

Kokugi Konnections Araibira's Sumo Channel

by Chris Gould

It's not only the wrestlers that are being featured this time, but a web page. A young man going by the web name of Araibira has created a Youtube page exclusively dedicated to sumo, hosting not only video footage of bouts from the last tournament, but interviews with wrestlers and stablemasters. As far as video updates on the current state of sumo go, Araibira's sumo channel webpage is definitely the place to be:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/araibira>

One of the most interesting segments online at the moment is the interview with the current Tamanoi Oyakata, who was formerly Ozeki Tochiazuma. This man is of huge significance to present-day sumo; he was the last Japanese ever to collect the top division championship in January 2006. In the period from January 2010 to July 2011, numerous sumo commentaries centred upon the fate of Tochiazuma's yusho

portrait hanging from the Kokugikan ceiling. 32 such portraits hang, and for a year-and-a-half Tochiazuma's was the only Japanese face among them. Commentators feared the day when the championship portraits marking the highest achievements in Japan's national sport were completely dominated by foreigners – and that day came in July this year when Harumafuji claimed the top honours for Mongolia again. How the Japanese crave for someone like Tochiazuma – a man regularly capable of beating Asashoryu – to return to the fold and get the paintbrush working for a Japanese purpose.

In addition to reviewing Tochiazuma's greatest ever match – according to the man himself – the video contains his interesting take on the bouts in present-day sumo, in which he accuses wrestlers of giving up too easily. (Interestingly, the famous match against Asashoryu in March 2006

when he benefited from this was not mentioned by the interviewer!) When watching today's matches, one can indeed understand the validity of Tochiazuma's point, as it's very rarely the case that wrestlers cling on desperately and risk an acrobatic ending a la Kirishima or Chiyonofuji. Like soccer players and their Actim stats, modern-day sumo has become more about percentages.

The page also contains links to Araibira's Twitter account, where he informs of the latest video uploads, and to basic information pages about sumo and its terms. It also links to other sumo-related Youtube accounts, including those of Moti Dichne (aka Kintamayama) and Bebelita Takayasu, the mother of the up-and-coming baby-faced makuuchi man, Takayasu. So if it's too cold to go out on some days during the festive season, here's one suggestion for how to pass the time!