



Let's Hear From You! What Made You A Fan? Summer 1991 – more than just the London jungyo

by Mike C

I actually got interested in Sumo in 1991 in London England. At the time I was working there on a Working Holiday Visa. I had no money to do anything other than hang out at the pub and drink beer (however, if I had had money, I'm not sure I would have done anything differently...)

Anyway, one night I was at the pub watching TV and on came sumo wrestling. I had heard about it before, but at the time I knew nothing about Japanese culture at all. I had no interest in Japan or sumo. As it turned out, there was a jungyo in London going on and some of the guys in the pub were interested in watching. I'm glad they were.

I didn't know any of the rules, or anything about martial arts, but I realized very quickly that this was

a very serious sport. I loved how the two wrestlers would calmly stare each other down, and then walk away to throw some more salt. Finally at some mysterious point they would just launch themselves at each other. I had no idea how they knew when to start (I knew **nothing** about sumo remember). As far as I could tell, they just picked an appropriately dramatic moment and came out, all guns blazing.

After a flash of incredible speed and strength, one side would win and the other side would lose. Actually, I couldn't always tell the winner from the loser. I just knew that in the blink of an eye, all that raw power turned back to serenity and the two wrestlers would walk away. I was instantly hooked.

It took almost exactly 10 years for

me to see sumo again. I had started to study karate, and for some reason began to take up the Japanese language. I decided that I should watch Japanese TV and subscribed to TVJapan. I didn't even know that they carried sumo. Bizarrely, when the cable technician came to install the cable box so that I could watch TVJapan, the first thing that came on the screen was the first of the twin towers collapsing (it was September 11th, 2001).

A few days later the basho started, and I mean no disrespect when I say that this left a greater impression on me than the terrorist attack.

It hit me that hard. Ever since, I have been a fan of sumo.

