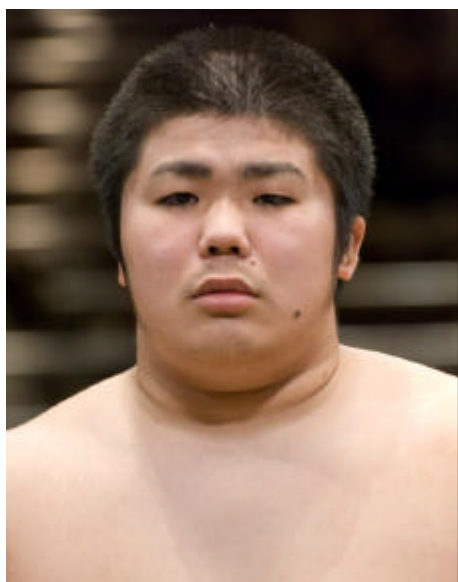


Lower Division Focus

by Martina Lunau

I couldn't be in Osaka, so I didn't get an idea of the strength of our yusho winners this time. I can only report what I remember from my memory in other basho.

So let's start with Fukao, who won the jonokuchi yusho. Mitsuhiho Fukao is only one year younger than Ichihara and Yamamotoyama and he was also a member of Saitama Sakae sumo club. The Nichidai guy is 1,80m and weighs 196 kg - the 6th heaviest shindeshi ever. He is now a member of Kise Beya, who seem to have affection for these very big boys. Well I don't share this bias so much and am a bit reserved with Fukao. He did quite well at university, he won the jonokuchi yusho and I don't want to write him off already. I only saw him live in Maesumo. No chance to impress me by fighting against little boys, but of course I can't blame him for this. Let's talk about his qualities again at Natsu Basho.



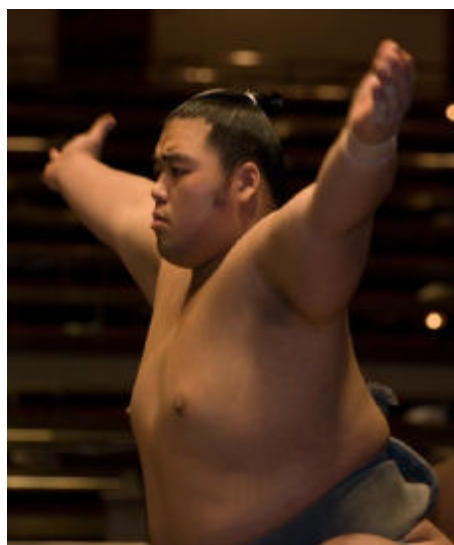
Kei

Another shindeshi from Hatsu Basho who pleased me more in January is Kei from Onomatsu

Beya who only lost to Fukao in Haru Basho. Kei just turned 18 years old, is 1,75m and 107 kg. I will keep an eye on him too at Natsu Basho.

In jonidan I'm a bit helpless to tell you the truth. I don't remember the yusho winner Terukaze at all, I even don't have a pic of him. It seems he stayed more or less invisible to me in the last few years. Terukaze is a member of Oguruma Beya. He reached his best ranking of ms26 in September 2003 but then he became an elevator rikishi, tumbling down the banzuke. He is already 28 years old. Of course he will make a big jump now from his position as jd7 but there is no hope left for a big career.

But I'm really happy about two others in the division who still have a future in sumo and who did extremely well this basho. (And I'm glad too that I mentioned them in my article in the last issue of SFM.) The first is 17-year-old Kotowatanabe from Sadogatake Beya, who only lost to Terukaze in the ketteisen.



Kotowatanabe

The other is 16-year-old Watanabe from Kokonoe Beya who finished with a 6-1 and also only lost to the yusho winner.



Watanabe

Fortunately, Korean Kinryuzan is back again after being absent for over 2 years, coming back, injured again, coming back with the jonokuchi yusho and a 6-1 performance in jonidan, injured again and now a 5-2 at Haru Basho. Hopefully he stays healthy this time!



Kinryuzan

The sandanme yusho was won by

half-Filipino Masunoyama from Chiganoura Beya. In an interview in Ozumo magazine, Nakadachi Oyakata (former Komusubi Oginishiki) praised him for aggressive sumo while moving forward. Asked about the prospects after Kyushu Basho he and other sumo experts ranked him in 7th place behind Kyokushuho, Ri, Sadanofuji, Tosayutaka, Aran and Ryuden.



Masunoyama

He did some sumo when he was a kid and represented his sumo club in Chiba in all prestigious junior high tournaments. He sure is a talent but I don't think he fights in the same league as Tosayutaka, for example, but I'll pay a bit more attention to him at Natsu Basho.



Karatsuumi

Others who did well in Haru Basho in sandanme were Karatsuumi

from Tamanoi Beya and Mongolian Arawashi from Araiso Beya.

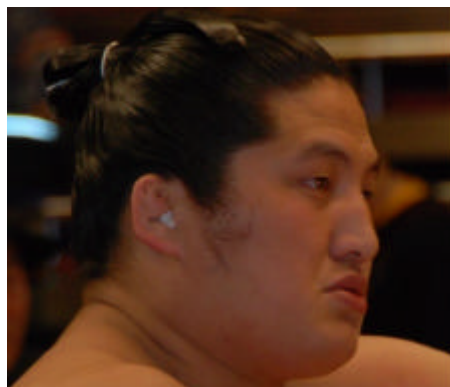
Karatsuumi got a 6-1 at his highest ranking of sd18, so we will see him in makushita in May and I'm curious how he will do there.

Arawashi also got a 6-1 and will make a high jump in sandanme. I hope he can continue like this and his shoulder won't bother him too much.



Arawashi

Last, but not least, the makushita division. It took Mongolian Daiyubu a long time to fulfil his sekitori dreams. He is 25 years old and joined professional sumo in



Daiyubu

2001 at Haru Basho together with Hakuho, who is 2 years younger. It wasn't easy for Daiyubu to gain weight and he still is a flyweight compared to others at around 120 kg, so he only showed average performances.

But in the 3 most recent basho he was able to do good sumo and had results of 6-1, 5-2 and finally the yusho in Haru with a 7-0. He prefers to win his bouts with yorikiri, hikiotoshi and uwatenage. I don't think he will be a champion like his grandfather Tuvdendorj, who was a Mongolian champion, but I hope he can stay in juryo because it's always a pleasure to see him fighting.



Fujimoto

I don't want to repeat myself, but my prospect for makushita in the last issue – Fujimoto – only lost to Daiyubu and finished 6-1. Fingers crossed for his next steps in makushita.



Nakanokuni



Fukao

A bit disappointing for me this time was Nakanokuni. I hoped for a good result and a little jump closer to juryo for the young Chinese. But he only could reach a 3-4, lost to Kotoyutaka (who had another good performance and will hopefully make it to juryo next time), Yamamotoyama, Asofuji and Ryuho. He will not fall so far so he still has more chances.

Another great performance and perfect results since his entry in

Haru Basho last year from Shiratsuka – Kise Beya. Also the preferred Kise kind of rikishi, tall and heavy, but Shiratsuka is also very agile and fast. He raced up the ranks very quickly and will now make his next big jump to high makushita after finishing Haru with a 6-1. He is a big talent for sure.

Let's have a short look at the shindeshi from Haru Basho. Happily, 68 young men decided to



Shiratsuka

join sumo. Hakkaku Beya was the most successful heya in recruiting with 9 shindeshi followed by Sakaigawa with 6. We have already seen some of the recruits on the heya websites. It's much too early to have an opinion about them but there are a lot of new faces to look at in Natsu Basho and hopefully some great talents.