

Kokugi Konnections Power Sumo

by Chris Gould

There are still some, especially among younger Japanese, who say that sumo is not interesting. Nothing special. Nowt to marvel at. This Kokugi Konnections proves exactly why they are so sorrowfully mistaken. Sumo wrestlers are immensely strong human beings. Sometimes, their feats may even appear superhuman. Disbelievers should keenly observe the following.

First up is muscular ozeki Kirishima, the man whose 115-kilogram body seemed to contain not an ounce of fat. Such was his muscle bound physique that many a sculptor fond of the machismo would crave for him to sit for them. In his memoirs, brilliantly translated into French by Liliane Fujimori, Kirishima gives numerous examples of his strength in action, the most remarkable of which was his ability to bench-press 220 kilograms “without trouble.” He was forever fond of either trying to lift opponents (he claims he dreamed of being the first to lift out the 240-kilogram Konishiki) or attempting the utchari, a highly risky pivot-throw technique that places immense strain on the ankles, knees and lower back.

One fine day in May 1988, Kirishima found himself vastly outweighed when faced with Mitoizumi, a 6-foot-4 giant who tipped the scales at 170 kilograms. What followed was a near-miracle, as Kirishima not only grappled

with the goliath, but tried to lift, spin and throw him not once, not twice... but three times as part of a four-match marathon!! (It was too close to call on three occasions!)

Take a look for yourselves.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_1Yp6VRKHA

A couple of years later, an even smaller wrestler named Mainoumi (quite rightfully named the “Dancing Ocean”) made considerable waves in the top division with his penchant for outwitting far larger foes. Up next is a 1992-encounter against a youthful Musashimaru who looks far slimmer and agile than at his peak (he has since slimmed down again, if recent TV footage is anything to go by!) This match is classic Mainoumi: a feint at the tachi-ai, a dive for the belt, incredibly low centre of gravity, an unpredictable move and an even more unpredictable ending. Here goes:

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

Next, those of you already missing Kaio one tournament after his retirement might be interested by the following footage. It says a lot about how old Kaio was (in sumo terms) when we consider he was already a top-division wrestler when Mainoumi was still quite young. This match took place in May 1993 and once again showcases Mainoumi’s “department store of techniques.” This time, minute Mainoumi

draws upon his judo experience in spectacular fashion.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv4t7wJDfSY>

And, talking of sumo’s forgotten men, does anybody remember Asashoryu? Unbelievably, it will soon be two years since the great man retired – and most of us remember him as being pretty strong; the sort of guy who could handle himself in a car park punch-up. This video requires clicking the link on the following page, where he can be seen picking up all 180-kilograms of man mountain Iwakiyama. Power sumo at its finest – and a great shove at the end too.

<http://www.banzuke.com/~movies/natsu2005/100505mov.html>

Finally, for those after a bit of excitement among the here and now, here’s Sagatsukasa on day 5 of the tournament just elapsed. At only 166-centimetres, Sagatsukasa is the shortest wrestler in the top division, and must make full use of his low centre of gravity to fell foes towering more than 20 centimetres above him. Here he is up against Tochinowaka, who by my mathematics must be 27 centimetres taller, and executing a very-rare judo-style technique: ipponzeoi. And who said sumo was boring?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pb1DuwNPuW>