

# Kokugi Konnections Winning Runs

*by Chris Gould*

So, when everybody talks about Hakuho's winning streak (which currently stands at 47 bouts), who are they comparing him to? Luckily, in an age enriched by internet footage, Kokugi Konnections can provide the answer with actual videos of the great fighters in question.

The 14th day of the 2010 Nagoya basho saw Hakuho surpass Taiho's one-time post-war record of 45 victories in a row. Many felt that Taiho could have extended his streak well past 50, if only he had not been the victim of a judging error which opened the way for TV replays to decide close bouts. In the 1969 Osaka basho, Taiho came up against maegashira Toda on the second day, looking for a 46th straight win. Watch here for one of the most famous judging errors in sumo history, made particularly galling for Taiho by the fact that the referee clearly declares him the winner – only to see the correct decision overturned. The great man's own verdict is also provided in this clip.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VEKCF0jjsQ>

Should Hakuho win seven more matches in succession, he will surpass the 53 consecutive victories posted by Chiyonofuji in 1988. All of these victories have been compiled into one video clip, accessible at this address: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnLBxW\\_GBG4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnLBxW_GBG4).

Please ignore the dreadful translations at the bottom of the screen. Chiyonofuji was certainly not as big as Taiho, and had to rely much more on his speed and muscle, as seen in many of these encounters. It was events like this which fuelled the sumo boom in the 1980s, instilled immense excitement and national pride in Japanese, and left future generations of sumo fans craving for something similar.

Should Hakuho go unbeaten through the next tournament, which is not a foregone conclusion but quite likely, he will find himself in touching distance of the greatest post-war winning streak of all: that of Futabayama, set between 1936 and 1939. Back then, there were only two tournaments a year, meaning that the legendary yokozuna actually managed to go three and a half years unbeaten. To learn more about this magnificent feat, look no further than here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sC6OBedhr8>.

There was of course no TV coverage of sumo during this era, so the winning streak is largely described in photographs. However, the match where it all ended was certainly captured on film and can be witnessed here, replete with commentary. Legend has it that the shock result sparked such pandemonium that spectators threw everything in

sight into the ring – including oranges.

Of course, history has a way of throwing up revisionist interpretations of the winning streaks documented here. Some claim that Chiyonofuji and Taiho's unbeaten runs were immensely devalued by the poor quality of opponents they faced – a claim also pinned upon Hakuho, especially after the quickfire retirements of Asashoryu and Kotomitsuki.

Other critics claim that not all the bouts in the winning sequences were genuine, although some are clearly motivated by resentment of seeing one sumo figure over-dominate. (Over-domination of sumo has always been looked upon sceptically by the Japanese, especially when yusho races would be so much more exciting if the all-conquering yokozuna were somehow removed from the picture). But let us not detract from the achievements of the men in this column: many thousands of wrestlers have tried to build winning runs under the same conditions and failed.

We wait with baited breath to see whether Hakuho can top the lot. Will some of his bouts in the next few months work their way into future incarnations of this column?