

AMERICAN APRIL 2024 SUMMO

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ON
ALL THINGS SUMO WRESTLING

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Edobor Konyeha of Raijin Sumo winning the Rollertown Showdown in Dallas
Photo by @koisplay_

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AMERICAN SUMO IS PRESENTED BY GRAND SUMO BREAKDOWN





SUMO is a traditional combat sport originating in ancient Japan. The rules are simple: force your opponent out of the ring or force them to touch the ground with anything other than the soles of their feet. Professional Japanese tournaments are held 6 times a year. The 2-week long tournaments take place every odd-numbered month, with each wrestler fighting once per day and the wrestler with the best record wins.

AMA-ZUMO short for Amateur Sumo, is practiced in gyms, parks, and backyards around the world. In the US, tournaments are held throughout the year all across the country. Sumo is a sport for everyone, and no matter who or where you are, we can help connect you with someone who wants to share it with you.

**NEXT PRO
TOURNAMENT:
NATSU BASHO**

Tokyo, Japan
May 12-26th

**NEXT AMATEUR
TOURNAMENT:
YOKOZUNA CUP**

Elgin, IL
May 4th

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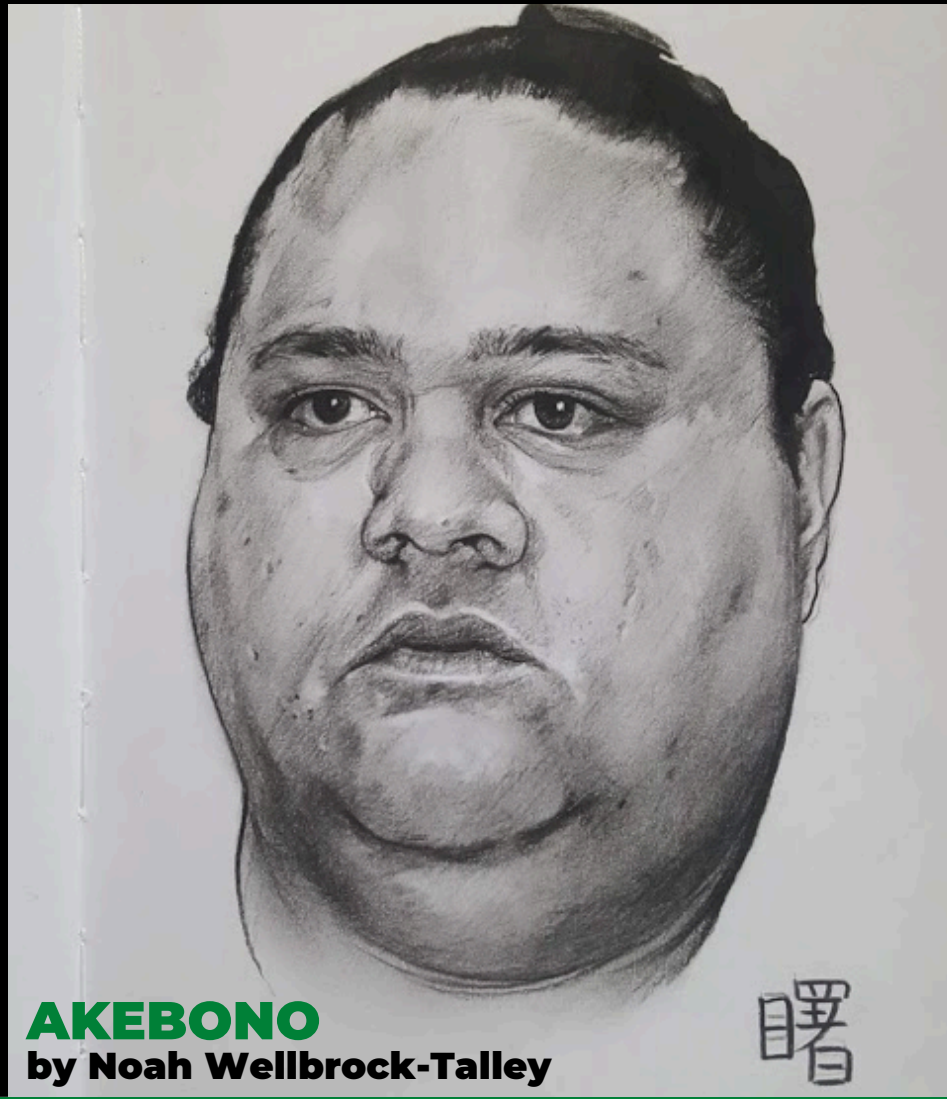
WHO ARE WE?

**GRAND SUMO
BREAKDOWN**

GSB is a podcast for all things sumo, covering everything from professional and amateur tournaments to interviews with athletes. We are here to keep you informed and help you run sumo events. Find us on your favorite podcast apps and reach out to us on social media.



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AKEBONO
by Noah Wellbrock-Talley





2024 NATIONALS



JUNE 1st, SAN DIEGO, CA

smoothcomp.com/en/event/16656

REGISTER BY MAY 27th TO COMPETE

This year's national tournament will be hosted by San Diego's Honu Sumo Club on June 1st. The winners in each men's, women's, and youth divisions will earn the right to represent Team USA this fall in Poland at the World Championships. If you can't attend, you can watch on the Maximum Effort Studios YouTube channel. Visit the smoothcomp website address listed above for full info on signing up and participating. 2023 champions are listed here, but you can watch the entire 2023 tournament on the Grand Sumo Breakdown Youtube channel. 2023's USNC took place in Orlando on 3/25/23, hosted by Iron Wave Sumo Club. More results can be found in the April 2023 issue of American Sumo. Email honusumo@gmail.com for sponsorship openings

2023 US NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

MEN'S OPENWEIGHT Mark Jones - GOR	WOMEN'S OPENWEIGHT Kellyann Ball - CAL	YOUTH MEN'S OPEN Damian Loya - SCS
MEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT Mark Jones - GOR	WOMEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT Kellyann Ball - CAL	YOUTH MEN'S HEAVY Perry Pecina - MES
MEN'S LIGHT HEAVY Eric Huynh - RAI	WOMEN'S LIGHT HEAVY Jenni Crook - CAL	YOUTH MEN'S MIDDLE Josh Sparks - IMS
MEN'S MIDDLEWEIGHT Coringa Conway - IWS	WOMEN'S MIDDLEWEIGHT Madison Guinn - IND	YOUTH MEN'S LIGHT Ben Shutko - IMS
MEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT Joe Ponsetto - CAL	WOMEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT Helen Delpopolo - IND	YOUTH WOMEN'S LIGHT Zeus Whittington - SHO



COACH'S CORNER HONU SUMO'S JJ JONES

What's your sumo origin story? "I was watching ESPN [in the 90s] and ... all of our Hawaiian brothers doing Sumo. Around 2010 to 2012, I listened to a podcast. They were talking about Sumo and then started talking about amateur sumo. It got me back to looking for it. I found the LA club, walked in and it felt welcoming. There was Justin, this rugby guy named John, Takeshi, Yama and Andrew...and I was having a lot of fun ruining all of Justin's dreams and then from there the bug was taken."

