

INSIDE STORY OF A FAMOUS JU-JITSU CHALLENGE

The following article appeared in a publication on May 15th 1932. Unfortunately I do not have the name of the publication, as all I have is a very poor quality photocopy. I have retyped it here as I found it to be very interesting. I have had to use a different photo of Yukio

This week I will let you into the secret behind one of the most sensational wrestling matches that was ever staged.

I refer to the defeat of my friend, Yukio Tani, the famous Japanese wrestler, by his fellow countryman, Taro Miyake, at the Tivoli Theatre, London.

It came when the popularity of Ju-Jitsu wrestling was at its height; at a time when Yukio Tani was sweeping through the country challenging all comers at any weight to come along and try their luck.

I was running Tani and so absolutely convinced was I that there was no man in the world, not even amongst our greatest wrestlers, who could last ten minutes against the Jap in the Ju-Jitsu style of wrestling, that I was offering £100 to anybody who succeeded in doing so.

I also offered the sum of £1 for every minute over five minutes they remained unbeaten by him.

I have staged many wrestling tournaments, and have been associated with all the greatest wrestlers of our time, but with the exception of Hackenschmidt in his own style - and whom I consider to be the finest wrestler the world has ever known - was never so sure of the invincibility of any man as I was that of Yukio Tani.

Challenge to Giants

I mention this at the outset in fairness to tani, who was one of the gamest and most sporting fellows I have ever met.

And it is good to know that at his school of wrestling at Victoria, and at the age of 53, this amazing man can wrestle 20 or 30 men a night, trained men at that and good wrestlers, without turning a hair. I also mention it by way of confession, for I turned out to be wrong, as Taro Miyake proved.

Yukio tani was brought over to this country during the big wrestling boom, and at a time when people were getting rather tired of the ordinary wrestling with giants squirming about on the mats for an hour at a time, perhaps.

Tani accepted my offer, and I travelled him around with me, he teaching me Ju-Jitsu. A charming fellow, modest and sociable, we got on wonderfully well together.

Convinced that we were perfectly safe in doing so, I issued challenges broadcast to any of the great wrestlers who were then touring the country - some of them absolute giants of fellows, who under

ordinary circumstances could have beaten Tani - to come on to the stage at the Oxford Music Hall when he would undertake to throw them inside ten minutes or forfeit the sum of £100.

Not one of them ever accepted, and in order that the show should not fall flat, and the public be disappointed, I go together a few stout wrestlers, such as Alf, Hewitt and Joe Carroll - one of the finest catch-as-catch-can exponents who ever stepped on to a wrestling mat - to take him on.

I hit on the idea of giving them £1 for every minute they stayed over four minutes against the Jap.

During the time they were travelling around with him wrestling every night, they naturally became more and more skilled in the game and in consequence they could put up better and better shows.

Tackled World Champion

We had a wonderful tour and Tani became one of the most popular turns on any bill. Tani was the jimmy wilde of wrestling, with the difference that whereas jimmy Wilde could not be expected to take on a boxer of any weight, tani barred no man however heavy he might be. He took on all comers. As an example of his sportsmanship let me tell you the story of his epic match with Jim Mellor, the champion catch-as-catch-can wrestler of the world at that time.

Jim Mellor, then at his prime, challenged him to a match for £200 a side in the Catch-as-catch-can style and Tani accepted it.

To my mind it was of the finest things ever done and exhibits Tani in a light which would do credit to those who promote and take part in present day sporting events.

The match was held at the old Tivoli Music hall, and I want to impress upon you that tani had never taken part in a catch-as-catch-can match in his life before.

It is a rule of wrestling that if any of the seconds should encroach upon the mat during a bout their man can be disqualified.

Now during the first scuffle the seconds of Mellor rushed on to the mat, claiming a fall. At the time

The claim was made the referee was outside the group of seconds, and thus could not see properly. Anyhow the fall was given to Mellor, amidst great rejoicing.

