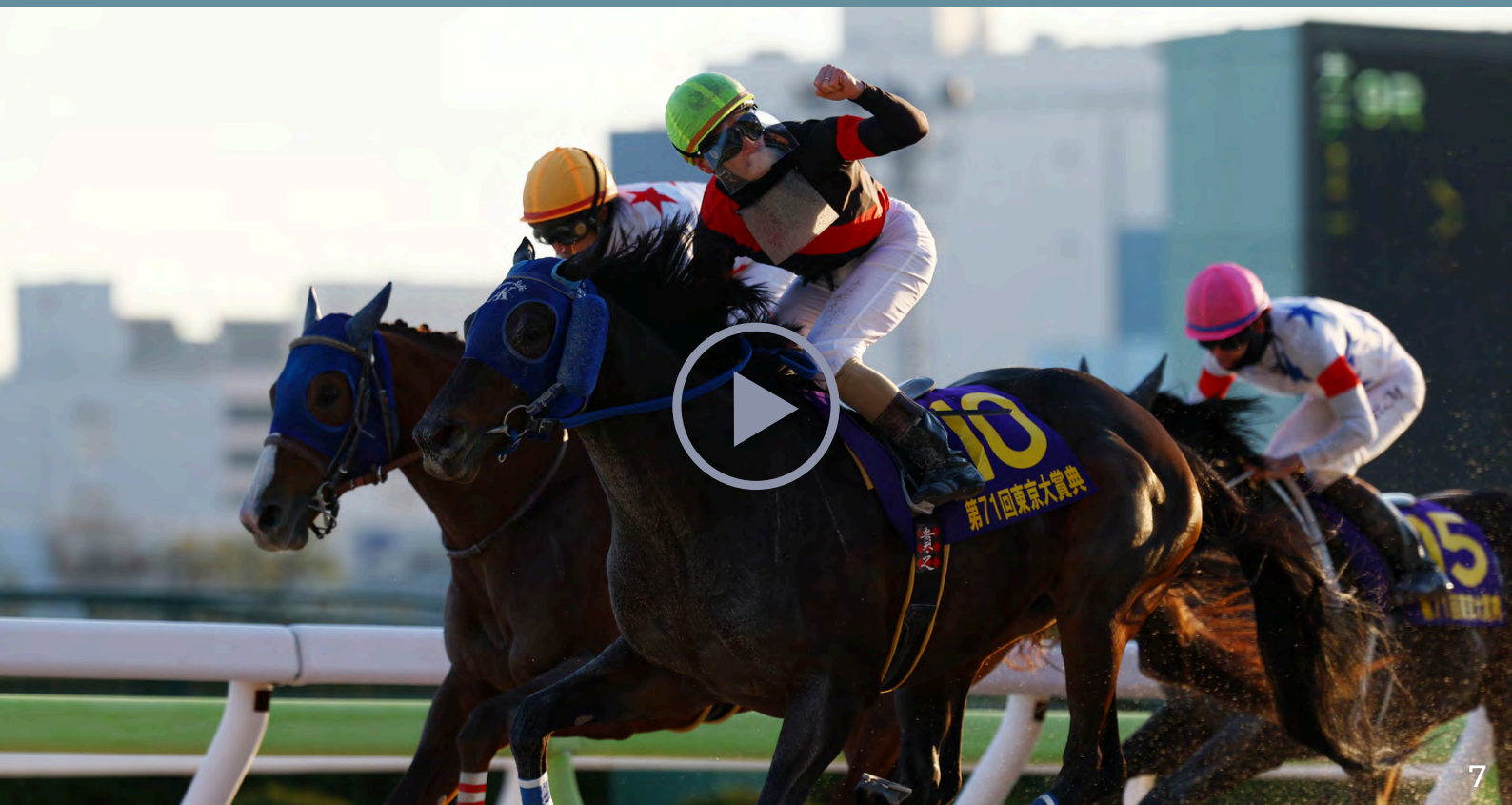
The Tokyo Daishoten is the only internationally-recognised Grade 1 race on the NAR circuit and brings together both JRA and NAR runners. Held at the end of December each year at the right-handed Ōi racecourse in Tokyo's Shinagawa area, the race is run over 2000m and offers a prizemoney of JPY 136,000,000 (USD 0.9 million).



ZEN-NIPPON NISAI YUSHUN (LISTED)

The Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun awards 20 qualifying points on the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby, alongside the Hyacinth Stakes (February) and Fukuryu Stakes (March). Open to participation from both JRA and NAR horses, this dirt race is run over 1600m at Kawasaki Racecourse in mid-December each year, offering a prizemoney of JPY 71,400,000 (USD 0.44 million).

Click here for a promotional video featuring the Tokyo Daishoten and Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun.



SERIES RACES

GRANDAME-JAPAN

These principal races are designed to expand the stage for outstanding fillies and mares, and to promote exchange while enhancing the appeal of mares-only racing. Races are organised by age category, with points awarded based on performance. Top earners in the 2YO, 3YO, 3YO+ Spring and 3YO+ Autumn categories also receive bonus prizemoney.



MIRAI YUSHUN

Established in 2008, this series features 2YO racing across Japan and serves as a stepping stone to dirt principal races and, ultimately, the 3YO Classic races. In 2023, the “Next Star” races (designated principal-rank races) were introduced to further promote 2YO racing and enhance the overall racing system.



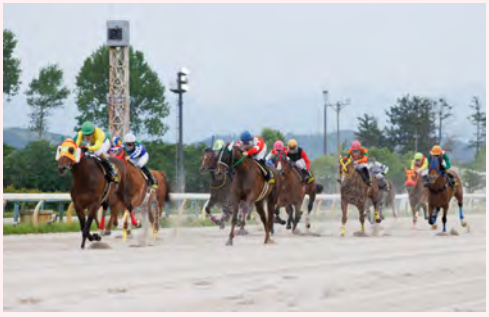
3YO SPRINT SERIES

Established in 2024, this championship series provides a pinnacle for short-distance dirt racing at the three-year-old level. It brings together promising horses that competed in the four spring “Next Star” races to compete in the Hyogo Championship.



JOCKEYS’ CHAMPIONSHIP

The Jockeys' Championship brings together leading jockeys from across Japan to compete for the title of champion jockey in NAR racing. The winner will go on to represent NAR at the World All-Star Jockeys, JRA's international invitational jockeys' competition.



YOUNG JOCKEYS SERIES

This series is a competition involving young jockeys from NAR and JRA. Following qualifying rounds held nationwide, the top eight riders from each organisation advance to the finals where they will compete for the championship across both NAR and JRA racecourses.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Racing Education Centre

NAR operates the Racing Education Centre in Nasushiobara City, Tochigi Prefecture, which provides education and training for jockeys and trainers seeking careers in racing by local governments.

Prospective jockeys undertake a two-year residential training programme at the Centre, where they receive comprehensive instruction in riding skills, horsemanship, racing regulations, equine knowledge and general education. The programme is open to all candidates regardless of prior riding experience, and graduates account for the vast majority of jockeys currently active in NAR racing. In 2022, a new training facility incorporating classrooms, training rooms and a gymnasium was opened to further enhance the learning environment.

In addition to jockey and trainer education, the Centre supports the development of racing personnel including stewards, judges and starters. These officials may be dispatched at the request of race organisers, helping to uphold the safe and fair conduct of racing throughout Japan.





Left: Cherry Blossom Avenue at the Racing Education Centre |
Right: 107th Class Graduation Ceremony

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RACING
FEDERATION

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