

2007 South American Sumo Tournament

by Federico Quiroga

On Sunday, July 22nd, in the Itaquaquecetuba District of Sao Paulo, Brazil, the continent of South America held its 12th South American Amateur Sumo Tournament. At the same time hosting the Brazilian National Tournament, Brazilian fighters were literally all over the place. Male and female, young and old(er) were represented at the “Ginasio Municipal de Esportes” (Municipal Sports Gymnasium). In the overall international tournament, Paraguay also had four rikishi on show, and Argentina three; one the man putting pen to paper for this issue of Sumo Fan Magazine and the photographer responsible for the [accompanying bonanza](#) – Mr. Federico Quiroga.



Argentina team

Representing the Argentinian nation, our sumo team arrived at Sao Paulo's airport the Friday before the tournament. Sao Paulo is, without doubt, the most important and most influential state / city in Brazil. With a



The stadium

population of 40 million, a full million of which can claim Japanese ancestry as Niseki (second generation Japanese) – the largest such community outside Japan - the level of martial arts in this area, judo, ju-jitsu and, of course, sumo, is second to none.

Upon arrival, as a result of the Pan American Games being held in Rio de Janeiro, only 400 km away, at the airport we met athletes from Canada, Jamaica, Argentina and other nations.

That first night in town we visited Liberdade, the ‘Japanese Borough of Sao Paulo’ where even the street names are written in Japanese. The following day, Mr. Kimoto, Vice-President of Sumo Confederation (of South America)

picked us up from our hotel and took us to Itaquaquecetuba – site of the tournament.

As the Stadium had only opened the year prior to our visit the facilities were brand new; an indication of just how important the development of sports is in Brazil. That same day we met the Paraguayan team and most members of Brazil's sumo administration. We were then fortunate enough to be present at a Shinto dohyo-matsuri ceremony during which a priest blessed the dohyo.

Surprisingly, this was the first such tournament in which Japan, as a country, was not represented. In previous years the tournament always had a lot of Japanese



shiko at the beach

fighters, who, by their presence, served to enrich the event from both a sporting and cultural aspect.

In the Brazilian National Tournament fighters from around the country brought about a degree of regional rivalry and overall 'sporting spirit'.

Physically, the different regions of this vast nation was reflected in the fact that the Parana Region fighters were largely of Germanic descent; the North Brazilians were more of a dark-skinned, taller and thinner appearance and fighters from around Sao Paulo were more Asian in appearance.

As the domestic tournament progressed, the bouts were increasingly exciting due to the fact that the best fighters would be permitted to travel to the Sumo

World Championships in Thailand come November.

Once the National tournament had finished though, the South-American event started. Three nations were present – the hosts, Argentina and Paraguay. Three national anthems were sung and after that the bouts began. The Brazilian fighters, instead of being unhappy at having to fight back-to-back tournaments seemed to relish the chance to confront opponents from different countries.

The team tournament took center stage at the outset with Brazil the winner, Paraguay in second place and Argentina third. Immediately thereafter, the light, medium, heavy and free-weight categories took place and the amazing Brazilian, Ricardo Aoyama, took both the medium and free-weight

crowns while the Paraguayan, Keishio Mizumoto, took runner-up in both categories.

The tournament was soon over and then came the greetings, photographs, laughter and hugs.

The following day this great experience was already over and we were back on a plane on our way back to Buenos Aires. We had been truly amazed at the organization and dedication to sumo shown in Brazil as well as by their female fighters and the cordiality and friendliness shown both ourselves and Paraguay by Brazil.

As a nation we did not win anything but did get "calientes" – the encouragement in this tournament being a subsequent desire to keep on training and come back next year.

As a gesture of our commitment to the sport and friendships made, before leaving Brazil and in order to demonstrate that our spirit was not beaten or downtrodden, we sung our 'Sumo Hymn' Argentinian Mawashi.

*"El mawashi argentino,
se tiene que transpirar
ponga huevo sumotori
que tenemos que ganar!
El mawashi argentino,
se tiene que transpirar
o si no no se lo ponga
váyase y no robe más!"*

In ending, I would like to take a moment to thank all those who supported our team in attending the 2007 South-American Tournament.