When asked why open his own club, "I was tired of driving up to LA from San Diego. There was just me when I started ...then I tricked Christina into doing it...the requirement for having a club is having three members so one of the people that beat me [in the 2020 Us Open], Mengkin, was in my bubble. So we started practicing 3-4 times a week because my gym was just open."

A coach in several other disciplines, Jj has a soft spot for sumo. "I see the beauty of Sumo in what it can do for other disciplines. What sumo gives you is that fast processing. That quick processing and that inner meshing of styles is beneficial and I wanted to share that with other people. Being able to find more people in my neighborhood that love Sumo [was important]."

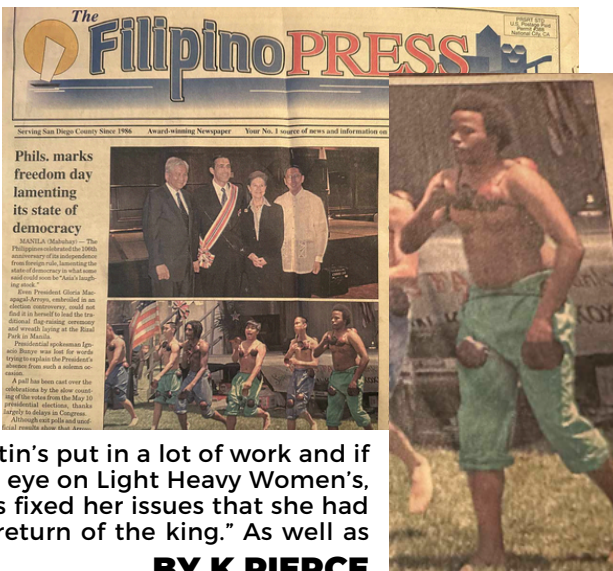
The biggest lesson Jj gave was "Not everyone wants to be a world champion". Jj cited that everyone has goals with sumo. Some want a hobby, a work out, and others want to be part of the community. "In the heart and soul of American amateur Sumo is this warm bubble of outlier freaks that just love to be around each other and if I can capture just a fraction of that and bring it to my own club it would be magic."

Jj's short term goal is to improve California sumo, "I'm doing workshops [in] different areas and now people are starting to get the buzz. More clubs, better training, solid training in California." Long term, all he wants is gold, "I want a world medal. We got one already but I want that gold and after we get that we're just looking for more."

When asked about fun facts outside of sumo Jj stated, "I did traditional Filipino dancing, I was the only black person in my high school and Filipino people are extremely warm and welcoming, so I can do multiple Filipino traditional dances and keep it in my back pocket."

Asking about Jj's Poland line up, he had a few ideas. In his own weight class: "Justin's put in a lot of work and if Justin gets out there, I will beat him and take it." He has good reason to keep an eye on Light Heavy Women's, "I have to put money on my wife [Christina] phenomenal and amazing and she's fixed her issues that she had on the world stage." He is predicting a heavyweight return, "Jose Galindo, the return of the king." As well as praising World Medalist Kellyann Ball as the favorite for Women's heavyweight.

BY K PIERCE





RESULTS

SAKURA CUP

APR. 6TH NASHVILLE, TN

YOUTH LIGHTWEIGHT

- 1st: Ben Shutko - IMS
- 2nd - Kai Pruiett - GRS

YOUTH HEAVYWEIGHT

- 1st: Gabe Tolentino - AHS
- 2nd: Verland Canas - AHS
- 3rd: Dylan Slocumb - OSD

YOUTH OPEN

- 1st: Dylan Slocumb - OSD
- 2nd: Verland Canas - AHS
- 3rd: Ben Shutko - IMS

MEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT

- 1st: Lucas Claunch - NAS
- 2nd: Gabe Unick - GRS
- 3rd: Al Short - SHS

MEN'S MIDDLEWEIGHT

- 1st: Mike Wisham - SHO
- 2nd: Justin Kizzart - DCS
- 3rd: Nicholas Tramonti Bonet - RAI

MEN'S LIGHT HEAVY

- 1st: Seth Adams - RAI
- 2nd: Cornelius Booker - FLS
- 3rd: Brandon Rudzinski - ROC

MEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT

- 1st: Jaime Calderon - CHI
- 2nd: Zach Sparkman - TNS
- 3rd: Caleb Baccus - MES

WOMEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT

- 1st: Kellyann Ball - CAL
- 2nd: Hardeman - GSC
- 3rd: Jennifer Sparkman - TNS

MEN'S OPEN

- 1st: Jaime Calderon - CHI
- 2nd: Zach Sparkman - TNS
- 3rd: Edobor Konyeha - RAI

WOMEN'S OPEN

- 1st: Kellyann Ball - CAL
- 2nd: Hardeman - GSC
- 3rd: Jennifer Sparkman - TNS

MEN'S TEAM

- 1st: Raijin Sumo**
- Edobor Konyeha - RAI
- Elliot Acosta - RAI
- Seth Adams - RAI
- 2nd: Sicago Chumo**
- Ruperto Cintron - CHI
- Sam Rodriguez - CHI
- Jaime Calderon - CHI
- 3rd: Ohayo Dayton**
- TJ Moore - OSD
- Mark Lambertson - OSD
- Brandon Mount - IAS



BY JAKE CULLISON - OHAYO SUMO DAYTON

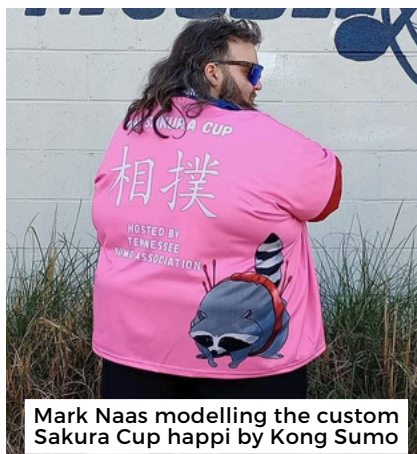
Nashville Tennessee is best known as America's "Music City". It boasts being the home of The Grand Ole Opry and the Parthenon. (Curious readers can look that surprising fact up for themselves.) One would never have guessed that hidden amongst those hills, hollers and the hustle and bustle of the country music industry, hides the 2000 year old Japanese sport of sumo.

