



Eric Evaluates

by Carolyn Todd



Me thinks Haru Basho whiffed of conspiracy... Given the opportunity, I'll always take the paranoid route, and last basho, many and several issues raised their ugly heads.

Early on, there was an unexpected loss from Hakuho on Day 4 to Aminishiki but Asashoryu just kept on winning. Surely the yusho couldn't be decided on Day 4! And then on Day 12, Hakuho lost again...What's going on?? Was the yusho to be more or less in the bag for Asashoryu on Day 12? But what of the fans? Tickets for senshuraku were totally sold out on the second day of sales (I know, I couldn't get one) and then the final Saturday sold out too. What kind of value for money would the fans get if they were basically seeing an exhibition for the final weekend? Also, what effect would this have on final weekend sales for the next and subsequent basho if fans saw

how Osaka had been done out of an exciting yusho climax? And then Asashoryu lost. To Kotoshogiku! Which was strange. And looked really really odd. But hey, it cancelled out Hakuho's loss and kept the yusho alive, so that was nice.

Then there was Day 13. And Asashoryu lost - again. To Kotomitsuki!!! Which was extremely strange. And looked extremely odd. But hey, now there was a level playing field for the yusho. Maybe the weekend wouldn't be a complete washout for the fans after all. Well, what a relief for everyone.

So, what's going on here? After winning for 11 days straight, did Asashoryu conveniently fall at the feet of Sadogatake Beya? Really? Or was he injured? Asashoryu is very good at hiding injuries to avoid showing vulnerability, so

that's a possibility, although he's now saying he only got injured during that Day 13 bout, so maybe not. Or – controversial bit here – was he told to throw a couple of bouts to stretch out the yusho race so that the weekend wouldn't be a PR fan disaster for the Kyokai (who have been highly delighted by the highest sales in a long time since Asa returned from suspension)? Or – and this is my pet theory – is this part of some post-suspension agreement? We, the Kyokai, lost a bunch of money while you were suspended so: thou shalt not win a yusho (or at least thou shalt not run away like a freight train with a yusho before a senshuraku showdown) for X number of basho.

For me, there was a lot of ham acting, face pulling, eye rolling, wry smiles, and frantic underwater paddling below the inscrutable surface of the Kyokai.