



Let's Hear From You! What Made You A Fan?

by Peter Dzierzynski

Each issue of SFM, We'll ask one of you to tell us something about you and sumo. Think you have something readers would like to know? Write our letters section! Enjoy.

"I think sumo is great."

This sentence often raises a pitying smile in your circle of friends. Many understand sumo like so: Two very fat men dressed in strange shorts stand on a raised platform and try to shove the other one off that platform with the help of their belly.

Unfortunately, this preconception is widespread. How do I know? Because I thought exactly like that in the past.

Sometime in the early 1990s I zapped through the TV programs at midnight and ended up on a Japanese channel. It was fed into the cable network in Hamburg at that time (of course there was just the Japanese audio track and no subtitles).

And what did I see there: fat men in strange shorts who stared fiercely at each other after an even stranger ceremony and then stormed into each other.

I was fascinated. I did not

understand a single word (well, acoustically I did). They obviously always talked about predatory fish: "Hai"*). This was my first contact.

From that time I always checked whether sumo was being broadcast. Suddenly, the channel was gone. Further information on sumo was out of reach as the Internet was in its early stages of development.

Later I saw a report about sumo wrestlers. I was flabbergasted when I watched one of them doing the splits. I could hardly believe it. After that my opinion was transformed and my respect for these boys increased and they became serious sportsmen in my eyes.

When my company was connected to the Internet I found a sumo forum in German while I was surfing. I registered and visited it every now and then and picked up the first basic knowledge about this sport.

Then Eurosport started to

broadcast sumo coverage more frequently. Sometime I noticed that there was a tipping game on the forum but I understood it only later and have been participating since then. One day the owner let the website lapse but the administrators who tenderly cared for it continued under a new name and in another location. There are not only members from Germany but also many from all over Europe. All ages and occupational groups are included. I am probably one of the oldest, being a three times granddad and with my pension being within sight.

I have not yet become an expert, and I can hardly distinguish a mawashi from wishy-washy :-)

My interest in the sport has persisted and presumably will not vanish now.

*Translator's note: Unfortunately you will have to learn a bit of German to get Peter's joke here: "Hai" is the German word for "shark".