On April 6th 2024 the city of Nashville held its first sumo tournament in the long history of the southern state. Tennessee Sumo, often seen simply as TN Sumo, hosted the first inaugural Sakura Cup at the Music City Muscle Gym to a surprisingly large turnout of athletes and spectators. Most tournaments outside of the amateur sumo capitals of the US, (I.E. California, Texas and Florida) are often faced with the uphill battle of getting sumotori to travel for said event. However, I believe Miss Dolly Parton herself must have been shining her botoxed blessings upon TN Sumo that day because nearly 80 competitors from across the nation showed up to compete on that brisk Saturday morning.

With a full lineup of mens, womens and even the ever elusive juniors brackets, it was poised to be a long and eventful day. From the moment you arrived at the event, you were met with a feast for the senses. Booths selling traditional Japanese happi coats of vibrant neon pinks dotted the entryway as well as many of the already mawashi-clad sumotori around the dohyo. The sound of clanking iron from the Music City Muscle Gym usuals, as well as the familiar meat smacks of large bodied wrestlers filled the air with a cacophonous roar. And finally, the tantalizing aromas of hibachi-style meat and rice filled the grounds as well as many of the spectators and wrestlers alike.



Florida Sumo's Dustin and Alex at the tachi-ai



Mark Naas modelling the custom Sakura Cup happi by Kong Sumo



The stage was set for the matches to begin but first a meeting to discuss the rules and procedures for the event. It was decided to run the tournament brackets slightly differently than expected by starting with the heavyweights and proceeding in descending order by weight for the men and women's divisions. Thus, giving the big boys and girls more time before the ever daunting openweight division. (which this writer greatly appreciated) After the openweight would come the team tournaments and finally the highly sought after award ceremony. The Juniors division would be sprinkled in throughout the day, with a surprising amount of competitors. In my opinion, many of the competitors were using this lower stakes tournament as a warm up and to size up the competition for the anticipated US Nationals that is just around the corner.

The competition was fierce as many of the competitors were seasoned veterans, however many of the wrestlers who ended up medaling were relative newcomers, ever pushing the boundaries of their own abilities. Competitors from Tennessee, Texas, Florida, Ohio, California, North Carolina, and even as far as the great white north of Canada battled in the dohyo for over 7 hours under the watchful eye of gyoji, black belt Packy Bannevans, and ringside judge, former maegashira Yama. Of course if you missed any of the action it can always be found over on the Grand Sumo Breakdown youtube channel.

What I took away from this event aside from the amazingly talented sumotori from across the nation, is that sumo in the US is grass roots in all the best ways. The events and clubs that are popping up all around the nation are a direct response to the lack of support for the sport. It comes from a place of "we'll do it ourselves" and has a similar spirit as the underground punk and metal music scenes, which unsurprisingly has a fair amount of crossover. Sumo in the US shows time and time again that the people involved will go above and beyond to put on amazing events such as this, so that our friends, competitors, rivals, and fans can have a place to compete and gather. Sumo in the hills of middle America is thriving thanks to the folks at TN Sumo and the Sakura Cup, which bodes well for our nation as a whole. I can say with utmost certainty that Sakura Cup 2025 will be one to watch.



Chicago's Ruperto slamming into Tennessee's Zach



- SPECIAL PRIZES**
- Power Pusher - Kellyann Ball - CAL
 - Big Hitter - Thomas Griffin - TNS
 - Sumo Spirit - Kai Pruiett - GRS
 - Technique - Edobor Koyeha - RAI
 - Fighting Spirit - Matt Shields - CHI
 - Top Thrower - Christian Zeigler - SHS



Antioch High teammates Verland and Gabe locking up



Youth lightweights having fun. Ben of Iron Mountain takes Kai of Grand Rapids for a ride



ROLLERTOWN SHOWDOWN

APR. 13TH CELINA, TX

BY SABRINA PACELLA



UNISEX OPEN

- 1st: Edobor Konyeha - RAI
- 2nd: Noah Wellbrock-Talley - SFS
- 3rd: Jamal Williams - CHI

WOMEN'S OPEN

- 1st: Etan Perez - DAL
- 2nd: Luce Garza - DAL
- 3rd: Liesel Rickhoff - DCS

Fighting Spirit

Kyle Ferriter - IWC

Performance

Noah Wellbrock-Talley - SFS

Technique

Ben Shutko - IMS



Dark Circle's Justin pushes out Chicago's Jamal

If you're going to hold a sumo tournament in an ordinary, medium sized town in Texas, it only makes sense to do it at the local brewery. After all, beer and sumo go together like chankonabe and rice. However, it just seems there's definitely something different, even magical, about the Rollertown Showdown Sumo Tournament held annually in Celina, Texas. Driving out to Celina past all the fields and ranches, through the town center full of brick boomtown buildings, past the well-kept little houses and vintage pickup trucks, it doesn't seem like the kind of place where you'd find dedicated practitioners of an ancient Japanese sport. Nevertheless, this tournament has grown from a small sumo demonstration in 2022 as part of a celebration for the release of a new Japanese style lager, into a huge event with multiple sponsors, vendors, and food trucks offering everything from pizza to mochi to brisket. Rollertown Beerworks, owned by local radio personalities Ben and Skin, radiate a festival-like atmosphere during the weekend of the tournament that attracts dozens of competitors from countries as far away as Australia and so many spectators that the thankfully swiftly-moving beer line would periodically wind its way out the front door of the brewery.

"It's like a huge party disguised as a sumo tournament." This exact phrase has been uttered by so many different people specifically about the Rollertown Showdown Sumo Tournament that I couldn't track down its original source (and believe me, I tried) and had to assume the sentiment was spontaneously felt by everyone upon entering the grounds of the Rollertown Brewery. Even so, it's still so much more than just that. Corey Morrison and Siggie Sauer, the proprietors of Dallas Sumo Club who organize the tournament, are so dedicated to sharing the sport they love that they have practically bent over backward to give the public an authentic sumo experience, each year being more spectacular than the last. At the first Rollertown tournament in 2023 they were able to accomplish something quite amazing, bringing the beloved recently retired Komusubi, Gagamaru, all the way out to Texas from Japan as an honored guest and to conduct a training seminar the day before the tournament. This year also provided the pre-tournament training, but it also included two honored guests from the world of professional Japanese sumo with the return of Gagamaru and a surprise guest, former Maegashira, Yamamotoyama, who acted as the head judge for the tournament.

