

Ones to Watch – Aki 2008

by Alexander Herrmann

This issue of OTW will give us some pretty heavy fodder to be looking at; namely the sekitori heavyweights. There has already been a little guessing contest about the weight at which shin-juryo Yamamotoyama will exit the next weigh-in on August 22nd. After the retirement of the Hawaiian behemoths, Konishiki, Akebono and Musashimaru and the stumble of Susanoumi, the sekitori ranks have become rather lightweight - until now. For the first time in five years there is a sekitori weighing in at more than 200kg again.

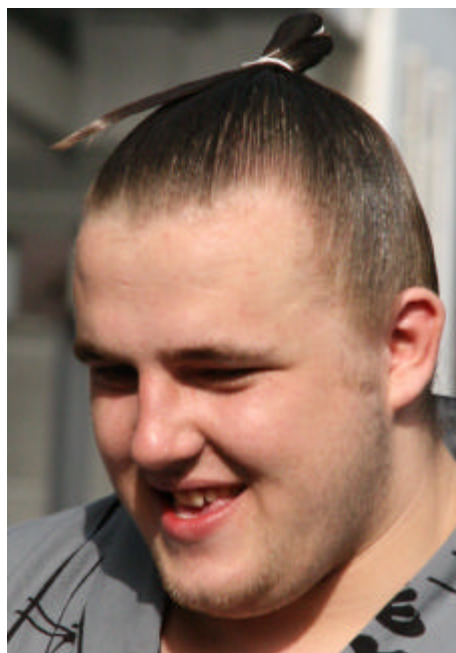


Kaio - Carolyn Todd

Looking only at the 200+kg guys for this issue of OTW would have made the column a rather short one, so I drew the line at 170kg – six sekitori are above that weight.

Their respective weights have been taken from the SumoDB Nagoya weigh-in.

Coming in at number 5 (171.3kg) is [Kaio](#) who has almost as many basho under his mawashi as the other five put together. Obviously he becomes fitter and stronger each time everyone talks about him being on his last legs. He is still good enough to be a barrier for the young guns though – and what barrier he is! – he just knows how to use his weight. And, of course he's still worth watching. Having become pretty stable in the last few basho he maybe will even hand the kadoban crown over to Chiyotakai.



Baruto - Carolyn Todd

One place ahead of Kaio (weight-wise at 172.8kg) is shin-komusubi [Baruto](#). The Estonian isn't known for being a red hot Gino-sho

candidate, but for using brute force to overwhelm his opponents. It does work most of the time, but he will not be able to rely on that ability only. Obviously his shisho, Onoe, not exactly known for having been big and heavy himself has a strong eye on his technical development too. If in addition to improvement in this area, and if his knee stays healthy, his joi-jin days have just begun.



Miyabiyama - Mark Buckton

The bronze medallist in the HSC ("Heaviest Sekitori Cup") is [Miyabiyama](#) at 180.1kg. Hopefully he has stopped his downslide now. He did meet some joi-jin in July, but given their performance it is hard to evaluate how much his 9-6 was really worth. It is a start, however, and we will see if he can put together more sanyaku basho. He has 27 under his belt already with most in the early stages of his 61 basho career, but I firmly believe that he will have spent more basho in sanyaku than in other ranks when



Yamamotoyama - Carolyn Todd

he finally retires some years down the road.

The last makuuchi heavyweight is [Iwakiyama](#) at 171.0kg – the lightest of the six. The late entrant had a quick climb into makuuchi and has taken the last several years to adjust to mid-/lower-makuuchi level with an occasional joi-jin basho thrown in. All were excited about his history and his fast rise, but I have the feeling that he would be being overlooked by most now – if it weren't for his (non-)protruding profile! He certainly deserves a better form of attention than the one he gets.

On we go to the second division then, and again to my favourite Turbo diesel, [Ichihara](#). At 182.5kg he is the second heaviest of the sekitori – by far. In his short career to date, he has had his share of good and bad luck already: several denied promotions, double digit kachikoshi, a devastating kyujo that sent him down a good many ranks on the banzuke, and a makekoshi on the last day. What he is missing now is a yusho.

Given his kyujo on the last day of Nagoya, one may doubt it will be this time out. But, he will be found in the yusho lists soon!

Last and definitely not least is [Yamamotoyama](#) of course His 236.5kg are only a milestone on his way to overtaking Konishiki in the record weight list. Just like Ichihara he is in only his tenth basho in Ozumo, but unlike the Kise Beya man, he already knows how winning a yusho feels. I wonder how he will fare against the very seasoned men and the other young Turks of the juryo division as his torikumi will be a tad harder in September than the ones he has faced thus far. Some of his potential opponents even know how to fight – and beat 'mountains with two feet' (Kaiho, Tamakasuga, Tosanoumi)! And I wonder if and when he will get a new shikona.

Don't get me wrong, I somehow like it as it is – I just wonder.