

Ones To Watch – Hatsu 2012

by Alexander Herrmann

Since we have talked about juryo in the last two issues it is time now to return to some more majestic fields again. Not that a juryo sekitori would be un-majestic but he is definitely no match for Mt Fuji. Don't be afraid, this will be no travel report, but after Homarefuji's promotion I have just been wondering how many Fujis there are in Ozumo today (the answer is: 22, thereof 19 with 富士 like the mountain, and three wisterias 藤). This time we will take a look at all Fuji sekitori – and the very first line in this article proves me a liar already as two out of the four presented here are in juryo. Where else?

Not in juryo but just one rank away from the pinnacle of Ozumo is **Harumafuji**. And I'm afraid to say that, but he will probably stay right there. He might even face more problems on his way to yokozuna now. Shogi and Kise rising to eye level with him means that now there are four prominent places behind them waiting to be filled with another batch of hungry contenders. And those will come. However, he is a rather consistent ozeki (no make-koshi yet when he

appeared on all 15 days) and as such an enrichment to the banzuke.

Despite Isegahama-oyakata trying to build a monopoly on names ending with "fuji" there are still some rikishi from other stables who are using it. One of them is **Sadanofuji**, one of the rare ones whose name is written with five kanji. The "sada" part clearly marks him as member of Sakaigawa-beya, where he has lots of good heya-mates to train with and to continue his slow but steady rise through the ranks. It will be interesting to see whether his kachi-koshi in Kyushu was just a fluke or indeed a result of his heya.

Takarafuji, at M14 in Kyushu, found the opposition down there quite strong and will be sent back to juryo. No harm done, though, as he stepped up on the dohyo for the first time just three years ago. He is also still quite young, entered Ozumo at very seasoned 149kg and reached juryo within just two years. And he has all the attributes that will make him Isegahama's second stalwart in

makuuchi soon.

His "brother-in-mind" **Homarefuji** shares not only the stable, but also shusshin (Aomori) and alma mater (Kinki) with him, and their careers are similar, too. Both sport a strong beginning with at least one yusho, and then a persistent march up the ranks. True, Homare needed twice as long to knock on the doors of juryo, but that's still a good performance. He should aim for becoming a juryo stalwart now, an aim perfectly within reach, before turning his eye to the first division, which might be a bit too high for him right now.

I'll end this issue with a totally unrelated side note. I just can't wait to hear the gyoji calling the **Ikioi** vs **Hakiai** match. Both will advance further with their 12-3 and 5-2 scores, and they will hopefully finally meet in a sekitori environment in 2012. Their first encounter in makushita in September 2010 ended in favour of Ikioi. Too bad that I missed it!

Enjoy the Hatsu Basho!