The Rollertown Showdown isn't designed like any sumo tournament you're probably used to seeing. In the main event at Rollertown, there are no weight divisions, no gender divisions, and no age divisions either. Men, women, and everyone else all compete against each other. You could say it's designed like an all inclusive open weight tournament inside of something akin to a teams tournament with only two teams - East Side versus West Side. The draft for each side is one of the most entertaining parts of the whole weekend. Each wrestler fights to snatch the gold for themselves, but they also wrack up points for their side until one of the two is determined to be the winner. There was much good natured trash talk between the wrestlers as the team captains, Rick Garza with Ben Rogers for East Side, and Bubba Garza with Tyler, one of the Rollertown brewers, sitting in for Skin Wade for West Side, went back and forth choosing their team members. Rick and Bubba decided to join Dallas Sumo Club after they just happened to be at the brewery during the first Rollertown event back in 2022 and have been dedicated sumotori ever since.



Special Prize winners Noah, Kyle, and Ben



ROLLERTOWN BANZUKE

WINS	EAST	155	145	WEST	WINS
15	Edobor Konyeha	E01	W01	Hayden Southall	11
12	Jay Scriven	E02	W02	Justin Kizzart	10
10	Jaime Calderon/ Kyle Ferriter	E03	W03	Cornelius Booker	11
8	Chad Neu	E04	W04	Angel Delatorre	11
10	Caleb Baccus	E05	W05	Bubba Garza	8
0	Ben Marquez*	E06	W06	Nery Monzon	10
5	Rick Garza	E07	W07	Obie Centeno	5
9	Hunter Williams	E08	W08	Goose	5
10	TJ Moore	E09	W09	Ryan Morris	3
13	Jamal Williams	E10	W10	Russell Howard	4
11	Nemo Davies	E11	W11	Earnest Jammer	3
4	Brandon Keever	E12	W12	Jacob De Castro	4
7	JJ Brunton	E13	W13	Noah Wellbrock-Talley	14
4	Robert James	E14	W14	Matthew Shields	7
8	Billy Lozano	E15	W15	Drew Bramlett	8
7	Matt Lann	E16	W16	Etan Perez	9
6	Zach Schramm	E17	W17	Catelin Jones	2
4	Luce Garza	E18	W18	Ben Shutko	9
9	Eric Flyr	E19	W19	Damian Ramirez	4
3	Gabe Betances	E20	W20	John Leverton	7

*Withdrawn due to injury

The festivities were far from over at this point. This amazing tournament evolved into high spirited revelry for the rest of the evening as each team celebrated the East Side's 155 wins. The West Side, who gained 145 wins, was just as eager to celebrate with the rival team. As the karaoke singers belted out their favorite songs and the bartenders filled glass after glass of delicious Japanese brews and yuzu flavored cocktails, many wondered if the Dallas Sumo Club would ever top the 2024 Rollertown Showdown, but we had a sneaking suspicion our expectations would be delightfully exceeded once more next year.

The tournament started with a short women's round robin followed by the all inclusive main event. All the competitors were eager to prove their battle prowess in front of the crowd, but there were definitely many who stood out among them. Ben Shutko from Iron Mountain Sumo Club in Tennessee entered the tournament as the smallest competitor. At only 14 years old and weighing only 145 pounds (66kg) he managed to cause upsets against several competitors more than twice his age and size through his daring feats of agility. Going up against the 6ft 5in JJ Brunton in round 9 he got the giant off balance by grabbing his leg off the tachiai. JJ was able to recover and tried to swing the boy out of the ring, but Ben held on to JJ's mawashi for dear life, keeping his torso from falling and his feet in the dohyo, while JJ himself stepped out. This elicited raucous screams and applause from the crowd. Ben ended the tournament with an impressive 9 wins out of 15 rounds and was awarded the Technique Prize.

Then there was Noah Wellbrock-Talley. Noah is well known in the sumo fandom for his pro sumo fanart. Like many fans, he realized that watching just wasn't enough anymore. He and his brother built their own dohyo in their backyard in Kansas and founded Sunflower Sumo Club. For quite a while he had been wary of entering any sort of competition, but he eventually decided the Rollertown Showdown would be his first. This dark horse ended up going undefeated until round 12 when he finally gained his first and only loss to Kyle Ferriter. He ended his very first tournament with 14 wins out of 15 as well as the Outstanding Performance Prize.

The tournament ended with a couple of the top sumotori in U.S. amazumo going head to head, Edobor Konyeha from Raijin Sumo Club versus current Texas State Champion Hayden Southall from Dallas Sumo Club. No doubt this match was orchestrated with the rumors of their rivalry in mind, and the audience was eager to see who would come out on top. The match, however, ended almost as soon as it began with Edobor stepping to the side and letting Hayden explode out of the ring by his own inertia, giving the undefeated Edobor Konyeha his 15th win.



Team captains Rick and Bubba Garza of Dallas Sumo



Mighty Eagle's Jay vs. Dark Circle's Justin



Edo of Raijin Sumo receiving the gold from Gagamaru



THE TRAVELING MOUNTAIN

YAMA'S GOING EVERYWHERE! BY K PIERCE

From Grand Sumo to International Sumo, people have seen their fair share of sumotori jump into a coaching role. In the US, the first person that may come to mind is Yamamotoyama. After a fairly successful sumo career, Yama was asked to retire in April of 2011. He moved to Los Angeles in 2014 and then moved to St. Louis in August of 2023. His wife Megan's family is from the area and thought it would be a good idea for a change of scenery. When asked about his move, he stated it's been "stress free, [I only have] stress from the weather". After moving to the midwest, Yama tapped into the local sumo clubs. With major success in L.A. he was looking for new talent. His first keiko (practice) in the midwest was held with Chicago Sumo Club before being tapped as head judge for Grand Rapids' Beer City Open in September. He led a training session the following day with several clubs present and ready to learn. Yama walked through proper mawashi tying, correct matawari form, and lots of shiko.



