

Ones to Watch – Natsu 2008

by Alexander Herrmann

Welcome to the second Tokyo basho of the year, which may well become known as the first basho of the “post-Osaka Prefectural Gymnasium era”. Since the Japanese school year ends in March, it is Haru Basho that has the most Maezumo recruits during the year and it is Natsu Basho that has all of them regularly listed on the banzuke for their first time. This year saw 68 entrants, and all gave a Japanese prefecture as their shusshin. With so much Japanese talent (or not...) coming in – one

of them already being known for roughing up a Sumo Forum member – we will look at some foreigners from the currently dominating non-Japanese country, Mongolia.

The makuuchi Mongolians have been analysed a lot already, so we will go peeking into the second division. By my calculations there should be six of them – although a seventh (Hakuba) has a slim “chance” to stay in juryo and not be promoted – and all of them

were born within a span of twenty months. The latest addition to their group came just some weeks ago with the announcement of the juryo promotions, that meant also a new record number of foreign-born sekitori in one basho (22).

The first one on my list is **Ryuuo**, and I’m afraid he will turn into some kind of Kinkaiyama. Hakuho’s stablemate and thus number 1 candidate for being the swordbearer of the yokozuna has had to give back the katana for some months now as he has had to fulfil yokozuna duties by himself. Juryo yokozuna duties, that is, but he’ll be back soon, no question. He’d fit perfectly into a one-and-a-halfth division and until its introduction he’ll have to yo-yo back and forth between the two top divisions. Such guys (and clubs in other forms of sports) have the best fans, and I am one of them. Go, Ryuyoyo!

With so many losses at the bottom of makuuchi, a mere kachi-koshi would have transported **Hoshikihari** into the first-class seats. Alas, his 5-10 will put him even behind some of those who come down from the maegashira ranks (most importantly, of course, his heyamate Kaiho)! Maybe he is still not heavy enough to have an impact. He can use this time-consuming setback to consume some chanko.

His classmate **Koryu** (both started in November 2000) also posted just a 5-10 from an excellent starting position. But unlike Hoshikihari I did not expect him to enter makuuchi – now. Five years ago he might have done it, but not today. Sounds wrong? Well, talk is not about his shape



Hoshikihari - Carolyn Todd

(which is good) but that of his competitors (sometimes better). With more and more recruits coming into sumo again, juryo has become fiercer and the division has lost its image as a way-station for talent and a safety net for has-been rikishi. Despite that, he is on my list, and he will advance to maegashira sooner or later.



Mokonami - Carolyn Todd

Mokonami, who turned 23 years shortly after the basho, will stay in mid-juryo at a level he has adjusted himself to. Exactly two

years ago he knocked on the doors of makuuchi, but got the door slammed in his face. I saw a bit more potential in him after he reached juryo with four high kachi-koshi two and a half years ago. But he is still young and has some time to season. (Am I the only one or does his picture on the Sumo DB resemble a Takamisakari without spectacles?)

Tamawashi has by far the shortest career of this OTW; he is the youngest of these six, too. After just 26 basho he will be at a new career highest rank somewhere in the upper third of the juryo division. There are three things that speak for him. He has got the “mandatory” makushita yusho that many young talents score before they advance to the second division – and stay there. He has got the bulk. And he is part of a heya with excellent rikishi (albeit some of them pretty old looking now).

Last, but not least: newly promoted **Daiyubu**. Apart from his makushita yusho in March and being the first sekitori of Shibatayama-beya I admittedly do not know anything else about him. But you always like to watch the mysterious ones, don't you? He has been around for some years now and obviously throws in a series of some good basho



Tamawashi - Carolyn Todd

occasionally. The rest of the time he gets 4-3s and 3-4s in turn. Six, five and seven wins in the last three basho was enough for the jump into the paid ranks. As I said: I know nothing about him. And so I will keep an eye on him.

Enjoy Natsu Basho!