

Heya Peek: Nakamura Beya

by Michiko Kodama



Does anyone remember the name Fujizakura – 富士櫻 – once a sekiwake affectionately nicknamed “rush boy” as a result of his trademark pushing and thrusting?

During his career he chalked up an impressive 9 kinboshi wins over yokozuna, and was so popular as to be the favourite of the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. Indeed, his bout with Kirinji (currently an oyakata) during the Summer Grand Sumo Tournament of 1975 performed in the presence of the Emperor remains one of the most noted fights in Ozumo history. Unfortunately, Fujizakura lost that

one despite having thrust his opponent over 50 times. Actually, in 'the Best 10 All Time Battles in Ozumo' published by the Nikkei Newspaper in 2003, this bout secured fifth position.

After the Haru Basho of 1985, Fujizakura put a 22-year active career behind him and at the age of 37, succeeded to one of the toshiyori titles of Nakamura. Twenty three years have passed since he opened Nakamura-beya, situated not in the main Ryogoku stable haven, but in Edogawa Ward which is also close to the Kokugikan – only nine minutes

from Ryogoku Station by train. Roughly 10 minutes' walk from Shinkoiwa Station, to the south along Heiwa Bashi Street, you will arrive at the stable – welcomed by a humorous raccoon dog standing erect on its hind legs.

Nakamura Beya, which once produced three sekitori (Saigo, Sumanofuji, and Ichinotani) has 10 disciples at present; some senior members have retired of late, but because most of its current pupils joined following graduation from junior high school, only two deshi are in their 20s – the others are all still teenagers. One of these disciples, Tokizakura of the sandanme division, won all seven of his bouts at the Hatsu Basho this year before regrettably losing the 'kettei sen' championship-decider. The rikishi at Nakamura-beya, as young as they are, (Hishofuji in makushita included) are full of promise.

In terms of atmosphere at Nakamura Beya, we can feel it not only by visiting the stable first hand, but also by way of the oyakata's essays entitled “Sportopia,” which appear every two or three months in the Nikkei Newspaper. In his pieces, he explains his feelings about educating his deshi. As Fujizakura, he was said to be a rikishi who applied himself to his training very enthusiastically; in fact his earnestness became almost legendary in the world of Japanese sumo. It is also a well-known fact that he always challenged his opponent to a fight head-on.

His "Sportopia" articles show this passion to still burn in his belly.



Through them, he expresses his

sincere attitude and deep thoughts regarding this traditional sport. These pieces, some full of witty remarks, can be seen on the home page of [Nakamura Beya](#) although unfortunately they are only in Japanese at present.

As well as being an experienced stablemaster, the oyakata has been a member of the Shinpan Committee of the NSK for more than 20 years, and recently became a member of the Lifestyle Committee which was established after the tragic death of Tokitaizan. Nakamura Oyakata tries to improve the world of Japanese sumo, including its training system. One outstanding

example was when he made his own disciples enter into a correspondence course at a high school in order to try and get them to degree-course level.

There is one final person more than worthy of mention at the heya – the Okamisan. An intelligent person who herself studied at graduate school, and has already published two books (one – Dosukoi! – about child rearing) is also introduced on the home page linked above. She is a woman of gentle heart kind enough to offer a smile to a stranger visiting asageiko, and an interview request from this sumo writer.



Nakamura Beya February 2009 - with kind permission of Nakamura Oyakata