

Ones to Watch – Aki Basho 2011

by Alexander Herrmann

The yaocho scandal pierced Ozumo to its heart. It was shocking (not the fact that yaocho exists but the dilettantism it was conducted with), it was unbelievable (again, the dilettantism), and it swept some promising names from the banzuke. It was good for nothing – except for one thing. We have been seeing lots of young and hungry rikishi entering the top ranks in the past few months. And we will therefore look at the juryo debutants of September – in place of all the hopefuls to come.ⁱ

No paragraph of their own but only honourable mentions shall be given to the juryo returnees **Nionoumi**, **Satoyama** (formerly in makuuchi) and **Hokutokuni** (who fell all the way from juryo down to maezumo and is back now).

Kyokushuho needed four years from his dohyo debut to make his juryo debut. The slender Mongolian (btw, he is the only foreigner in this column) is a member of Oshima-beya, home to the first Mongolian rikishi and famous for its warriors from the land of Genghis Khan. He might well become an established sekitori soon and so become the new pride of his heya that has lost much of its vigour from a decade ago. Pride or not, barring injuries he will definitely be the heya's senior rikishi in April 2012 as

heyagashira Kyokutenho will become shisho then.

Kokonoe-beya has two debutants who could not be more different. **Chiyozaakura** is a university rikishi from Nittai (Nippon Sport Science) who entered Ozumo at the seasoned age of 22 years. Fast-forward one and a half years and he has collected two yusho, six kachi-koshi in seven basho (none below 5-2), 39 wins in 49 bouts and a promotion to the second division. He is probably the most promising rikishi in this debut class: age-wise, background-wise and also physique-wise.

A bit more of a “classic” Kokonoe rikishi is **Chiyoarashi** who started Ozumo at the tender age of 15 years. Just to reach his “Chiyo” shikona (traditionally received when entering sandanme) he needed nearly as much time as it took his heya mate to reach the paid ranks! But he is still young – the youngest in the list – and has time to grow. Let's hope that he will not grow the hard way by hitting an invincible wall in juryo.

After a good start **Kotoyuki** has faltered in lower makushita for two years. Three breakout basho and a good share of banzuke luck later he is in juryo. Now, what does this tell us? A sudden increase in performance level? A lucky streak has kicked in? Or is it rather a lucky streak that runs out

in September? Kotoyuki is the biggest question mark on my list, and it will therefore be all the more interesting to watch him.

The second university rikishi in this issue, the former Naoe and now **Kimikaze**, has said that he wants to represent his alma mater well. He doesn't like other comparisons between him and the last sekitori from Waseda, who entered juryo under the name of **Kasagiyama** almost 80 years ago. Hopefully he will not frown at us when we do make a tiny comparison – their highest career rank. Kimikaze could well become sekiwake, too.

Hishofuji has been around quite a long time compared to the five mentioned above. He started his Ozumo career in 2005 – six years of service which make him the most senior rikishi in this list. His bulky frame of 192cm and just as many kg (even at his hatsudohyo he wasn't exactly small at 128kg) seemingly haven't been too helpful on his journey up the ranks: he has needed at least one year in every division since jonidan to adjust to “division level.” Let's see how long he will take to adjust to juryo.

Enjoy the Aki Basho!

ⁱ A topic that I chose in one of my first OTW articles four and a half year ago, too – how time flies...