

Ones to Watch – Nagoya Basho 2009

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The hot and humid Nagoya Basho awaits us, and this issue of OTW will feature some watchworthy Mongolians and a solitary Japanese. This Mongol-centricity wasn't intended from the beginning, but rather happened by chance when I was compiling the list of rikishi. It is no sign whatsoever of an era devoid of domestic talent. There's certainly plenty of that.



Ozeki Harumafuji

Without doubt everyone will be watching [Harumafuji](#) in Nagoya, as he is possibly just some 13 or 14 wins short of his tsuna. After struggling in his first ozeki basho he now has the... oh, wait, was he really struggling or was this just the "normal" Harumafuji? Maybe the two basho right before his promotion were the fluke ones? I guess that's just a mean naysayer's thought, but who knows? He will surely provide us with some exciting sumo in the next two weeks, whatever the result.

Another one to watch is [Kyokutenho](#). Without looking it up: how long has he been around?



Kyokutenho

That's right, 17 years. At the age of 34 he still holds upper maegashira and lower sanyaku ranks. Had he ever made a real bid for ozeki, he'd be a perfect supplement (record-wise) to Kaio and Chiyotakai. Unfortunately he has turned into a



Tokitenku

rather colourless and unimpressive rikishi in the last few years, and sometimes he is even good for a big surprise – e.g. when I found him on the new March banzuke in the komusubi rank again. Not this time, though, as I have been warned...

[Tokitenku](#) registered a both astonishing and depressing record in 2008. Having started as M1 in January, he got six make-koshi in that year but was still maegashira at the end; he even had some space left to continue his unique downslide. Luckily he pulled the brakes at that point and posted a 9-6 in Hatsu 2009. But those who thought he had turned the tide were badly disappointed in the two following basho. The most intriguing thing is that he doesn't seem to be hampered by any big injuries. He's just... well... off the track. Hopefully he'll get back onto it soon.



Hokutoriki

Another "off the track" record was [Hokutoriki](#)'s 4-11 in May. Well,



Hakuba

not the result itself, as his fans are used to him getting a big make-

koshi every other basho. It was the rank from where it was achieved. Usually Hokutoriki is good for a double digit kachi-koshi in lower-maegashira but this time he showed nothing against most of his opponents. So he'll have to start in juryo in July, for the first time since 2007. Hopefully he will return and fill that one gap in his CV – the former sekiwake has never been komusubi.

The lightweight **Hakuba** is one of the rikishi who carry their division and may give the eventual yusho winners a hard time, but will never be in the spotlight himself. He'll receive a mere honorable mention here. Upper-juryo will feature a great mixture of old hands and young turks this time, and the White Horse will be amongst them. He may not win a lot of

bouts but he will once again help carry the division simply by being there.

The last rikishi on the list is **Tokusegawa**. This tall man is the first sekitori out of the current Kiriya-beya and has been in the juryo promotion zone for a year now. Finally he could make the step and get into the paid ranks, taking a 7-0 makushita yusho (with wins against the fancied Tokushinho and Hoshikaze) on the way. He has defeated juryo opponents already, but Okinoumi or Wakatenro aren't exactly juryo powerhouses. Thus, we will have to wait for the start of the basho to see whether he is really capable of competing in Ozumo's second highest division.

Enjoy the Nagoya Basho!