

Interview Hiroko Suzuki

by Chris Gould

Hiroko "Betty" Suzuki is one of the most successful female American footballers of all-time, her number 79 jersey achieving legendary status in women's competition. Less known is the fact that she is a fearsome sumo wrestler, winning Gold Medal in the women's middleweight division at the first attempt in 2005. With her also having grown up in Tokyo and met many former sumo wrestlers during her time as a fitness coach, SFM simply had to ask her for an interview in June 2011.

CG: When you worked as a fitness trainer, you met many famous sumo wrestlers in your gym, did you not?

HS: Yes. Chiyonofuji. Hokutoumi. Konishiki. I helped them out with their weight training and their swimming. Although Konishiki simply waded through the pool...

CG: When did you actually decide to try sumo yourself?

HS: One day, Nikkei TV came to cover one of my American football matches. When I later telephoned to thank them, I was made aware of the fact that not a single Japanese person was entering the upcoming US Sumo Open! Upon hearing this I thought: "Right! It's up to me to join in and put that record straight!" And that was how I made my decision.

CG: What is the one match that you will never forget?



Hiroko Suzuki with Chris Gould

HS: In terms of my matches, I've only had a few so it's difficult for me to draw many big impressions. Well, I guess, when fighting Americans, be it in American football or sumo, I really don't want to lose.

As for the Mongols, their timing for executing techniques was really, really good. I have had no experience of fighting Japanese apart from upper-year elementary school kids in Shizuoka. In American football practice, you come up against lots of strong high school boys, but in sumo there are so, so many elementary school kids, aren't there? (The interviewer can testify that there are. He lost to one such kid, 10-years-old, 80 kilograms, on

more than one occasion).

CG: What was most difficult about sumo training?

HS: Knowing the best time to execute a technique.

CG: You now own a ladies pro-football team. What's the latest?

HS: We have disbanded for now, and are currently having meetings about setting up a new Lady Kong team. The current team for which I play, California Quake, have just finished the regular season, and have won every game (eight out of eight). We are looking forward to the playoffs with relish.