TANI WAS NOT IN THE LEAST PERTURBED, AND WITH THE SAME CALM WITH WHICH HE ALWAYS TOOK THE MAT,



HE WENT UP FOR THE NEXT BOUT. There is no need to describe all that happened.

Tani won the next two falls with as fine an example of classic wrestling as has ever been seen anywhere, and he has never since been defeated in the catch-as-catch-can style.

I say in all seriousness that I believe to this day there is no wrestler living who could beat him in that style, weight for weight.

Tani was with me altogether about six years, and just towards the end of that time it came to my ears that certain people were bringing over another Jap to beat him.

I made discreet enquiries, and learned that an agent had got into touch with Taro Myaki when he landed and had spirited him away awaiting the time when they could spring him on me, and produce him suddenly at one of the big London halls, demanding an instant acceptance of his challenge.

This was all quite fair, and I am not making any complaint. There was a Japanese club in London where they had the records of Japanese athletes in all branches of sport, and on making investigations we discovered that Myaki was a real champion, weighing 12st. 4lb and standing about 5ft. 9in. in height.

We knew he was a formidable antagonist, but Tani was confident that he could beat him, and expressed no anxiety about the matter.

Somehow I felt that there was something behind it all, and I scoured London for Myaki to try to get the strength of things, but could not find him. All that I could discover was that they intended to spring a surprise upon us.

Having had so much to do with Tani I had frequently been along to the Japanese Embassy where I knew an official, so I quietly went to him, explained the position, and asked him whether he knew where Myaki was.

I explained that there was a scheme afoot to pit Jap against Jap.

How They Met

This man said: "You leave it to me, we'll very soon find him for you," and he was as good as his word. Within twenty-four hours he had him there, and gave him a good dressing down for trying to put it across a fellow-countryman.

Myaki told me that he had been offered £12 a week, and it struck me as being a good move to offer him £50 a week, an offer at which he jumped.

I thereupon got him to sign a contract with me, and took him down to my home, where I kept him for a time, whilst the other side were looking all over the place for him, never dreaming that I had played them at their own game and won.

I kept him for two weeks, and then Tani was due to appear at the Tivoli where he had gained his great victory over Mellor.

All the time I was wondering what to do about Myaki. I thought it would be a good idea to book him

on one tour whilst Tani was doing another tour, and eventually arrange a match between them.

Then it struck me that if I arranged the match whilst Tani was appearing at the Tivoli, it would give Myaki a great boost, especially if the pair went the whole ten minutes without a hold or lock on either side.

Then having thus whetted the public appetite with regard to both of them, I could do the two tours with both men claiming to be the champion and finally staging a big match - fight to a finish in London when the matter would be decided to our respective and mutual profit.

I went to Tani and said: "Look here, Tani, supposing this fellow Myaki comes along whilst we are at the Tivoli and issues a challenge, what will you do about it?"

"I'll wrestle him," was the quiet reply.

"Are you sure you can beat him?"

"Yes"

Strength and Speed

As I have told you, I did not believe there was anyone in the world who could beat Tani. I had been with him for six years, and I had never seen him extend himself. He was so confident himself that I was obsessed of his certainly.

"Right-" I said "Myaki will show up tomorrow night."

Tani was not in the least bit surprised. Big as Myaki was, Tani expressed himself so confident at winning that I was certain that the result would end as I had planned in a ten minute draw.

But strength and speed won. Tani simply collapsed before the onslaught of Taro Myaki, who, despite all the skill of Tani, simply overwhelmed him.

I have never in all my life witnessed a more wonderful exhibition of speed and strength combined, and Myaki had no need to resort to the skill which characterised Tani to enable him to inflict the crushing defeat which he did inflict.

And Tani -? That game little sportsman took his defeat as gracefully as any man ever could, and again I would commend his demeanour in the hour of his disappointment to our present day sportsmen.

No questioning of the decision; no wailing of hard luck. Just the same stoic acceptance of the fact.

"A good job it is a Jap," he told me afterwards, with never an attempt to excuse himself. "I feel tired."