Covering gyoji duties for Jaime & Sam at the ASU New Years Festival at GVSU

Yama held his first St. Louis training session in October. Prior to this first keiko, Yama received word that one of his students from California, Kellyann Ball, won Bronze in Women's Heavyweight as well as the US Women's team of which Kellyann, and Christina Griffin-Jones, another of Yama's students now training out of Honu Sumo, at the World Sumo Championship in Japan. After this Yama assisted with keiko in Grand Rapids and in Chicago. During this training session, Yama learned that Kellyann had also won Silver in Women's Heavyweight in Saudi Arabia at the World Combat Games. Yama was said to have been overcome with emotion. When asked about his students Yama confessed he was so happy for her wins, although he gave her all the tools, she put in all the work. He has stated he is so proud of her and she did soooo good. He has expressed wanting to pass on more sumo skills as he continues to travel throughout the Midwest. His next stop was the Midwest Open hosted by Ohayo Sumo-Indiana. A pattern of Yama's tournament visits is a training session held the next day and this event was no exception.

December saw the first training session in St. Louis under Yama's new club name 'Show Me Sumo'. When prompted about the goal of his new club, Yama had this to say, "I want it to be a place for sumo, it's easy to get to. I want it to be an everyone come together, kind of place. Accessible to everyone. [I] want to coach anyone who wants to learn." Megan stated that her family has a plot of land and they would like to invite Onoe-beya, Yama's prior stable, to the U.S. to help build a clay dohyo. The long term goal is to place tiny homes on the property to create a type of sumo compound so anyone can come and train.



Training with wrestlers from Grand Rapids, Chicago, Rock City, Ohayo, and Iron Mountain Sumo Clubs
Photo by Megan O'Donnell

The next event on the Yama tour was to Nashville for the Kuma Sumo Basho teen tournament put on by the Kuma Sumo Bears, where Yama gave a brief intro to sumo for the teenagers and was head judge. In signature Yama style a training session was held the next day. Yama advised, "Scary, I want other countries to be scared of [the] U.S." With a lot of athletic backgrounds and a blending of people, he thinks it's possible for America to have a strong sumo presence on the world stage. He states that he wants to make it obvious that he's been in the midwest to help level up sumo in the area with a good showing at Nationals this year, being held in San Diego, California by Honu Sumo.



The Yama train stopped at Grand Rapids, Michigan to take part in the ASU New Years festival at GVSU. As of now, Yama states this is his favorite event, he loved to see the sumo community come out and work together to help Grand Rapids Sumo Club with the event. He loved the energy of the crowd and the wrestlers, and how everyone worked together. He will use it as a learning experience for himself, for what to do at his next demonstration.

The next stop for Yama was back in Nashville for the Sakura Cup, where he acted as head judge and ran a seminar the following day. He reunited with his most decorated student, Kellyann, while watching her also take Gold in Women's Heavyweight and Open weight. When asked if there was anything he would like the American sumo community to know Yama had this to say, "[I want to] teach and people can go back and pass on information. Raijin [sumo] comes and they go back to Raijin [sumo club] and show everyone. Ohayo [sumo] comes and they go back to Ohayo [sumo club] and show everyone but [put their] own style with it. Everyone [has their] own style. [I want to] teach the basics [and] everyone take it back and put their own style on it."

When asked who his favorite student currently is, Yama giggled and said it was Chris from Chicago Sumo Club because he's "funny and crazy, very crazy". What's next for Yama? Training up more students. Yama states he wants to see a leveling up in sumo skills to be able to teach more advanced students. If you think you are Yama's next star student, reach out to Show Me Sumo on instagram. Yama has just launched YamaSumoAcademy where you can learn sumo skills from Yama for a small monthly fee. If you want to reach Yama for any other reason refer to his linktr.ee/yamasumo. We wish Yama the absolute best in his future endeavors and are excited to have him with us! Welcome to the Midwest. Ganbatta!

Editor's note: Yama has since also visited Texas for the Rollertown Showdown and training with Kurowashi Sumo in Denton. He will be spending most of the summer helping coach his old stable, Onoe-beya, in Japan.



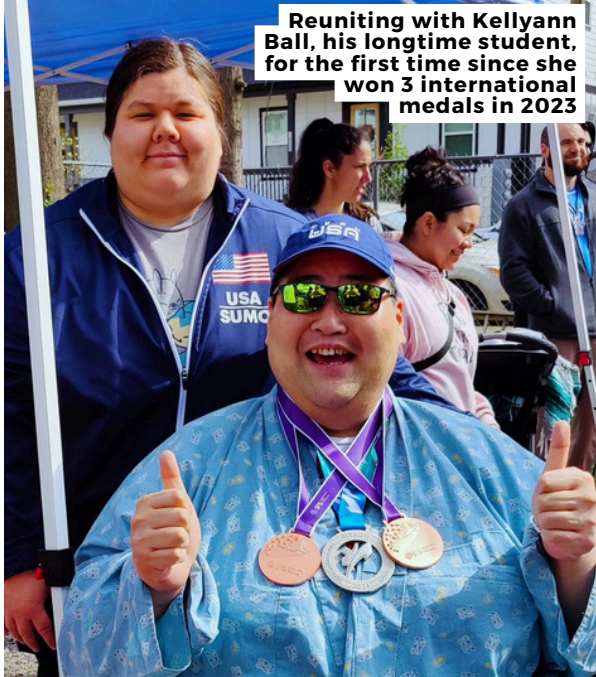
Helping Ben with his top knot
Photo by Jen Sparkman



Training with Chicago and Iowa Sumo Clubs



With his Chicago students at the Sakura Cup in Nashville



Reuniting with Kellyann Ball, his longtime student, for the first time since she won 3 international medals in 2023



2024 TEXAS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP



WOMEN'S DIVISION LEADERS

Etan Perez	DAL	31
Luce Garza	DAL	26
Eri Midorikawa	DCS	14
Catelyn Jones	DAL	14
Liesel Rickoff	DCS	13

MEN'S DIVISION LEADERS

Jay Scriven	MES	27
Hayden Southall	DAL	26
Caleb Baccus	MES	24
Justin Kizzart	DCS	22
Chad Neu	DCS	21
Billy Lozano	DCS	21
Zach Schramm	MES	20
Bubba Garza	DAL	18
Matt Lann	DAL	17
Jacob DeCastro	SHO	16

Etan Perez and Hayden Southall of Dallas Sumo Club.
Photos by Robin Mallon

Since 2004, the Lonestar Sumo organization has awarded the Texas State Championship to the most outstanding Texan wrestler of the year. The scoring is simple: 5 points for participating, 1 point per win, and bonus points for medals (3/2/1 points for gold/silver/bronze). In 2023, Dallas Sumo won both the men's and women's titles via Hayden Southall and Etan Perez. With 2 of this year's 4 qualifying events in the books, Perez is on pace to repeat, but is followed closely by Dallas teammate Luce Garza. In the men's race, the front of the pack is a bit more crowded, with Mighty Eagle's Jay Scriven in the lead and Southall and Caleb Baccus within just 3 points. Next up will be the Consulate's Cup over Labor Day weekend and the Texas Classic near the end of the year. Visit mightyeaglesumo.com for complete point results

