

Kokugi Konnections Dejima

by Chris Gould

Seeing as Takeharu Dejima will not be seen on TV in a matchday mawashi any longer, it is worth looking at the more interesting footage he left behind.

First up is the bout which inspired SFM's tribute piece for this issue. <http://www.banzuke.com/~makuuchi/3.html>. This is, quite simply, one of the finest moments of Dejima's career, and perhaps the one he will remember most while in retirement. The clip shows one of the most unexpected results of the decade – nobody gave Dejima a chance against a yokozuna who had gone zensho the previous basho. But the dogged warrior from Ishikawa proved everyone wrong with a classic thrusting attack perfected by the boys from Musashigawa.

Dejima had not defeated a yokozuna in Tokyo for four years prior to that match. His previous victory had come in January 2003 when he proudly became the second-last man to fight – and defeat – ailing yokozuna Takanohana II. <http://www.banzuke.com/~movies/hatsu2003/070103mov.html>. Here, Dejima charges with customary

Musashigawa vigour, bulldozing into Takanohana's wobbly frame and savaging him to pieces like a wolf. However, the raw aggression is also accompanied by consummate skill in the shape of a leg-sweep with the right hand which takes the grand champion completely off-guard. This is Dejima at his very best.

The one basho that Dejima actually won came in July 1999. A review of that pulsating tournament is provided via this video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ob41E289gGw>. On this occasion, a young Dejima is shown pummelling a variety of opponents before having to face Akebono in that all-important playoff. Particularly entertaining are the shots of his mother in the masuseki, shuddering with intensity of a road-drill as her son comes agonisingly closer to the top prize. Akebono then has the chance to win the yusho against compatriot Musashimaru, but is slapped to the clay and consequently pounds out his frustration against the dohyo. Clearly affected, Akebono is then slow to react to Dejima's sidestep in the title-decider, and the rest makes for memorable

sumo history.

Those who wonder why Dejima's ankle came to be so badly swollen may derive some clues from the following clip, filmed in November 2001. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMY2hzVHuZ4>. The clip sees Dejima undone by a phenomenally fast sidestep and leg-sweep from a youthful Asashoryu. The crashing fall which results from a full-blooded charge into thin air leaves Dejima limping heavily, stunned by the brilliance of the future yokozuna.

If you want to know how it all ended, this clip provides the answer. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1Uu1VVwI4E>. It shows Dejima on the 11th day of the 2009 Nagoya Basho struggling terribly against Toyonoshima. Defeat in this match triggered the retirement announcement which can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqu2eVS0zQE>. It is, of course, typical of the die-hard sumotori to avoid retirement in his prime and continue fighting until all his strength is sapped. This, according to the great Takamiyama, is most definitely the sumo way.