

Ones to Watch – Aki Basho 2007

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Kotomitsuki

Will you believe me that I always knew it? Never mind. I always knew it. Late blossoms are the prettiest, they say. And this particular one is! I'm really excited to see how he will do in Aki. Can he be in the yusho race until the last day once again?

Can he repeat his yusho from Aki Basho 2001 exactly six years ago? Or will he just fall back into his usual 8-7 pattern? He has nothing to lose in September, but so much to win. And not only he himself – his rise to ozeki might mark the birth of a new monster heya.



Kisenosato

His decline and possible despondence following his four-basho reign as komusubi (blocked out of promotion by Kotomitsuki and Miyabiyama every time) became worse every day. Finally he pushed the “Up” button in his elevator. His opponents were not always at his level this time, but

nevertheless, the wins should give him enough confidence to go (and win!) against rikishi of his own calibre again. Two of these wins surely will – he defeated both men who denied him the sekiwake rank for so long. On senshuraku he sacked Kotomitsuki in his last bout as lower sanyaku, even throwing him out of the yusho race. Play it again, Yutaka!



Toyohibiki

The Kanto-sho winner of July will find himself in the joi-jin this basho. The highest rank of his opponents in the last tournament was only M8 and we have yet to see how he can do against the top maegashira and sanyaku. He definitely has the bulk, but what about his (non-)experience? It will be the first time that he breathes very thin air, and so no one will expect another sansho performance from him; however, a little kachi-koshi is within his reach. Anyway, he will have 15 great lessons in Tokyo on his way

further up. By the way, did you notice how secretly he became the heyagashira of Sakaigawa-beya?



Tamakasuga

He turned 35 years in January and started his career at a time when the first English bits about sumo were travelling around the web. Entering as Ms60TD (he won't be the only tsukedashi rikishi in this issue) he climbed slowly but steadily.

After twelve kachi-koshi he was in makuuchi and would stay in the upper maegashira ranks for the next seven years. An injury at the end of 2002 made him slide down and he was seen above M10 again only twice – both times with a devastating outcome. He is still able to rush the lower makuuchi and juryo off their feet, and he will prove once again that there's some life left in this old dog. How much? We will see.



Wakakirin

Why him? Just because I like him? Maybe. But now he has a second chance to meet all the expectations people had three years ago. He seems to be healthy again and back on track. A bit older now, he's

been able to collect some makushita experience in the meantime that will perfectly add to his natural abilities. Let's accompany him on his journey to live up to his great name.



Ichihara

Oh no, not again! Everyone thought that he would finally arrive in juryo and could be watched rising further through the paid ranks. An unusually strong lower juryo division made him stall this time. He started with the "Turbodiesel" option at Ms10TD, but his turbocharger is clearly defunct and his banzuke movements remind more of a freight truck: Lots of power and noise, but unable to advance quickly. The last rikishi in a 1 West position who wasn't promoted with a kachi-koshi was Kotonishiki. We all know what

happened – he retired just one basho later. Let's hope that Ichihara won't face the same fate.

Minami & Minaminoshima

Just for the fun of it... The two so different "Southern" boys. The quickstarter from talent pool Onoe-beya and the working-slowly-through-the-ranks Tongan from Musashigawa-beya will have a realistic chance to meet in honbasho for the first time. (The gyoji are frightened already.) They are pretty similar in height but there are 40 kg between them. Yotsu against oshi, which one will prevail?

Hakiai

He started as a great hope at Ms15TD in March 2005. After competing in only three basho he got injured and kyujō after kyujō followed. Hakiai returned to the show with a 3-0 in this year's Nagoya maezumo class. The expectations of him are still high, but it remains to be seen if he is capable of coming back.

At 25 years of age he is not exactly a hungry red-hot youngster, and looking at his record, he cannot be called experienced either. Many others would have retired faintheartedly by now but he obviously still has a very strong will to become a sekitori. And we want to see this will, want to see him climb up the ranks to where he was two years ago. Hakkeyoi, Hakiai!