

Ones to Watch – Natsu Basho 2009

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As this is my eleventh OTW already, I thought it might be time for a summary of the past ten. Since Aki 2007 there have been 71 paragraphs on watcheworthy rikishi containing the names of 56 different men. Kiyoseumi, Kotoshogiku and Tosayutaka are the record-holders for this column with three appearances each. Out of the entire 56, you will find 40 in the sekitori ranks of the Natsu Basho 2009 banzuke. So, in this issue, some of the other 30 sekitori plus two non-sekitori will be focussed upon.

Unbelievably but truly: **Hakuho** and **Asashoryu** have not yet been mentioned. Well, they are yokozuna, so they don't need some random author to point out that they are ones to watch. However, they shall be mentioned now. "White hat" Hakuho is officially a dai-yokozuna as of March, (the month of his 10th makuuchi yusho), and has recently bleached his cap even more by stating his intention to stay as an oyakata after his career – his "black hat" counterpart probably won't do so. This year will show whether the junior is ready to surpass his senior not only in people's hearts but in numbers too.

With **Bushuyama**, the Musashigawa maegashira head count increases to five. (The heya still provides the most makuuchi rikishi – although not quite as high-profile as ten years back). In his first maegashira basho he surprised us with an 8-7 but the illusion didn't take long to disappear. The next basho saw a 2-13 and the immediate demotion to juryo. He isn't the youngest any more but still seems to be full of



Bushuyama

fighting spirit: not many can claim that they had their makuuchi debut at 30-plus.



Sakaizawa

Onoe powerhouse **Sakaizawa** had a pretty good start in Ozumo and became maegashira just 12 basho after his maezumo debut. Two fusenpai (strangely enough both on a nakabi) unfortunately seem to have pushed the "pause" button on his career during the last few months. Back in the

upper half of juryo this basho, he will hopefully not be shy of promotion and march on into the first division. He certainly has everything in him to establish himself in makuuchi – if he would just get there for starters!

His heya-mate **Shirononami** posted a phenomenal 26-2 in his first four basho, but has been trapped in juryo for two years with seemingly no possibility of escaping. He has not yet lived up to the high expectations many had of him, and I'm unsure if he ever will. Unlike Sakaizawa he hasn't convinced me yet, but I am willing to be proven wrong.



Daishouumi

One of the many Mori of the last

few years is now known as **Daishouumi**. Being a successful amateur, he was granted tsukedashi status but has been adjusting to professional sumo rather slowly. This isn't a bad thing per se, as watching someone learn and advance can be rather

exciting. The "Big Flying Lake" (er...?) will surely provide some more thrilling hours in this respect as his breakout basho probably won't come too soon.

And, just for the sake of it, we will mention... twins! Again! And

guess which ichimon? Correct, it's the Nishonoseki group. Kataonami-beya is now the home of **Tamatoryo** and **Tamaseiryō**. Soon we'll be able to start a "Twins to Watch" column.

Enjoy the Natsu Basho!