

BREEDING STATISTICS 2022-23 - PART 1

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Usha Stud was established by the late Maj. P K Mehra in 1973 within the precincts of the President's Estate. He was then the Commandant of the President's Bodyguard. It was there that Usha Stud's first stallion, Grey Gaston, covered the mare Dusty Marta. A year later, the establishment moved its location to Carterpuri. That's where Dusty Marta's foal, the first born at Usha Stud, saw the light of day. That foal was Manitou whose record of winning the Indian Derby by ten lengths still stands. Usha Stud thus completed the fifty years of its existence in 2022 and celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2023. Usha Stud horses were very much to the fore in the celebrations and recorded some notable achievements in racing year 2022-23:-

In December, the victory of King's Ransom in the Indian 1000 Guineas made Usha Stud's Classic tally the highest in the country. It still remains perched at the very top.

Mirra's tenacious triumph in the Indian Derby over stud mate King's Ransom in February gave Usha Stud its 15th win in the race and took it five clear over the chasing pack. The first four horses in The Indian Derby were all Usha-breds and they enabled the farm to achieve a rare distinction.

When Something Royal won the Nilgiris 1000 Guineas in May, Speaking of Which became the ninth Usha Stud stallion to be inducted in the Hall of Fame. No other farm in India has stood as many Hall of Fame stallions.

At the end of the year, Usha Stud won the Champion Stud title, its ninth and also completed its second hat-trick.

Mirra's sire Speaking of Which won his first Champion Sire crown.

Multidimensional, five times Champion Sire himself, got his first title as the Champion Maternal Grandsire.

The Champion Stud farm is decided based on a point-based formula approved by the Turf Authorities of India. The farm where a horse is bred gets one point for winning an ordinary race,

two points for winning a race where prize money is above Rs. 5 lakh to the winner and points for black-type races. 30 points are allotted for winning a Gr.1 race, 15 for placing second and nine for finishing third. For a Gr.2 race, the points are 20, 8 and 4 and for a Gr.3 race the allotment is 10, 4 and 2. The first honours were instituted for the year 1995-96 and the first winner, Usha Stud, received the award during the Indian Turf Invitation Cup weekend at Bangalore in 1997. The formula was tweaked in the early years but has remained unaltered for many years now.

The statistics for the top five finishers are given below.

Rank (Previous Rank)	Farm (Location)	Runners	AE Index	Black-Type	Ordinary Race Point	Total Points
1. (1)	Usha/Mehra Stud (Haryana)	167	1.98	706	161	867
2. (2)	Poonawalla Farms (Maharashtra)	281	1.5	483	337	820
3. (3)	Nanoli Stud (Maharashtra)	132	1.65	429	130	559
4. (6)	Sohna Stud (Haryana)	169	1.2	374	127	501
5. (11)	Mukteshwar Stud (Uttar Pradesh)	122	1.38	132	161	293

During the year, Usha Stud had eight Classic winners of 13 Classics including four of the five Indian Classics. As the winner of Bangalore Oaks and the Indian Derby, Mirra grabs the spotlight but a strong case can also be made for King's Ransom who won three Indian Classics and placed second in the Indian Derby as well as the Indian Turf Invitation Cup. In terms of contribution of points, King's Ransom gave Usha Stud more than double the points as compared to Mirra. Remediesofspring, Salento, Imperial Power, Something Royal, Livermore and Synthesis were the other Usha-bred Classic winners.

Another Usha stalwart was the older grey Northern Lights. He failed to win in his first three starts at Mumbai but then struck a purple patch to remain unbeaten in seven starts in 2023 which included five black-type races; one of them was the Maj. P.K. Mehra Memorial Super Mile, Gr.1, a win that would have gladdened the hearts of everyone at Usha Stud.

It was a start to finish victory for Usha Stud as it led at the end of each quarter from the Poonawalla Farms. The lead was never overwhelming but always comfortable. Poonawalla Farms had 281 runners on the track -- the most by any stud farm -- as against 167 that represented Usha Stud. The higher numbers kept Poonawalla Farms very much in the hunt but in the end they had to settle for the runner-up berth despite the fact they won more than double the number of races as compared to Usha Stud. The difference was in the quality of races; Poonawalla Farms won just 4 Classics against the 13, including four Derbies, won by Usha Stud. Another noticeable fact was that while Poonawalla runners dominated the shorter races,

Usha Stud excelled over longer distances. These two nurseries have broken away from the rest; in the last dozen years, both have won the Championship four times and are the only two establishments in the country who have never finished out of the top five.

Nanoli Stud finished third and hence there was no change in the finishing order of the top three stud farms. Most stud farms in India have started on a smaller scale and expanded as they tasted success. Nanoli Stud, established in the early 1990s, was an exception. From the outset, it was meticulously planned, had ample acreage and in time became a showpiece equipped with modern technology. A few years back, the Nanoli location was abandoned -- though the name continued to be used --and the operation moved to east of Pune. The farm had its moments in the sun while still at Nanoli but has been more consistent following the shift, winning its only Championship in 2016-17 and never being out of the top three in the last eight years except once. Dyf (South India Derby) and Jamari (Derby Bangalore) provided Nanoli with Classic wins in 2022-23.

The exploits of the evergreen Juliette, Success (Calcutta Derby), La Reina (Bangalore Derby) and Enabler (Pune Derby) contributed handsomely to Sohna Stud occupying the fourth rung. That is the highest it has finished in recent years. Sohna's success has come predominantly from its 'got-abroads' like Juliette, Success and Enabler. Its own stallions -- Ontario, Noverre, Planetaire and others -- have had limited impact at Classic level.

With a leap from eleventh spot the previous year to a position in the top five, Mukteshwar Stud has stunned some established nurseries. It has come a long way from its early days when it was essentially breeding horses for polo. It was then located at Garh Mukteshwar on the right bank of the Ganga. Some years back, after Angad Singh Sandhu, a third generation breeder had taken over, the farm acquired bigger facilities a bit further away and since then there has been a steady upward swing. Two Classic winners of the year, Forsetti and Time and Tide, were bred at Mukteshwar.

PAST THE POST

The first authentic annual breeding statistics, covering the year 1975-76, appeared in the Indian Turf Statistical Record published by the National Horse Breeding Society. They were published regularly in the '70s but inexplicable gaps started to appear in the '80s. The Stud Book Authority of India started publishing the statistics in its annual publication The Return of Mares from the early '90s. When it did so, the statistics for the previous missing years were also compiled but they were not published retrospectively.