

Ones to Watch – Kyushu Basho 2008

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The OTW in 2008 have involuntarily reflected a rikishi's life cycle to some extent. For January we had the shin-juryo batch, for March some makuuchi talents and for September the heavyweights. Of course, being heavy does not necessarily mean that the rikishi is seasoned (or vice-versa, too) but older rikishi tend to have more weight on their hips than the younger ones. We will close the life cycle motif and the year 2008 by looking at those rikishi who own a toshiyori-kabu already and will sooner or later retire from active Sumo and become trainers of a new generation.

On my list there are currently twelve of them. Six of them have been mentioned in the last two issues already so we will settle with the other six this time. For the sake of completeness, not mentioned here will be Dejima (who owns Onaruto-kabu), Iwakiyama (Sekinoto-kabu), Kaio (Asakayama-kabu), Shimotori (Nishikijima-kabu), Tochionada (Takenawa-kabu) and Ushiomaru (Azumazeki-kabu)¹.

The second longest tenure of our six watchworthy rikishi is held by **Chiyotaikai** (owner of Sanoyama-kabu). He still baffles me and I don't know what I should think of him. The gaps between his jun-yushos are a lot wider now than is his first makuuchi years BUT in March he will celebrate ten full years as an ozeki. Quite an amazing feat! Maybe he'll have one of his breakout bashos before then, and we should also watch him because every basho could be his last (something we usually say about Kaio only).



Chiyotaikai

Aminishiki (Ajigawa-kabu) will be one of Chiyo's sanyaku mates in Kyushu. He has turned 30 years recently which makes him the youngest in this issue's OTW by far. I expect him to appear for some more basho in the sanyaku ranks and be a stumbling block for all the other high-rankers again. With his heya-mate Ama advancing to ozeki, there might be an open sekiwake spot for Ami soon.



Aminishiki

The next on the list has served for more than 100 basho now.

Wakanosato (Nishiiwa-kabu) had his maezumo debut in March 1992 and has collected five yusho in three divisions and ten sansho since. I am not saying it's over yet (after all, no one did expect Kotomitsuki to bloom late, too) but his days as "perennial sekiwake" seem to be over. However, his yotsu-zumo is great and that's why you should watch him. His 9-6 in Aki will take him close enough to the sanyaku ranks to show his brilliance.



Wakanosato

While Chiyotakai, Aminishiki and Wakanosato all started in maezumo, the following three rikishi were “turbodiesels” at the beginning of their career and entered Ozumo as makushita tsukedashi.



Takamisakari

The first of them is [Takamisakari](#) (Furiwake-kabu), who might be watching you, too. He is looking out for a wife, and hopefully his search won't harm his abilities. We all know that only the boys in the big league get all the nice girls, and as he is pretty much at the end of makuuchi he must get kachi-koshi to stay in the

first division. His fight against demotion will be something watchworthy as this situation is rather rare for him. Of course, Takamisakari himself is watchworthy as well. Quite frankly – who does not look forward to his pre-bout antics?



Tosanoumi

The former sanyaku stalwart [Tosanoumi](#) (Tatekawa-kabu) does not need to go looking for wife and wedding papers anymore; but might have to look for the intai papers soon. He got the immediate re-promotion to makuuchi after he fell to juryo on each of the three previous

occasions, but it has been a close shave this time. Some better lower maegashira here, some non-smoking Russians there, and he would have had to stay in the second division. He's hard to assess for me (really!), he surprises me every time he steps onto the dohyo, and he will hopefully do so for more basho.

Last but not least is [Otsukasa](#) (Wakafuji-kabu). Long over are his maegashira days (have they begun at all?) and he will probably be the first of our six OTW's to retire. The 9-6 of Aki Basho only prolonged his stay in the division but only his performance in upper juryo in Kyushu might indicate where he's going. He has been promoted to makuuchi eleven times already (meaning of course that he has been demoted as often). Now, will he get his 12th promotion or will he just slide down again and fall out of juryo?

Whatever happens, enjoy the Kyushu Basho!

ⁱ Technically he does not own it yet but he has already been nominated by the current Azumazeki-Oyakata who will retire in June 2009.