

# SFM Interview - Miyabiyama Tetsushi

**Text by Enatsu Watanabe  
Pictures by Mark Buckton**

*One of the longest serving makunouchi sekitori is Miyabiyama (Tetsushi) (MT) – former ozeki and Musashigawa stalwart.*

*In her first interview as an SFM staffer, Enatsu Watanabe (EW) – like Miyabiyama–zeki, of Ibaraki Prefecture to the north east of Tokyo – sat down with the big man in the Musashigawa Beya keikoba on a rainy April day to chew the proverbial fat over his 10-years to date in Ozumo. Also present was Mark Buckton (MB) of SFM.*

**EW:** You are now 10-years into your career in sumo – how much longer do you see yourself going?

**MT:** Hmm, I don't know. I like sumo so I want to keep going as long as possible, but new, younger, strong foreign people are coming in so I don't really know.

**EW:** Over the past decade, you have reached ozeki, had three jun-yusho and won both makushita and juryo titles twice. Does anything stand out as a single, stand alone highlight?

**MT:** I won the makushita division twice and went to juryo and really enjoyed that time. At that time I could enjoy the sumo for the sumo.

**EW:** And any lowlights?

**MT:** When I got a little higher, in the joi-jin and as an ozeki, I had to think about winning and each win took on more importance (which was less enjoyable). Also the injuries were hard to cope with (and more a part of the game). At



ozeki, you are expected to win every fight too so there were many things that made that time harder and sumo became scary for me.

**EW:** What about in the past year - have you had one particularly memorable victory?

**MT:** Hmm, (thinking) not really, but I was on a few TV shows. As an ozeki, I couldn't do that. From now, I am looking forward to doing more of that.

**EW:** In the heya, would you pick one other sekitori as trickier to beat than the others? Now or in the past?

**MT:** Of course Musashimaru-san, and my seniors in the heya were

hard to beat. Nowadays, Dejima-zeki I think.

**EW:** How did you feel about the heya when you first entered?

**MT:** I couldn't believe I was actually doing sumo, and practicing against people I saw on TV.

**EW:** Did you feel different to many others entering sumo, given that you entered at the makushita division?

**MT:** Well, I entered at the foot of makushita (and that is different now as they enter much higher) so nothing really different, but I did feel I had to show the sumo I could do and that I deserved to be in at



that image in mind.

**EW:** A little more on yourself now. What do you like to do in your free time?

**MT:** I like pachinko, and being alone. I like to think which pachinko parlor and seat in the place is best / better. Then I go out.

**EW:** Before you started in sumo, did you enjoy participating in any other sports?

**MT:** In elementary school I liked basketball and little league baseball. In junior high I liked judo and sumo as well as ball games.

**EW:** What about now – do you like watching other sports? Baseball / soccer etc?

**MT:** I like watching any sport nowadays as sport is a kind of drama so I like watching this 'drama' as much as I can when I have the time.

**EW:** You grew up in Ibaraki – Mito – an area famous for its natto and umeboshi. These are foods the majority of foreign visitors don't take to at first – are you a fan or foe of these items?

that level.

**EW:** How do you prepare for bouts after learning who you will go against the next day?

**MT:** I learn who I will go against but usually forget about it until after dinner when I start to get an image of my foe. Then I use DVDs of us fighting before – fights in which I lost as well as those I won, then I get an image of how to win in my head and go to sleep thinking about winning – only with the image of me winning in my head.

The next morning I prepare with



**MT:** I like them both. I make natto tempura and eat it in many forms, and, if I have no snacks, I go to the refrigerator and eat natto. I love natto. Umeboshi too.

**EW:** Do you have a favorite food and drink not involving natto or umeboshi?

**MT:** I love yakiniku and a while ago I used to eat it around four or five times a week, but recently I like fish. Sashimi, but white meat fish, non-oily fish.