2024 TX State qualifying events:

- METT, San Antonio - 2/10/24
- Rollertown, Dallas - 4/13/24
- Consulate's Cup, Austin - 8/31/24
- TX Classic, Houston - Late 2024

2024 MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIP

Taking inspiration from Texas, the Midwest Ichimon will award the 1st annual Midwestern Sumo Champion title this year to the top wrestler in the men's, women's, and youth divisions. Earning points works the same as in the Texas competition and is based on the four major events in the region (plus the Kuma Bash for youth only). The current standings include Antioch High's heavyweight Gabe with the lead in the youth division, Tennessee's Amanda and Jennifer close together in women's, and Jaime Calderon of Chicago out front in the men's division. Find the Midwest Sumo Ichimon on Facebook for more details on the title and to see if you live in a state that qualifies, and keep an eye on Sumo411.com to keep up to date on official dates for tournaments as they are finalized over the coming months.

2024 Midwest qualifying events:

- Kuma Sumo Bash II, Nashville TN - 1/27/24
- 1st Annual Sakura Cup, Nashville TN - 4/6/24
- Riverfront Open, Grand Rapids MI - Summer 2024
- Beer City Open, Grand Rapids MI - Fall 2024
- Midwest Open, Bloomington IN - Winter 2024

MEN'S DIVISION LEADERS

Jaime Calderon	CHI	25
Zach Sparkman	TNS	17
Gabe Unick	GRS	16
Thomas Griffin	TNS	15
Matt Shields	CHI	11
Sam Rodriguez	CHI	11
Brandon Mount	IAS	10
Corban Meyer	OSI	10
Ruperto Cintron	CHI	10
Brandon Rudzinski	ROC	9
TJ Moore	OSD	9

WOMEN'S DIVISION LEADERS

Amanda Brahle	TNS	8
Jennifer Sparkman	TNS	6

YOUTH MEN'S DIVISION LEADERS

Gabe Tolentino	AHS	35
Verland Canas	AHS	29
Ben Shutko	IMS	23
Dylan Slocumb	OSD	15
Lucas Boudoin	AHS	12
Kai Pruiett	GRS	7



HARU BASHO, OSAKA JAPAN

MAR. 10-24TH 2024

Result	East	Rank	West	Result
2-5-8	Terunofuji	Y		
5-10	Kirishima	O	Hoshoryu	11-4 J
8-6-1	Takakeisho	O	Kotonowaka	10-5
6-9	Daieisho	S	Wakamotoharu	9-6
9-6	Abi	K	Nishikigi	3-12
6-9	Ura	M1	Asanoyama	9-6
8-7	Atamifuji	M2	Meisei	6-9
7-8	Oho	M3	Takanosho	5-10
8-7	Tobizaru	M4	Hiradoumi	9-6
7-8	Midorifuji	M5	Onosato	11-4 JGK
2-3-10	Tsurugisho	M6	Gonoyama	10-5
6-7-2	Kinbozan	M7	Tamawashi	7-8
9-6	Onosho	M8	Takayasu	11-4 J
6-9	Hokutofuji	M9	Kotoshoho	8-7
8-7	Shodai	M10	Mitakeumi	9-6
7-8	Ichiyamamoto	M11	Sadanoumi	8-7
9-6	Shonannoumi	M12	Shimazuumi	0-4-11
6-9	Ryuden	M13	Churanoumi	7-8
8-7	Nishikifuji	M14	Kitanowaka	3-12
6-9	Myogiryu	M15	Roga	7-8
5-10	Endo	M16	Daiamami	7-8
13-2 YGSK	Takerufuji	M17		

The Haru basho was an historic tournament. It featured a Yusho winner that did something that hadn't been seen in generations, and may not be seen for many generations to come. Takerufuji debuted in Mae Zumo in September of 2022 and just 9 tournaments later he shattered the record books to become the fastest rikishi to win a top division tournament from the time of their debut (10 bashos) and was the first rikishi since Ryogoku in 1914 to win the Yusho in his top division debut. Those are just a couple of the records he set/matched in his shocking win. He started off the tournament with 11 consecutive wins (T-most in a Makuuchi debut). Included in that streak were wins over Komusubi Abi and Ozeki Kotonowaka. He won the Yusho with 13 wins (T-most wins in a Makuuchi debut). He also became the 6th rikishi ever and the first since 2000 to be awarded all three special prizes in one basho.

Takerufuji was able to win this yusho with his combination of strength and speed. Most of his matches were over in a matter of seconds. He quickly blasts off at the tachiai and immediately forces his opponent back and out, typically with very minimal resistance. This allowed him to easily clean up the bottom of the Makuuchi division which gave him the lead in the tournament. This win seemed like a forgone conclusion for Takerufuji following Day 13. He was sitting with 12 wins and his closest competitors only had 10, meaning that a win on either of the final two days would secure him the Yusho. But nothing ever comes easy in sumo. In his Day 14 matchup against Asanoyama, Takerufuji injured his ankle in a loss. He slowly shuffled back on the dohyo to bow to his opponent, but then had to leave the arena in a wheelchair and was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Things seemed bleak for Takerufuji's chances to mount the dohyo on Day 15 and if things landed a certain way he could have lost the Yusho in a playoff by forfeit. But according to Isegahama Oyakata, who was ready to turn in Takerufuji's kyujo papers, Takerufuji refused to be sidelined for Day 15 and took enough pain killers to make sure he could take the dohyo and compete for the Yusho. He was able to go head to head with 10-win Gonoyama and force him out to win the Yusho with no controversy, capping the greatest top division debut ever.

BY RYAN SMITHMAN

Yokozuna Terunofuji had to step to the side this basho and watch as his junior stable mate took the world by storm. Following his 9th Yusho win in January, Terunofuji took to the dohyo again, but was clearly not healthy enough for the rigors of a full basho. He would lose on Day 1 to Komusubi Nishikigi, and then after wins on Days 2 and 3 he would follow it up with back-to-back-to-back kinboshi to Meisei, Oho, and Takanosho. After those consecutive losses the Yokozuna would go kyujo with the promise to give it his best in May.

