

Will Sumo Ireland Show in Thailand?

by Mark Buckton

If recent rumblings on the amateur sumo scene are anything to go by, Sumo Ireland could well prove itself the proverbial flash in the pan if it fails to attend the Sumo World Championships in Thailand later this year.

The organization that pulled in so much help just to be allowed to register with the global amateur sumo body, the International Sumo Federation (IFS) ahead of the 2006 championships in Sakai City in Osaka, was initially seen by some as little more than a gimmick given the then publicly stated aim of at least one leading Irish official to have himself crowned 'World Champion' (in / at anything) in a fixed period.

However, despite having been provided with the benefit of the doubt by the Tokyo based IFS, and even, at one point drawing the

attention and aid of Irish Embassy staff and residents of Japan, those initial concerns are now resurfacing. Sumo Ireland has failed to hold its own national Irish championships to date and has not yet it seems, been represented in any way whatsoever at any of the events sponsored by their regional body - the European Sumo Union (ESU) - or fellow European states in the 10 months since IFS recognition.

Whether or not rikishi from the Emerald Isle will make an attempt to participate in the invitational European Games in Kiev, Ukraine on July 20th is as of yet unknown but even if such an attempt is made they may be hampered by the ongoing issue of lack of ESU membership.

Almost all amateur sumo bodies suffer a lack of funding and

struggles to find sponsorship and the cash to compete internationally so claims by Sumo Ireland along those lines would likely fall on unsympathetic ears especially as offers of help in joining the ESU in late 2006 and early 2007 from at least one ESU official have been ignored - leaving the Irish sumo body noticeable by its glaring absence from the list of member nations on the new, official ESU site.

To add to Irish woes, in just the past week it also came to light that the official Sumo Ireland homepage, the only source of constant publicity Sumo Ireland had secured to date, had vanished. Fans were left wondering if Sumo Ireland was a thing of the past but it now appears the page is still around even if in a different location - accessible by way of the google or yahoo search engines.