**EW:** When you go home, what do you like to do?

**MT:** I go to my family grave and pray there. I also meet some friends from my school days if I have time.

**EW:** When you get together with old school friends, what did they think of your joining Ozumo?

**MT:** At first they thought it was great and really supported me. They still do. They often thought how far I would get. Nowadays, hey are all around 30-years-old and have their own hard lives so I think of them too and wish them well.

**EW:** At the recent hanazumo

event at Yasukuni you wore a red mawashi – a sign of things to come? Will you wear it during honbasho?

**MT:** I really like green. That's my favorite but the red mawashi was a gift from the Osaka supporters club so I try to use that. I used it a few years ago. I also received a purple one from my family.

I did use the red one in a honbasho before, but a family member died so I (switched) to using the purple one and I will use that one until I 'intai'. Now I use the red mawashi on jungyo and tours to show my appreciation for the Osaka fans. At the Natsu Basho I think I will use the purple one.

**EW:** Back to sumo, on Day 12, you had a tough bout with Kisenosato – another Ibaraki man Mark was fortunate enough to interview a year or so ago, do you feel any competition with him given your both being Ibaraki men?

**MT:** A lot of sports people from Ibaraki go out together – baseball, sumo athletes etc. and we often go drinking. At first, I beat Kisenosato-zeki three times, then lost five straight so I didn't want to

lose again. Off the dohyo and on the dohyo are very different, and this time I won by going very hard, changing my usual technique with him, so I was very happy.

**EW:** Do you have any plans post sumo / after you leave?

**MT:** I want to stay in sumo, in the Kyokai, and become an oyakata, but as I have only done sumo, I might start a new career. I don't really know.

**EW:** At present, awareness and enjoyment of sumo is growing around the world. Do you know you have a nickname in English? (Do you want to know?)

**MT:** Really? I have a nickname (blushes). I know in America (Vegas) Konishiki was doing the introductions for the crowd and said I like pachinko so all the fans were shouting 'pachinko, pachinko.' Is that it? (MT answers 'no') (sheepishly Miyabiyama-zeki asks) What is it?

**MB:** Miyabi-babe!

**MT:** Miyabi-babe? After Babe Ruth? (laughter all round) I'm shocked. I thought it would have been based on my (love for) pachinko.



**EW:** Do you yourself have a (heya) nickname you can share?

**MT:** Really just Miyabi. Seniors and juniors alike.

**EW:** On your blog, you mentioned that a friend had just got married and that you would like to marry ASAP – does this mean there is anyone special or just a wish?

**MT:** (laughing and blushing) says – ‘ten, ten, ten’ (meaning in Japanese .....no comment)

**EW:** Given the chance to meet anyone – from any time period – who would you like to meet and what would you say to them?

**MT:** No-one I can think of, (and does for a while).

**EW:** I understand from your blog

that you like soft toys. Why?

**MT:** I really liked the actual winning of the toys in a machine called UFO Catcher. This started in high school when I became hooked. I wanted to win a really big one and finally got one, and was very happy when everyone else saw me with it. I went after [Ampanman](#), Totoro, Stitch and all the other characters. I have many of them.

(The interview now descends into talk of [Crayon Shin-chan](#) and [Chibi Maruko](#) as MT and MB discuss MB’s somewhat odd telephone straps – Chibi Maruko and her father, Hiroshi)

**EW:** One fan, often with a (toy) monkey around his neck is known to shout your name a lot at jungyo and honbasho. Do you know him?

**MT:** Hmmm, (then recalling the monkey comment). Ah, yeah, I know him. He is a Hanshin Tigers fan and always wears a Hanshin (Igawa – former player from Ibaraki) shirt with a Miyabiyama headband. Yeah, I know him and am really happy when I hear him supporting me. Actually, I often win when I hear him as I can hear him from the dohyo.

**EW:** Last one, as this will go out to fans around the world in English, French, German and Spanish – any message you’d like to send to those fans?

**MT:** I am really happy to learn of my ‘English’ nickname of Miyabi-babe, so from now, I will really keep trying my best. Thank you very much.