



Ones To Watch – Natsu 2012

by Alexander Herrmann



After all the Fujis and Wakas in the last two issues I decided to go with another often found sumo kanji this time, the "ocean" (read either "kai" or "umi"). Well, what do we know about the sumo oceans of the past? One might say, many of them have always been one step short of greatness. Some examples are [Chiyotaikai](#) who never became yokozuna despite having the ability; [Tosanoumi](#), the model sumotori, who never made it to ozeki, possibly due to a huge heya disadvantage, (which he never complained about); [Tokitsuumi](#), one of the few successful amateurs allowed to start as makushita tsukedashi, who was unable to make it to komusubi even once; [Hayateumi](#), only stopped by injury from fulfilling his full potential; [Kiyoseumi](#), also a promising rikishi, but fired after the yaocho scandal; and [Kushimaumi](#), also a college champion who never made komusubi, and recently died at the age of 46.

The list seems endless. So let's see what the crystal ball says for some of the current sumo oceans and their future greatness.

The highest one on the May banzuke will be an upper maegashira. [Okinoumi](#) is his name, and the one achievement he already has under his mawashi is that he has risen higher up the banzuke than any other rikishi

featuring the "oki" in his name (all of them presumably hailing from Oki-gun, the home of [Kotenzumo](#)). The comfort he showed on the verge of sanyaku shortly after the yaocho scandal seems to have given way to a harder time, maybe because all the good rikishi suffering from yaocho goings-on have finally got there too. Time will show whether or not he can keep up with them.

Former makuuchi stalwart [Kokkai](#) (the "kai" is another pronunciation of the "umi" character) seems to be having big trouble even in lower makuuchi nowadays. He is probably also a victim of too many good opponents coming up and soon getting used to his rather one-dimensional style. Of course, he is in his thirties already and his fresh, raw power of ten years ago has transformed into a more cautious fighting style, but that alone cannot be the reason for him going down. Let's just watch the probably not too many years that remain to him as a sekitori.

The third ocean sekitori is [Masuraumi](#) at only 23 years of age. That is way too early to talk about possible greatness in the future, but what does his past indicate? He is the typical sumotori entering maezumo in March at 15 years of age, and he has had rather a slow rise through the ranks – not unusual given his youth back then. Two years ago he

entered the paid ranks. It remains to be seen whether he will be able to make the step into makuuchi at all as his results indicate no clear trend yet.

Since we are running out of water in the upper two divisions now we will turn our attention to two lower-ranking but yusho-winning rikishi who took the makushita and sandanme yusho in March 2012.

[Kairyu's](#) makushita title was a last bow to his late master Tagonoura-oyakata (the unlucky Kushimaumi mentioned above!) Let's hope this is not the only impetus for him to reach out for good records but the 7-0 in March and just one other 6-1 are the only great results in his career so far. But then again, he is just 22 years old and might soon have his breakthrough basho. Watch him, as it could happen any time now!

[Kihonoumi](#) has developed into a makushita regular during the last three years but fallen in the banzuke after an injury. So his sandanme yusho is not a complete surprise. Unfortunately I just cannot see any "greatness" in store for him other than this yusho and his unique shikona. He might be the only bearer of the "kiho" kanji in the last 250 years.

Enjoy the Natsu Basho!