

Views of Japanese Sumo Fans

What Sumo Means to Me #3

by Yaguchi Yuichi

Some people argue sumo is no longer attractive because of the amount of foreign sumo wrestlers, whereas others find it interesting.

I would like to briefly discuss the merits and demerits of the presence of foreign sumo wrestlers in sumo.

'Sumo' is now an international word.

Actually, many foreign sumo wrestlers have joined the traditional world of sumo and it has given both positive and negative impacts. Although I understand the demerits to some extent, I believe this trend will be bucked and will be seen as positive overall.

Some people argue sumo wrestlers from foreign countries lack manners; a requirement of all the sumo wrestlers. For instance, Asashoryu, the 68th Grand Champion of the sport has repeatedly demonstrated bad

manners – seen easily in his daggers drawn look when administering a 'coup-de-grace' even after he has already secured victory in a fight.

Certainly, I am not satisfied with those bad manners either as a Japanese, however, under current social conditions where constitutionalism is being discussed and the freedom of choice in employment is guaranteed to all, we cannot exclude foreign sumo wrestlers based on just their nationalities so I hope they can acquire the necessary sumo manners with their own efforts.

On the other hand, the merits surrounding the presence of foreign sumo wrestlers are numerous. It is very interesting for sumo fans to watch the current form of 'international sumo.' In addition, the presence of non-Japanese will help sumo itself to expand globally. In the modern-era, sumo has travelled to Hawaii,

America and China to name but a few locations and it will be helpful for the sport to add different nationalities of wrestler to increase popularity.

Moreover, such PR related activities will of course contribute to Japan being recognised for its traditions and while I guess some will criticize the changes taking place in traditional sumo, I believe the merits will outweigh the demerits.

Sport, music and cuisine are among the main reasons to learn of other nations and Japanese sumo is a really unique sport. There are no balls, no 'fashions' based on clothes and matches end quickly. In sumo, they fight after purifying the dohyo with salt and follow traditional, strict manners; as do most of the foreign sumo wrestlers.

The current state of sumo is changing and will only support the sport as it moves into tomorrow.