In a familiar scene, Takakeisho entered the basho as a kadoban Ozeki and needed to get 8 wins in order to keep his coveted rank. Things started off about as well as Takakeisho could hope while still nursing a neck injury that has hampered him for years. He was 7-2 following Day 9 and needed just one win, but then the losses began piling up and he was sitting at 7-5 with his three toughest opponents still ahead of him, his fellow Ozeki. But on Day 13 Takakeisho was able to defeat new Ozeki Kotonowaka and secure his rank for at least two more tournaments. It was a pyrrhic victory however as Takakeisho suffered an injury to his chest muscle and would need to pull out of the basho.

A little overlooked due to Takerufuji's historic debut, Onosato once again put together an impressive 11 win basho, en route to a Jun Yusho and two special prizes. Onosato has completed his first year in sumo and will likely begin Year 2 in the san'yaku and looking like a very dangerous force to the top ranked rikishi.

Sharing the Jun Yusho with Onosato were Ozeki Hoshoryu and Maegashira 8 Takayasu. Hoshoryu was the first rikishi to put dirt on Takerufuji this basho and was the only rikishi this basho that was able to defeat both rookie sensations, Takerufuji and Onosato. Takayasu's 8th Jun Yusho ties him for the most Jun Yusho won without ever winning a Yusho.

As surprising as Takerufuji's yusho was, it was almost equally surprising to see 2 time Yusho winner, Ozeki Kirishima struggle for the entirety of the basho. From Day 1 it seemed as if Kirishima lacked much, if any, power to finish off his opponents and limped to a final record of 5-10. It seems as though Kirishima was fighting multiple upper body injuries during the basho. He will be a kadoban Ozeki for the second time in his career.

TAKERUFUJI'S PATH TO THE TITLE

Day	Opponent
1	M16w Daiamami
2	M16e Endo
3	M15w Roga
4	M15e Myogiryu
5	J1e Tokihayate
6	M13w Churanoumi
7	M12e Shonannoumi
8	M13e Ryuden
9	K1e Abi
10	M5w Onosato
11	O2w Kotonowaka
12	O1w Hoshoryu
13	S1w Wakamotoharu
14	M1w Asanoyama
15	M6w Gonoyama



SUMO ESSENTIALS WITH TOM ZABEL

GYOJI BASICS

PART 3: THE JUDGES

Whenever possible, there should be five judges (shinpan) that assist the gyoji for a sumo competition. The judges should enter and exit the dohyo-damari (ringside waiting area) as a group. While standing in front of their seats, the judges make a bow at the command of the gyoji. This is the positioning of the judges and gyoji

The referee (gyoji) oversees the action in the dohyo, signals the start of the bouts, keeps the action going, watches for unauthorized actions or techniques, and declares the winner.

The judges (shinpan) monitor the tachiai carefully and stop the match if either rikishi does not start properly. In addition, any one of the judges may challenge a decision made by the gyoji.

When there is a disagreement, the shinpan must immediately raise his right hand before the gyoji has given the kachi-nanori (formal announcement). Once the gyoji makes the final announcement, the decision is final and no objections may be raised.

The rikishi exit the dohyo and wait for the shinpan committee to determine the outcome.

The shinpan meet in the center of the dohyo with the gyoji to discuss the verdict in a conference (mono-ii). The chief judge (shinpan cho) presides over the mono-ii.

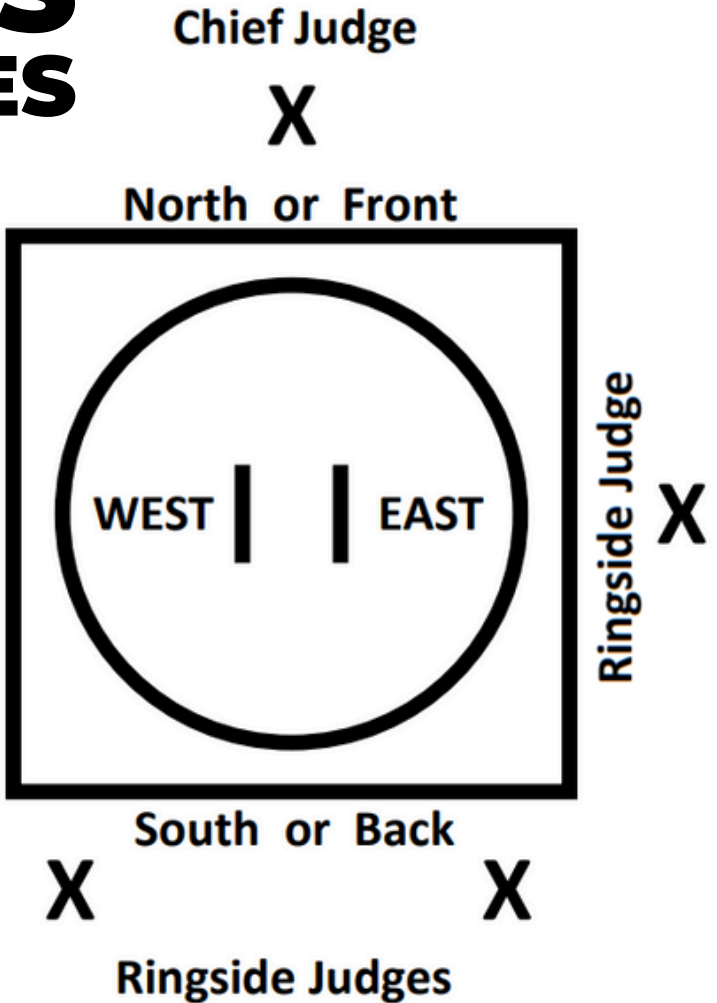
The judge who raised his hand should state the reason he challenges the initial decision of the gyoji. The gyoji should then explain what he saw and the reason for his decision. The next step is for all the judges to discuss and make a ruling. The final decision is based on a majority vote and is announced by the chief judge.

Upon returning to their seats, the chief judge can concur with the gyoji's verdict (gunbai dori), declare a complete reversal of the decision (sachichigai), or call for a rematch.

If the mono-ii agrees with the initial decision made by the gyoji, the initial winning rikishi steps into the dohyo and performs sonkyo to accept the decision. If the mono-ii reverses the gyoji's initial decision, the new winning rikishi steps into the dohyo and performs sonkyo to accept the decision.

If a decision cannot be made, the match will be replayed (tori-naoshi). Both rikishi step back into the dohyo and start the prematch ritual.

