

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 **Tokushinbo** 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!