

[Guide To Flat Racing](#)

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The ClassicsDoncaster- The St. Leger

No horse since Nijinsky in 1970 and Bahram in 1935 before him has ever won the 'Triple Crown' of Classics open to Colts- the 2000 Guineas, The Derby and the St. Leger.

2,000 Guineas Stakes

Course: Newmarket

Date: First weekend in May

Distance: 1 mile

Open to: 3 y/o Colts and Fillies

The first classic of the season open to Colts and Fillies, the 2,000 Guineas is when the top miler's Classic reputations are put on the line for the first time.

Taking place on Newmarket's Rowley mile course, the race is an intense test of speed, but as the race draws on and the combatants climb the Rowley Mile's hill stamina is sincerely tested too.

Famous recent winners include Nijinsky, Brigadier Gerard, Dancing Brave, Rock of Gibraltar, George Washington and 2008 saw an incredible race as Henrythenavigator edged out New Approach by a nose.

1,000 Guineas Stakes

Course: Newmarket

Date: First weekend in May

Distance: 1 mile

Open to: 3 y/o Fillies

The 1,000 Guineas is held the day after the 2,000 Guineas on the same Newmarket Rowley Mile course, but is open only Fillies.

The youngest of the Classics, it was first run in 1814 and includes amongst its winners Pretty Polly (1904), Petite Etoile (1959), Miesque (1987 - on the way to back-to-back victories in the Breeders' Cup Mile), and Bosra Sham in 1996.

The Oaks

Course: Epsom

Date: First weekend in June

Distance: 1 mile and 4 furlongs

Open to: 3 y/o Fillies

Epsom's Ladies Day is the place to dress up in your best to see the finest fillies

competing in the feature race - The Oaks. It is the day when Ladies take centre stage both on and off the course.

The Epsom racecourse itself provides the ultimate test for the world's finest fillies. The perfection of the turf in the summer sunshine deceives the eye into ironing out the steep incline, the deceptive cambers and the unforgiving descent into Tattenham Corner.

Past winners include Pretty Polly (1904), Sun Chariot (1942), Oh So Sharp (1985), Ramruma (1999) and Ouija Board, who took the 2004 running and went on to win that year's Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf.

The Derby

Course: Epsom

Date: First weekend in June

Distance: 1 mile and 4 furlongs

Open to: 3 y/o Colts and Fillies

Derby Day dates back to 1780 and is still the greatest flat race in the world. The Derby remains the race that everyone wants to win, as horses and riders are pushed to their limit around the unique and challenging course.

The absolute Blue Riband of flat racing, Derby Day is a great day out and always has a very special atmosphere.

Winners of the Derby include greats like Dante (1945), Nijinsky (1970), Mill Reef (1971), Shergar (1981), Nashwan (1989), Galileo (2001) and in 2008 New Approach edged out Tartan Bearer in a thrilling finish.

The St. Leger

Course: Doncaster

Date: Second weekend in September

Distance: 1 mile and 6 furlongs

Open to: 3 y/o Colts and Fillies

The St Leger is the oldest classic race, dating back to 1776

There are too many famous St Leger moments to list, but highlights include the phenomenal Nijinsky and Lester Piggott winning the Triple Crown in 1970, the Queen's Dunfermline out-battling Alleged the only time he was ever beaten in his racing career, and Oh So Sharp landing the Fillies' Triple Crown in 1985.

The last Classic of the season, the St. Leger is still a truly great race and part of a fantastic festival.

Structure Of Flat Racing

Flat racing is a term commonly used to denote a form of horse racing which is run over a level track at a predetermined distance.

The season stretches across the summer months, ensuring better weather than Jump racing, and the prize money is significantly better on the level than over the obstacles.

Flat racing is a global, glamorous and lucrative sport with prestigious and historic meetings held across Europe as well as in the US, Australia, the Middle East and the Far East.

Racing takes place on a natural grass surface (turf) or on a synthetic surface (all-weather).

The flat races in Great Britain are run over a variety of distances:
Please note: 1 furlong = 220 yards

Sprints: 5, 6 or 7 furlong races
Middle distance: 1m to 1m 4f races
Stayers races: 1m 6f - 2mile races

In Great Britain, flat racing is split into three distinctive bands:

Classics
Class 1 or Conditions races
Class 2-7 or Handicap races

Classic Races

In British horse racing, The Classics are a series of horse races run over the flat (i.e. without jumps). Each classic is run once each year and is restricted to horses that are three years old. There are five Classic races:

2,000 Guineas Stakes
1,000 Guineas Stakes
Epsom Oaks
Epsom Derby
St. Leger Stakes

Visit our Classics page for more information about the Classic races.

Class 1 or Conditions races

The top level of flat racing. In Class 1 races the horses carry weights which are laid down by the conditions attached to the race, e.g. weights are allocated according

the sex of the runners, the age of the runners (referred to as 'weight for age') or the quality of runners, with horses that have won certain values of races giving weight to less successful entrants.

Class 1 races are further divided into the following categories:

Pattern races

'Pattern' races are the best in flat racing. Pattern races are divided into the following sub categories:

Group 1 - Races of major international importance.

Group 2 - Less important than Group 1, but still major international races

Group 3 - Important domestic races

Listed races

Have less prestige than the group races but are still recognised as high quality races and more important than Handicaps.

Class 2-7 or Handicap races

In Handicap races the British Horseracing Authority official handicapper gives horses a rating according to their ability. This rating then translates to the weight that the horse has to carry in the race, in the interest of making it fair so that poorer horses still have a chance of competing against better horses.

Handicaps are the bread and butter daily races, although some of these are also quite prestigious.

Handicaps are divided up from Class 2-7 to make sure horses of similar ratings are racing against each other:

Class 2 - Heritage Handicaps, Handicaps of rating 86-100, 91-105 and 96-110

Class 3 - Handicaps of 76-90, and 81-95

Class 4 - Handicaps of rating 66-80, and 71-85

Class 5 - Handicaps of rating 56-70, and 61-75

Class 6 - Handicaps of rating 46-60, and 51-65

Class 7 - Handicaps of rating 46-50