

Kisenosato: Son of the Rising Sun

by Junko Asami, Sumo blogger

A special issue of Sumo magazine is coming out to celebrate Kisenosato's promotion to Ozeki. In the past only the great Yokozuna Takanohana has enjoyed the fame, which of course didn't happen in the case of Kotoshogiku, when he was promoted just two months ago. Sumo lovers here find the buzz surrounding Kise quite understandable. What we want to see is not a Japanese Yokozuna, but Yokozuna Kisenosato. Well, what is the difference? What makes Kise so special for us?

As SFM's Editor mentioned in a recent piece, sumo is Japan itself in miniature form. While Kotoshogiku remains a local hero of Kyushu area, Kisenosato has more nationwide popularity, symbolizing Japan, uniting both our country's hope for the future and the tradition that we have cherished.

Kisenosato does not smile over victory as Kotoshogiku does, and it impresses us that he is being disciplined in samurai tradition. When you win, you have to consider the losers. Showing too much joy is not regarded as an appropriate act, and this is not what we expect from someone at

the top. The second best ones are allowed to smile over victory, sometimes, but not the strongest ones, and Kise had this dignity even in his younger days. This, together with his physique, power, technique and of course his gachinko spirit, are what make us believe that he will be a Yokozuna someday.

Yes, someday. And for this someday we waited, too long, and there were really agonizing days. We had stomach-churning 15 days every two months, too often with disappointing results. Kise had komusubi days that lasted for ever, and though we were so delighted when he became sekiwake, he lost 10 bouts at the first sekiwake basho. We were angry, scolded him where he does not see it (on the internet), called him baka-musuko, which means "our idiot son" – with a little bit of affection of course!

Yes, Kise is our national sumo lovers' son. Men or women, senior or junior, love and scold him and celebrate his victories as if he is our own son. That is why we never gave up, in spite of his continuous underachievement. We never abandoned our hope, because he is our own son. Nobody gives up on

his own son.

As a Japanese son, Kise has his strength and weaknesses. Despite obviously being well-fed (you would be surprised how shiny he is if you look at him closely), he is still vulnerable, failing to learn from the past. He is also modest, disciplined and strong, but yet nervous on the dohyo. He is powerful but does not know how to use his power effectively. He is obviously loved by sumo gods, but is not aware of the fact. He is a man without pretentiousness.

He must have been ambitious through all his sumo life, but never showed off, unlike Mongolians or Kotoshogiku. However, we observe some change in his manner after the stablemaster's sudden death. Now he states clearly, that he will aim for the top, like his late master. Not a very talkative man, making a clear statement in his own words is something new, and we are glad.

Yes, we are glad. A lot of people died and suffered in 2011. But at the end of this disastrous year, now we have our new hope, our new Ozeki, our new era... our beloved son, rising to the top.

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