

sumo special

Autumn Basho shaping up to be another drama-filled affair

Autumn Basho Preview

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Life as a sumo columnist in 2020 is akin to being a TV critic in 2019 writing about “Game of Thrones.”

Countless hours spent observing the actions of the main players, paying close attention to how they interact with each other, and keeping track of their many intricate and interconnected plots, all go for naught when some minor character (or *maegashira*) sweeps in at the last minute and steals all the glory.

Unlike that divisive HBO juggernaut however, sumo never ends, and so, despite it being just six weeks since Terunofuji’s incredible title run, the September tournament is almost upon us, bringing with it a chance for everyone in the top tier to make another run at the Emperor’s Cup.

The rankings for the upcoming meet, released at the end of August, included some surprisingly generous promotions as well as a few unusually heavy drops, and set the scene for a continuation of the

recent string of exciting tournaments.

Fans who like dark horse champions will be licking their lips at the sight of former *sekiwake* Ichinojo at maegashira 17. The top division’s lowest rank has already produced two title winners in 2020 (Tokushoryu and Terunofuji), after just one in the previous 110 years.

Will there be a third? While the giant Mongolian hasn’t exactly been setting the world on fire in the second tier *jūryō* division over the past few tournaments, he is just 18 months removed from a 14-1 runner up performance and, when healthy and motivated, is a match for pretty much anyone in the sport. Ichinojo lest it be forgotten has downed all four of the most recent yokozuna on multiple occasions and was at one time tipped for the white rope himself.

Despite all that though, it’s Ichinojo’s former high school classmate that has been grabbing the headlines of late, and the wrestler who probably deserves the tag of favorite heading into the autumn meet.

Terunofuji’s unexpected championship in the July tournament, saw him promoted all the way up into sumo’s top ten at maegashira 1 east.

That has led to a lot of handwringing online, with many fans expressing the view that it’s too big of a jump too soon, and

that the resulting tough slate of opponents Terunofuji will face in the upcoming tournament should quickly end any hopes the *ex-ozeki* has of winning back to back titles and starting a run at his former rank.

It’s difficult to agree. For one, Terunofuji wasn’t as far along in his recovery in July but still managed to lift the Emperor’s Cup despite facing arguably the three toughest and hottest *rikishi* left in the competition over the final run in.

Asanoyama and Mitakeumi both lost to the Isegahama stable veteran with the title on the line last time out, and the latter man hasn’t beaten Terunofuji since 2016.

Shodai of course did manage to even up his lifetime record with Terunofuji in the ring, but even that was his first victory over the former ozeki in three and half years.

With both yokozuna still in poor condition and unlikely to make it to the end of the 15 days (or possibly even the starting line) there is no one in the top half of *makuuchi* that Terunofuji will fear. Some *rikishi* like Endo have given him difficulty in the past, but as long as he is in decent physical condition, the two-time champion should go into almost every matchup as favorite.

The ongoing ban on *degeiko* (visiting other stables for training) which hasn’t really been

a factor up to this point will likely begin to have more of an effect. A few months without high quality training partners wasn’t enough to seriously impact the sumo of top rankers in July, but as time stretches on, not being able to train with other *sekitori* will begin to take a toll.

Asanoyama and Mitakeumi both belong to stables where the next highest wrestler in in the third (*makushita*) division, which makes it harder for them to keep pace with the kind of training and preparation available to *rikishi* like Terunofuji and Takakeisho.

Another change that could play a role will be a better atmosphere right from the get-go. Although the number of spectators allowed in to the Kokugikan each day hasn’t been increased, ticket sales this time out were far brisker.

With many seats unsold in the first week in July there was a palpable sense of tension in the arena initially. That dissipated as the tournament progressed without incident and by the end the fans seemed much more relaxed.

Virtually all the best seats selling out almost instantly for September points to a much more enthusiastic crowd this time out, and *rikishi* will off course feed off that energy.

Brace yourself. The autumn tournament is coming.



Terunofuji grapples with Asanoyama during the July Grand Sumo Tournament on Aug. 3 at Ryogoku Kokugikan in Tokyo. KYODO

















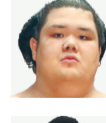









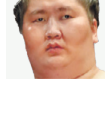

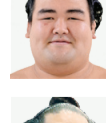




大相撲九月場所番付表

Chart introduction

● Y=yokozuna, O=ozeki, S=sekiwake, K=komusubi, M=maegashira, J=juryo, r=rest days. ● Records are shown as previous ranking, won, lost and rest days.

