

Ones to Watch –Natsu Basho 2010

*Text by Alexander Herrmann
Photos by Chris Gould*

No less than 13 sekitori (almost 20 per cent) were on a career-high rank in March. Eight of them even achieved kachi-koshi and will thus ascend to new career high ranks in May. And here they are...

Kitataiki's 10-5 will send him up to the joi-jin ranks from where he might face a yokozuna in competition for the first time. His second makuuchi stint seems to be much more successful than his first one, where he got a paltry 2-13 in Kyushu 2008. Starting with a rather cheap juryo yusho in November 2009, he has been climbing up the ranks ever since; Natsu might see an end to his streak, as he doesn't look ready yet to face (let alone win against) all the big guys.



Kitataiki

The makuuchi debut of Michinoku's **Hakuba** wasn't much better. He recorded a 4-11 exactly two years ago in Natsu 2008. The lightweight technician is currently on four kachi-koshi in

a row, but none above 9-6. This might indicate his future path on the banzuke already: his new rank in May will unfortunately be a bit too high for him. But who knows, maybe he will surprise us.



Hakuba

Maegashira **Okinoumi** obviously reads the OTW column; I can't think of another explanation for his last few basho. After his demotion to makushita and shikona- change back to his real name Fukuoka, I predicted that he would forever jump back and forth across the so important border between sekitori and toriteki. "I'll show you how things are done," he probably thought, and now he is indeed in makuuchi and ready to continue his way up...

Mongolian **Tokusegawa** was in upper makushita for quite a while (15 basho in a row between ms2 and ms18) before he had his break-out basho in July 2009. Even a make-koshi could not stop him from reaching makuuchi five basho later. He is pretty hard to



Okinoumi

assess; periods of dominance seem to alternate randomly with periods of trying to get accustomed to new, higher-rank domains. It will be exciting to watch which period he will embrace in May.

The youngest entrant in this issue's list is **Gagamaru**, at just 23 years old. He is 5th in line for promotion to makuuchi, which should be just enough for him to become the third Georgian in Ozumo's elite division. Going by the pattern of his last four basho (yusho – 8-7 – yusho – 8-7) we might expect an unexpected winner of the Emperor's Cup in Tokyo. Just kidding... Or not?

Sokokurai has bulked up a lot since the beginning of his career in 2003 and added an extra half to his weight; his current 125+ kilograms seemingly helping him in his quest for permanent sekitorihood. Ten kachi-koshi in the last eleven basho speak for themselves. He will move closer to the top of the juryo division from where he can aim at the first

division.

Heavy **Tokushinho** is one of the many bloated Kise-beya talents. The graduate of Asahi University has only 19 basho (and just three make-koshi) under his really huge mawashi. He shows a lot of promise, and adjusting to

professional sumo will hopefully merely be a matter of time.

Last but not least: **Daido**. Being a member of the renegade Oonomatsu-beya, he might soon face the problem of too few adequate training opponents. The race through juryo between him

and his heya-mate Masuraumi has been decided in his favour for the moment (surprisingly) but the competition within his heya might well drive him into higher achievements.

Enjoy the Natsu Basho!