This is part 3 of a 3-part series on Gyoji Basics, see Dec. 2023 and Feb. 2024 for parts 1 and 2





KIMARITE KORNER

決まり手

BY TOM ZABEL

UWATENAGE/UWATEDASHINAGE Overarm Throw / Pulling Overarm Throw

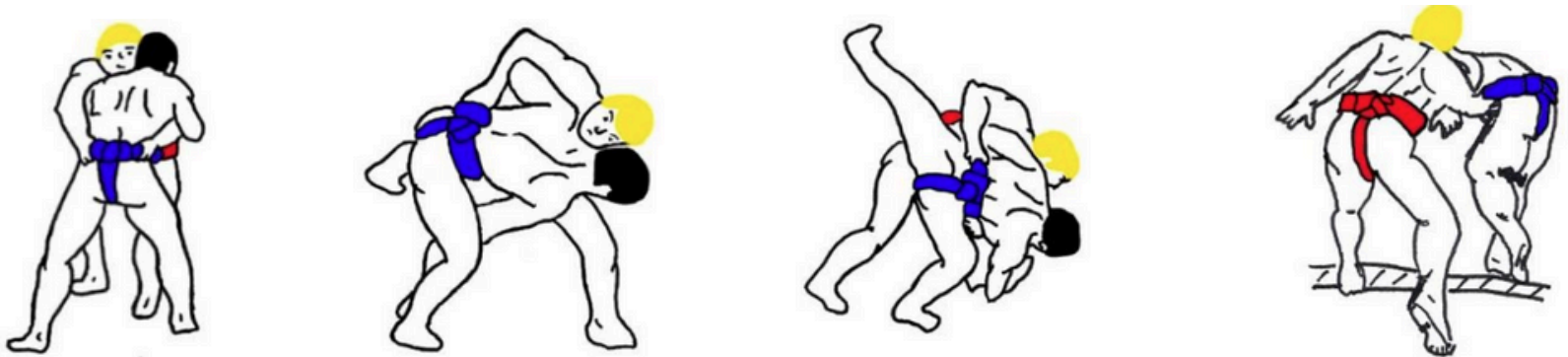
“Uwate” is “overarm”, or as we say in sumo, having an “outside grip”. “Nage” is “throw”, so Uwatenage is an overarm throw. “Dashi” is “out”, so Uwatedashinage is an overarm throw out of the dohyo. These are accomplished using an overarm or outside grip. (As you may imagine there is are corresponding throws using an inside grip: Shitatenage and Shitatedashinage.)

FIGURE 1 After establishing an outside grip, heave your opponent down by turning away as a sharp angle.

FIGURE 2 As you twist, use your hip to get your opponent off balance. You may also use your head and/or shoulder to force your opponent down onto the dohyo. If you also have an inside grip you can pull down on the front of the mawashi, (at some point you will have to release the inside grip).

FIGURE 3a Follow through by continuing to lean into your opponent with your shoulder, forcing him downward. You may also use your inside foot as a pivot and continue to take a step backward with your outside foot.

FIGURE 3b If your opponent will not go down you can force him out of the dohyo. The throw is successful when you are centered on his body which is turned sideways.



“Okuri” is from “behind” or “rear”, “dashi” is “out of the dohyo”, the attacker drives his opponent out from behind.

OKURIDASHI REAR PUSH OUT

FIGURE 1 Use this technique when your opponent is pushing or thrusting you and use his power and momentum against him.

FIGURE 2 Best used when you grab your opponent’s mawashi and turn away by taking a step to the side and pulling him so that you are to his side or in back of him.

FIGURE 3 Continue pulling/pushing your opponent from behind and out of the dohyo.





UPCOMING EVENTS

Farewell to ONE Fitness Center
 THE CHICAGO SUMO
YOKOZUNA CUP
 SATURDAY MAY 4TH, 2024
 ONE Fitness Center
 24 Tyler Creek Plaza, Elgin, IL 60123
 \$20 Entry
 Doors open at 6PM, First match at 7PM
 A dozen of the best competitors from the Midwest!
 No weight classes just like REAL SUMO -
 competitors from 175lbs to 475 lbs!



USSF Sanction #11124




US SUMO OPEN
 SAT MAY 11, 2024
 WALTER PYRAMID, CAL STATE LONG BEACH



USSF SANCTION #10945

24TH ANNUAL

2024 US SUMO
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
 SAN DIEGO, CA
 LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL GYM
 4777 IMPERIAL AVE
 SAT. 6/01/24 @ 9AM
 ADMISSION - \$10





bit.ly/uswatch2024sumo

DOWN THE ROAD IN 2024:



SUMO 411

Consulate's Cup
 Austin, TX - 8/31/24
 Sanction #10884

2024 SUMO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
 Krotoszyn, Poland
 9/6 - 9-8/24

Contact the editors to get your club or event added and find more event information at [sumo411.com!](https://sumo411.com)

NEWLY INDEPENDENT CLUBS





FLORIDA SUMO
 PANAMA CITY BEACH & ORLANDO, FL
 FLORIDASUMO@GMAIL.COM

SHOW ME SUMO




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黒鷲 (Kurokashi)



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 Keiko (Sumo Practice)
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 Contact honusumo@gmail.com for more info
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Dark Circle's Chad Neu pushing California's Angel Delatorre at the Rollertown training day this April
Photo by Tyler Koi

COMING UP IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

- **Tournament Coverage:**
 - **Natsu Honbashi**
 - **5/4/24 Yokozuna Cup**
 - **5/11/24 US Open**
 - **6/1/24 US Nationals**
 - **Riverfront Open**
- **Previews and Features**
 - **Fall Tournament Previews**
 - **Coach's Corner**

CLUB ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS ISSUE:

ABR:	Club Name:	Out of:
AHS	Antioch High School Bears	Nashville, TN
CAL	California Sumo	Los Angeles, CA
CHI	Chicago Sumo Club	Chicago, IL
DAL	Dallas Sumo Club	Dallas, TX
DCS	Dark Circle Sumo	Austin, TX
FLS	Florida Sumo	Orlando, FL
GRS	Grand Rapids Sumo Club	Grand Rapids, MI
GSC	Georgia Sumo	Atlanta, GA
IAS	Iowa Sumo Club	Des Moines, IA
IMS	Iron Mountain Sumo	Elizabethton, TN
IWS	Iron Wave Sumo	Orlando, FL
MES	Mighty Eagle Sumo	San Antonio, TX
NAS	North Alabama Sumo	Decatur, AL
OSD	Ohayo Sumo Dayton	Dayton, OH
OSI	Ohayo Sumo Indiana	Bloomington, IN
RAI	Raijin Sumo	Raleigh, NC
ROC	Rock City Sumo	Detroit, MI
SFS	Sunflower Sumo	Salina, KS
SHO	Shogeki Sumo	Houston, TX
TNS	Tennessee Sumo	Nashville, TN
IND	Independent/Unaffiliated	