NIKKAN SPORTS PHOTOS

East			West		
<div><div>Hakuho</div><div>Miyagino</div><div>Mongolia (March 11, 1985)</div><div>Y, 10-3-2</div><div>After getting off to a 10-0 start in the July Basho, Hakuho was forced to withdraw due to knee injuries. He underwent surgery last month.</div><div></div></div>			<div><div>Kakuryu</div><div>Michinoku</div><div>Mongolia (Aug. 10, 1985)</div><div>Y, 0-2-13</div><div>The Mongolian pulled out of the July Basho after just two days because of a right elbow injury. The 35-year-old has struggled with injuries recently, having only completed all 15 days at one of the last five tournaments.</div><div></div></div>		
<div><div>Asanoyama</div><div>Takasago</div><div>Toyama (March 1, 1994) S, 12-3</div><div>The 26-year-old had success in his first tournament at sumo's second-highest rank and remained in the championship race until late in the basho. Asanoyama was the winningest rikishi in the makuuchi division last year with 55 victories.</div><div></div></div>			<div><div>Takakeisho</div><div>Chiganoura</div><div>Hyogo (Aug. 5, 1996) O, 8-4-3</div><div>The short, 175-cm wrestler missed the final four days of the last basho due to a knee injury and barely managed to post the eight wins he needed to save his rank. He announced his engagement to a daughter of former ozeki Hokutenryu last month.</div><div></div></div>		
<div><div>Daieisho</div><div>Oitekaze</div><div>Saitama (Nov 10, 1993) K, 11-4</div><div>After a 5-4 start, the powerful wrestler bounced back and would go on to finish 11-4 and earn his second career Outstanding Performance Award at the July tournament.</div><div></div></div>			<div><div>Mitakeumi</div><div>Dewanoumi</div><div>Nagano (Dec. 25, 1992) S, 11-4</div><div>He was in the mix for the Emperor's Cup until the final day at the July Basho and was given the Outstanding Performance Award for his efforts.</div><div></div></div>		
<div><div>Shodai</div><div>Tokitsukaze</div><div>Kumamoto (Nov. 5, 1991) S, 11-4</div><div>The veteran posted a double-digit win total for the first time as a wrestler in one of the three ranks directly below yokozuna in July and also earned the Fighting Spirit Prize from that basho.</div><div></div></div>			<div><div>Endo</div><div>Oitekaze</div><div>Ishikawa (Oct. 19, 1990) M1, 8-7</div><div>The 29-year-old beat yokozuna Kakuryu in his first match of the July tournament then proceeded to lose his next five bouts. He bounced back on Day 7 and managed to finish 8-7.</div><div></div></div>		
<div><div>Okinoumi</div><div>Hakkaku</div><div>Shimane (July 29, 1985) K, 9-6</div><div>The tall wrestler struggled early on but won five of his final six bouts in the July Basho. The 35-year-old has recorded four wins over yokozuna in his career.</div><div></div></div>					

東前頭		Maegashira East		West Maegashira		西前頭					
	No.1 Terunofuji Isegahama Mongolia (Nov. 29, 1991) M17, 13-2		No.7 Ryuden Takadagawa Yamanashi (Nov. 10, 1990) M6, 7-8		No.13 Meisei Tatsunami Kagoshima (Jul. 24 1995) J1, 10-5		No.1 Takanosho Chiganoura Chiba (Nov. 14, 1994) M2, 8-7		No.7 Aoiyama Kasugano Bulgaria (June 19, 1986) M4, 5-10		No.13 Ishiura Miyagino Tottori (Jan. 10, 1990) M8, 4-11
	No.2 Hokutofuji Hakkaku Saitama (July 15, 1992) M5, 9-6		No.8 Tokushoryu Kise Nara (Aug. 22, 1986) M7, 7-8		No.14 Tobizaru Oitekaze Tokyo (April 24, 1992) J2, 9-6		No.2 Tamawashi Kataonami Mongolia (Nov. 16, 1984) M9, 10-5		No.8 Wakatakakage Arashio Fukushima (Dec. 6, 1994) M14, 10-5		No.14 Abi Shikoroyama Saitama (May 4, 1994) M5, 3-4-8
	No.3 Myogiryu Sakaigawa Hyogo (Oct. 22, 1986) M10, 10-5		No.9 Enho Miyagino Ishikawa (Oct. 18, 1994) M6, 5-10		No.15 Shimanoumi Kise Mie (July 11, 1989) M11, 5-10		No.3 Terutsuyoshi Isegahama Hyogo (Jan. 17, 1995) M7, 8-7		No.9 Onosho Onomatsu Aomori (July 4, 1996) M2, 2-13		No.15 Shohozan Nishonoseki Fukuoka (Feb. 9, 1984) M12, 5-10
	No.4 Yutakayama Tokitsukaze Niigata (Sept. 22, 1993) M1, 5-10		No.10 Sadanoumi Sakaigawa Kumamoto (May 11, 1987) M12, 8-7		No.16 Kyokutaisei Tomozuna Hokkaido (Oct. 18, 1989) J5, 10-5		No.4 Tochinoshin Kasugano Georgia (Oct. 13, 1987) M11, 10-5		No.10 Kotoeko Sadogatake Miyazaki (Nov. 20, 1991) M16, 10-5		No.16 Hoshoryu Tatsunami Mongolia (May. 22, 1999) J6, 10-5
	No.5 Kiribayama Michinoku Mongolia (April 24, 1996) M3, 6-9		No.11 Chiyotairyu Kokonoe Tokyo (Nov. 14, 1988) M8, 6-9		No.17 Ichinojo Minato Mongolia (Nov. 29, 1991) J5, 9-6		No.5 Takarafuji Isegahama Aomori (Feb. 18, 1987) M3, 5-10		No.11 Kotoshogiku Sadogatake Fukuoka (Jan. 30, 1984) M14, 8-7		
	No.6 Takayasu Tagonoura Ibaraki (Feb. 28, 1990) M13, 10-5		No.12 Kotoshoho Sadogatake Chiba (Aug. 26, 1999) M15, 8-7				No.6 Kagayaki Takadagawa Ishikawa (June 1, 1994) M4, 5-10		No.12 Kaisei Tomozuna Brazil (Dec. 18, 1986) M10, 6-9		