

Ones to Watch – Hatsu Basho 2010

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Welcome to the “tenner years” – and a new issue of OTW. The excitement is building even before the basho has started... well, at least for some banzuke arithmeticians like yours truly. The number of sekiwake might be anything between two (creating a heavy logjam in the hiramaku ranks) and four (creating a bit higher labour costs for the Kyokai), and there will also not necessarily be only two komusubi.

But let’s turn our attention to five men that will definitely be found in the highest paid ranks in January.



Yokozuna Hakuho

On top of the pile will be [Hakuho](#), whose performance in 2009 has been simply amazing! Not only has he broken the record for wins in a calendar year but he has also collected the unwanted record of three playoff losses from three

attempts in a single year – all in Tokyo! That aside, he has set new standards of achievement in Ozumo and it will be hard for anyone to stop him claiming his first Tokyo yusho for 14 months. In his current shape he might even break his own record in 2010.



Chiyotai kai

No records will be broken any more by the demoted ozeki [Chiyotai kai](#). This is it for him, isn’t it? Hardly anyone can see how he can get the ten wins he needs for automatic re-promotion to ozeki – or the 34 wins that he would need if he doesn’t make it in January. Even the seemingly tacit agreement between the ozeki that they will not aggressively try to send each other back to sekiwake has become obsolete; Kaio’s face spoke volumes. So let’s watch Chiyo one more time, forget his later years, and remember him as the strong, tsuppari master that he

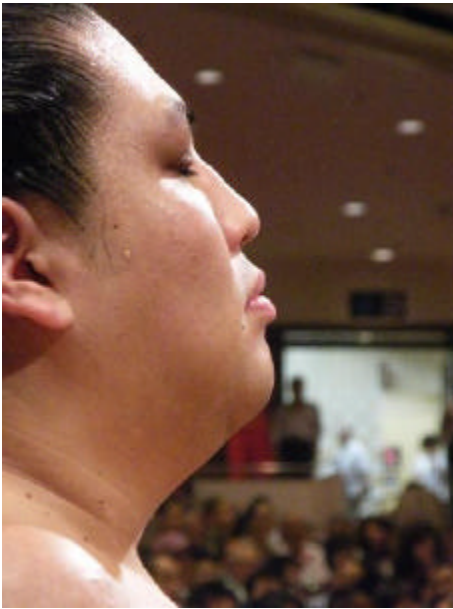
once was.

A possibly future ozeki could be [Tochinoshin](#). Both his visits to the highest maegashira ranks ended in devastating results (3-12 and 4-11), but a great performance in the last basho suggests he will fare much better this time. Admittedly, his opponents in Kyushu were not the top crowd but his wins against the likes of Kotoshogiku and Miyabiyama, and his final record of 12-3 didn’t look like accidents. (He will probably meet some of the foes he toppled again in the Hatsu basho). He should be a force to be reckoned with in 2010, and Hatsu will be only the start of promising things to come.



Tochinoshin

Just like the rising Georgian, [Miyabiyama](#) had a fine 12-3 record in Kyushu that brought him



Miyabiyama

the kanto-sho too – his first sansho since May 2006. It is unclear yet whether that sparkling result was enough to promote him to komusubi but the special prize might well be enough motivation for him to capture a kachi-koshi at a high rank again and make one more appearance in the (minor) sanyaku ranks, which would be his 20th. Although he has lost much of his former power he still is a danger to all the high rankers, and that is yet another reason why you should watch out for him.

We will leave makuuchi now and move to juryo for the mandatory mention of a newly- promoted

rikishi. New [Miyogiryu](#) and former Miyamoto has entered the sekitori ranks after four consecutive 5-2s in makushita. Thanks to five college titles (well, actually the Kokutai Championship in 2008 was enough), he was allowed to start as makushita tsukedashi 15 in May and hasn't disappointed since. Being a member of the mighty Sakaigawa-beya (home to Goeido, Iwakiyama and Toyohibiki) will certainly help him climb up the ladder and knock on the doors of makuuchi soon.

Enjoy the Hatsu Basho!