

Elevator Ride

by Lon Howard

Because there isn't any precedent, I've always regarded the Elevator Rikishi project to be a work in progress, although it's been quite a while since any changes were made to the criteria. The last change added a Longevity Factor (LF) to the calculation process, to 'reward' rikishi whose elevator prowess was maintained over a longer period. That makes sense, but only to a certain point, I now believe. There are several rikishi who had stellar careers of uncommonly long duration... so long in fact that when you plug in their bulging Longevity Factor, it makes them appear to be elevator rikishi when in fact they were not, and were never thought of that way. Two examples are Takamiyama and Terao, whose placement on the all-time list of #26 and #31 respectively, is due almost solely to their large LF of 1.97 and 1.98.

(By the way, one reason I've never published the complete Elevator Rikishi database online is that I've always thought it might need some more work, at some point.)

I still think the LF is appropriate, the most blatant evidence being the contrast between #1 Itai and #2 Takanofuji. Without the LF, Takanofuji is top dog, but with a relatively brief qualifying string of 33 basho, compared to the much longer one of 53 basho for Itai. With (hopefully) more modern ways of maintaining rikishi health in the future, it's conceivable someday that someone might hang in makuuchi for 120-130 basho and end up on top with a very unimpressive Move On Quotient

(MOQ).

A criterion such as that still needs work, in my opinion, so here's a solution. The LF will be employed, but will top out at 1.50. With this, longevity is still recognized but isn't overly valued, or at least it looks that way to me.

With this, Takamiyama goes from #26 to #49, and Terao from #31 to #61. The all-time top 20 list remains roughly the same, with the names shuffled a bit. Itai and Takanofuji are still #1 and #2. The ranking rikishi with the largest impact is Ozutsu, who goes from #8 to #16. As for Hokutoriki, the only active man in the top 20, he is now #19 instead of #20, where he would have been otherwise.

The slightly revised all-time top 20 list of elevator rikishi can be found [here](#).

On the active top ten list, of course it's Hokutoriki still out front. I've thought that Futeno would take over the #2 spot from Takekaze but that may take a while, based on the results of the Hatsu basho. Takekaze's big 12-3 record will send him up around 12 to 13 spots while Futeno will have a much smaller hike with his 8-7. Asasekiryu's 10-5 will turn him back around enough to maintain his #4 position. Roho's ongoing back problems have him bouncing up and down the banzuke now and he's now a new entry on the list, at #8, while Tamanoshima's expected descent into juryo will probably remove him from the top ten, even if it's just for one basho. As a reminder, I don't include

someone on the active top ten list until he has accumulated 15 basho in his qualifying string (this is unrelated to the 30 basho requirement for inclusion on the all-time list).

So recently there has been some consistency at the top of the active elevator ranks, with Hokutoriki, Takekaze, Futeno and Asasekiryu ruling the roost.

The current active top 10 list can be found [here](#).

Recall that each new issue of SFM is published on the same day the new banzuke is announced, so it's not ever possible for the active list to be completely up to date.

The Rules governing the calculation of the Elevator Index are found [here](#). As a reminder, they are weighted toward recognizing makuuchi rikishi who compile big elevator numbers without going back and forth into juryo and below. They are also designed to allow someone to get 'settled' in makuuchi before beginning a qualifying string, and to allow a cameo appearance in makuuchi with no harm done after beginning a career wind-down in juryo and below.

That's the Elevator Ride for February. If Takekaze holds form, he should be in for another good-sized tumble in March, so maybe he'll give Hokutoriki a run for his money, or even join the elevator joi-jin on the all-time top 20 list in another couple of years. See you in April.

All-Time Top 20 Elevator Rikishi

	<u>RIKISHI</u>	<u>MOQ</u>	<u>AFQ</u>	<u>REI</u>	<u>LF</u>	<u>EI</u>	<u>MY</u>
1	Itai	11.58	0.8039	9.31	1.50	13.96	1987
2	Takanofuji	11.00	0.9355	10.29	1.33	13.69	1988
3	Sadanoumi	10.61	0.7674	8.15	1.45	11.81	1984
4	Daijuyama	9.91	0.7460	7.39	1.50	11.09	1986
5	Jingaku	9.47	0.7955	7.53	1.46	10.99	1987
6	Kirinji	10.23	0.6867	7.02	1.50	10.53	1981
7	Higonoumi	10.06	0.6863	6.90	1.50	10.35	1997
8	Daitetsu	10.13	0.7586	7.69	1.31	10.07	1986
9	Kyokudozan	8.40	0.8043	6.76	1.48	10.00	1992
10	Takamisugi	9.70	0.6812	6.43	1.50	9.91	1989
11	Kasugafuji	8.88	0.7619	6.77	1.44	9.75	1992
12	Mainoumi	9.21	0.7368	6.78	1.40	9.50	1994
13	Koboyama	9.06	0.6875	6.23	1.50	9.34	1985
14	Tochiazuma (1)	8.34	0.7414	6.18	1.50	9.27	1972
15	Kyokushuzan	9.51	0.6500	6.18	1.50	9.27	2001
16	Ozutsu	8.19	0.7500	6.15	1.50	9.22	1985
17	Tochihikari (2)	8.52	0.7049	6.00	1.50	9.00	1979
18	Kotofuji	10.00	0.6571	6.57	1.37	9.00	1991
19	Hokutoriki	9.15	0.7273	6.65	1.35	8.98	
20	Toyokuni	9.00	0.7143	6.43	1.37	8.81	1965

- (1) The sekiwake
 (2) aka Kaneshiro

Explanation of the Terms:

MOQ (Move On Quotient): Average number of banzuke spots (not numbered ranks) moved per basho.

AFQ (About Face Quotient): Percentage of time rikishi changed direction on the banzuke.

