



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Meet the 10-year-old, 85-kilogram Sumo Champion

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Among all the young sumo **wrestlers** in the circle, 10-year-old Kyuta Kumagai stands out.

He weighs 85 kilograms. That means he is two times the size of the other children his age. His big size makes him very good at his sport. When he wrestles boys five or six years older, he wins.

He is so good that last year Kyuta was named the under-10 world champion. He defeated competitors from as far away as Britain and Ukraine.

Kyuta is a **shy** boy of few words. When reporters for the [Associated Press](#) asked him why he likes to wrestle, his answer was simple: “It is fun to beat people older than me.”

His father Taisuke created his training **routine**. And the training is not easy. The 10-year-old boy trains six days each week and does many different exercises. He lifts weights, moves huge tires, swims, and runs. The goal is to build up **flexibility** and quickness, two things needed for sumo wrestling.

Kyuta has been on this routine since about age six. That is when his father first entered him in a sumo competition.

“I didn’t teach him anything,” Taisuke said, adding that his son could wrestle naturally.

Taisuke himself used to be a sumo wrestler. “There is a **talent** for sumo, he said, “and he has that talent.” After winning that first competition, Taisuke thought his son may have a special talent for sumo.

## ‘Betting everything on this’

The training costs a lot of money and requires sacrifices from the entire family, including his mother Makiko.

His father says he does not **gamble**. Instead, he is **betting** everything on his son.

When it became clear the boy had talent, Taisuke moved the family to the Fukagawa area of Tokyo. This area is famous for sumo wrestlers. It has many sumo clubs. It also has the Nominosukune Shrine. This is where the God of Sumo is said to live. So, there is a lot of local support for sumo culture.

Father and son use a local **temple** for intense one-on-one training. The training usually ends with the two wrestling up and down the carpet in front of the main temple.

Taisuke pushes Kyuta so hard that the child is often left breathless and crying. But the father believes it is the only way to get the best out of his son.

“I think he is managing to make time for himself and I think he has time to play with his friends,” explained Taisuke, adding, “I don’t think it is too much pressure.”

## 4,000 daily calories

Besides training, another important part of sumo success is food.

On an average day, Kyuta will eat up to 4,000 calories. This includes over a liter of milk and a lot of protein. Steak is his favorite.

While Kyuta ate a large meal, his father told reporters that his son needs to put on another 20 kilograms by the time he enters middle school in two years. If he does that, the hope is he will be taken in by a famous sumo **coaching** team. Taisuke said there has already been interest.

Kyuta himself said he wants to reach the level of “yokozuna.” That is the highest ranking in the sport. But he admits the workout routine and lifestyle can be extreme and hard.

“Sumo training is something you don’t describe with words like ‘enjoy,’” Kyuta said. “When it became tough... I have thought about (quitting) sometimes.”

For now, the struggle toward the top continues, for both father and son.

I’m Anna Matteo.

*Kim Kyung Hoon and Jack Tarrant reported this story for Reuters. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**wrestler** – *n.* someone who competes in the sport of wrestling in which competitors try to overpower their opponent

**shy** – *adj.* showing nervousness or discomfort about meeting and talking to people

**routine** – *n.* a regular way of doing things in a certain way

**flexibility** – *n.* able to bend parts of the body such as arms and legs easily

**talent** – *n.* a special ability to do something well

**gamble** – *v.* to play a game of chance

**bet** – *v.* to do things in the belief that something will happen in the future

**temple** – *n.* a building for worship or religious observance

**coaching** – *n.* the activity of teaching and training people to do a certain activity such as a sport of some kinds of jobs

