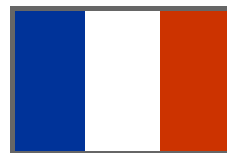


Let's Hear From You! How I became a Fan – and entered a tournament!



by Amateur Sumo Wrestler Jean-Philippe Cabral

Hello Everyone. I hail from France and belong to the French Internet fansite: Info-Sumo.net. As far as I can remember, I have always been interested in sumo. I discovered Ozumo in the 90s and was hooked at first sight when I saw some Hawaiian Mountain who was fighting in the hiramaku ranks under the shikona of Konishiki.

I originally fought in Greco-Roman wrestling but in 2007 decided to take my chance in Amateur Sumo competition, while still participating in traditional wrestling. I attended the Milan Open for three years in a row, organized by Fausto Gobbi, who is now a friend of mine.

This year, I was invited to Estonia by Kairi Kur, a great Estonian female amateur sumo wrestler who won several titles in the heavyweight division.

France desperately lacks any kind of structure for sumo and I therefore have to practice some of its technique during my training time for traditional wrestling. I am, nevertheless, highly motivated and could rely on some good sparring-partners in my wrestling club to achieve serious preparation for this Estonian Open.

On Friday October 2nd, I left home at 0330 to reach Tallin, capital of Estonia, some twelve hours later. Quite a long and tiring journey, but it did not dampen my enthusiasm prior to a new competition in amateur Sumo.



I have always belonged to the lightweight category, as I weigh some 80-81 kilograms. That proves quite difficult as numerous wrestlers are quick and physically

strong, as well as technically efficient. My goal in Estonia was therefore to win one bout, though I knew it wouldn't be easy, seeing the quality of my opponents.



While in the plane flying to Estonia, I felt motivated enough to also take part in the openweight competition, but as the competition closed in, I have to say that courage started to fail me when considering facing 140 kilogram opponents. I thus decided to take part solely in the lightweight competition.

The bouts in the adult categories started at 2p.m., but I was already in the gym at 0830, so as to help the organization team. It was a way to thank them better than just words. There were also children in this tournament. The Estonians have a sumo school and so the kids can train all year long. Some are very young, but already show some promising dohyo sense and good technique. Poland and Finland have also taken kids into their delegation. The organizers have taken care of every detail, and there was even a small sumo demonstration with kids, to the delight of the spectators.

After lunch, it was time for the adults to fight. First, the women's competition and my hats off to their technical qualities and

extraordinary fighting spirit. Names that first come to mind include Erge Nurgis and Siiri Simar. Poland also have a quite famous wrestler, Justyna Murgala. She was the title winner in the Milan Open last year. Their bouts were ferocious!

Then it was time for the men's bouts, starting with my lightweight category. I have to say that I felt quite some pressure. The will to give my best, fear of the unknown, fear of injury and so on...

Alas, the story ended for me quickly, as I took part in two qualifying round bouts which both end in defeat. But despite these setbacks, I have the satisfaction of feeling some great improvements in my sumo. I also have to congratulate my opponents, who were stronger than me, as the results show without doubt. I also have to thank the Estonian people, who are not only fearsome fighters on the dohyo but also very kind people who helped me in putting on my mawashi. Those guys have an awesome level. They are very physical and have a very good technical level too. Their dohyo

sense is also impressive.

During this event, I also started a friendship with Stefano Venturelli from the heavyweight division. This former high-level judoka in the heavy weight category has taken part to two Olympic Games with the Italian delegation. He told me that during the course of his career, he fought some of the French judo legends such as Douillet, Traineau or Mathonet. Stefano is a charming man despite his humongous frame. We got on very well right from our first meeting. He and his cousin Fausto have helped me and we have become friends, as I can speak and understand the Italian language. Stefano was in the heavyweight competition, and while I kept saying he was the favorite due to his immense career in judo, he just answered with a lot of kindness and humility, underlining his opponents' qualities. He eventually took the title though!

It's now three years that I have fought in amateur sumo, and I haven't have yet the opportunity to attend any Europe or World competition. But I try to remain

true to myself and give a good image of Sumo “à la Française”, especially through my attitude both inside and outside the dohyo. I have forever felt appreciated by the other participants and am regularly invited to participate in other open tournaments. Everyone is kind to me, and I feel I have won the respect of others in

the past three years. I now belong to this big European Amasumo family, and am extremely proud of it.

Estonia was my fourth international sumo competition, in a quality tournament with quite a number of highly-skilled fighters. The Gym is wonderful (that was

the host to the last World Championships) and the organization is flawless. Hats off to the numerous voluntary workers who worked in the shadows to create good competition conditions for each and every wrestler!