REI (Raw Elevator Index): $MOQ \times AFQ$.

LF (Longevity Factor): $1.xx$ (xx = number of basho in qualifying string).

EI (Elevator Index): $REI \times LF$.

MY (Mid-Year): Year of the mid-point in rikishi's qualifying string.

For a detailed description, see the [Rules](#).

Active Top 10 Elevator Rikishi

	<u>RIKISHI</u>	<u>MOQ</u>	<u>AFQ</u>	<u>REI</u>	<u>LF</u>	<u>EI</u>
1	Hokutoriki *	9.15	0.7273	6.65	1.35	8.98
2	Takekaze	6.88	0.7917	5.45	1.26	6.86
3	Futeno	7.00	0.7273	5.09	1.24	6.31
4	Asasekiryu	8.24	0.5714	4.71	1.30	6.12
5	Tamanoshima *	7.56	0.5476	4.14	1.44	5.96
6	Kyokutenho *	6.29	0.6078	3.82	1.50	5.73
7	Takamisakari *	5.71	0.6765	3.87	1.36	5.26
8	Roho	7.60	0.5263	4.00	1.21	4.84
9	Kakizoe	6.69	0.5600	3.75	1.27	4.76
10	Tamakasuga *	5.82	0.5352	3.11	1.50	4.67

* Fully qualified rikishi.

Some figures could seem inaccurate because the spreadsheet calculates unrounded numbers.

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LF (Longevity Factor): $1.xx$ (xx = number of basho in qualifying string).

EI (Elevator Index): $REI \times LF$.

For a detailed description, see the [Rules](#).

Elevator Rules

THE GENERAL PROCEDURE:

These components are used in determining a rikishi's position in the Ranking:

- 1 *Move On Quotient (MOQ)*: The average number of banzuke spots moved per basho (currently 42 spots on the makuuchi banzuke): Starting with the 2nd basho in the string, count the number of spots moved – whether up or down – from the previous basho, and do this for each basho, through the final basho in the string. Total all those figures counted and divide by the number of figures used. This is the MOQ, and is expressed as a number with two decimal places., e.g., 6.25.
- 2 *About Face Quotient (AFQ)*: The percentage of time the rikishi changed direction on the banzuke: Starting with the 2nd basho in the string and going down, record a plus (+) if the rikishi moved up the banzuke from the previous basho, and record a minus (-) if the rikishi moved down (no mark is made if there was no movement). Then, starting with the 3rd basho in the string, determine if there was a change of direction from the previous basho or not. e.g., after a plus (+) is recorded, a change of direction occurs with the next minus (-), and vice versa. Finally, divide the total number of direction changes by *the total number of times a direction change was actually possible* (i.e., number of basho in the string, minus 2). This percentage is the AFQ, and is expressed as a decimal in four places, e.g., .6315.
- 3 *Raw Elevator Index (REI)*: Simply multiply the MOQ by the AFQ.
- 4 *Longevity Factor (LF)*: 1.xx, with xx equal to the total number of basho in a rikishi's qualifying string. e.g., if a rikishi has 45 basho in his string, his LF is 1.45. When a rikishi's LF reaches 1.50, it

will go no higher, but remain at 1.50 for the remainder of his career. This is to prevent a rikishi from posting a large Elevator Index (EI) based more on his longevity than on his movement up and down the banzuke.

- 5 *Elevator Index (EI)*: Multiply the REI by the LF.

Rikishi are then ranked according to their Elevator Index, highest on top.

SPECIFIC RULES:

- 1 A rikishi must have an unbroken string of at least 30 consecutive qualifying basho in order to be listed in the all-time Ranking.
- 2 A rikishi's string is assumed to start with his first makuuchi appearance and end with his last – with these exceptions:
 - When a string begins with the first makuuchi appearance, in order for it to remain unbroken, as you count down the list of basho, the total number of makuuchi appearances must at least equal the total juryo or below appearances. At any point, when this is not true, that string is broken, and a new string is assumed to begin with the second makuuchi appearance, with the same test applied. The string actually begins with the first makuuchi appearance where the test is passed.
 - If using the above exception produces a string with less than 30 basho because the string doesn't start with the first makuuchi appearance, just start the string with the next oldest makuuchi appearance – going back in time – until you've gone up far enough back for a 30-basho string. If this exception is used to create a 30-basho string, it will be disregarded

when and if it's no longer required.

- If the last makuuchi appearance is immediately preceded by at least three consecutive juryo or below appearances, the string will not end with that appearance. Instead, the string ends with the last makuuchi appearance that is not *immediately* preceded by at least three juryo or below appearances.
- 3 If a rikishi doesn't accumulate a string of at least 30 consecutive qualifying basho under these rules, his string will simply begin with his first makuuchi appearance and end with his last. If there are still less than 30 basho in the string, it will begin with his first makuuchi appearance and continue until he retires. As long as the string has at least 30 basho, he will qualify to be listed in the Ranking.
 - 4 In calculating the Move On Quotient (MOQ), a rikishi is credited with zero banzuke spots moved for any demotion to juryo, and for the first makuuchi basho when transiting back from juryo – regardless of how many actual spots were moved. i.e., In counting the number of banzuke spots moved from any one basho to another, both basho must be in makuuchi. Similarly, no credit is given for a change of direction when transiting to and from juryo.
 - 5 All sanyaku ranks other than East are considered West, e.g., S2e, S2w are both counted as Sw. *
- * Note: Trying to be exact in accounting for more than two spots for each sanyaku rank (in the cases where that occurred) required a system which sometimes produced nonsensical outcomes further down the banzuke, such as rikishi going from M6e to M7e, yet being credited with a 0 or a 1 count in spots moved, even though two spots were actually moved.