

Lady wrestlers are teen-age hit

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TOKYO — The image of the delicate and refined Japanese girl may have received a fatal judo chop.

Picture thousands of teen-age girls, screaming, crying, fainting and pushing forward, not at a rock concert but at a lady's wrestling tag team match. A truly fearsome sight.

They have all come to give homage and their undying adoration to the newest pop idols here, a duo of singing lady wrestlers called "Beauty Pair."

Jackie Sato, 19, and Maki Ueda, 18, affectionately known as "B-P," have by their sweet voices and devastating drop kicks created a cult of young feminine fans in the not-too-ladylike sport of lady wrestling.

Their hit single record, "Runaround Youth," was the catalyst that brought them up to the lofty realm of stardom and indirectly created legions of new followers of the fine art of grappling. The Beauty Pair now commands a viewer rating of more than 20 per cent when they appear on television.

Their matches are scenes of absolute pandemonium. In one recent match in a Tokyo suburb at least 90 per cent of the capacity crowd of 3,000 were junior and senior high school girls. Jackie and Maki, tall, thin beauties wearing stylish jump suits, were engulfed by a mob of fans as they made their appearance.

Finally making their way onstage, they immediately broke into song. The ring was showered with multicolored streamers thrown by young ladies who had paid \$10 for a

ringside seat.

This night they were pitted against the villainous "Black Pair." The first blow by Jackie brings the whole crowd to its feet, and when she later counters a bucket-wielding Black Pair with a flying kick the roar of delight is deafening.

Spurred on by blood-curdling cries of "smash her" and "wipe them out," B-P put up a valiant fight, but the night ends in disaster as the bad girls use an assortment of dastardly tricks to come out on top. Tears can be seen streaming down the faces of some girls, while others are shouting "kill the Black Pair" with shocking seriousness.

The mercurial rise of Beauty Pair may be discounted as just another teen-age fad, but the growing interest of young girls here in physical sports is a very real modern phenomenon.

Girls are now participating actively not only in more genteel sports like baseball and soccer, but are also proving to be formidable foes in karate, judo and now wrestling.

Since B-P became popular their home gym in Tokyo has been swamped by inquiries from girls interested in entering training programs to become wrestlers. There are now more than 100 women training regularly at the gym, ranging in age from a fourth grader to a 40-year-old housewife who says it is excellent beauty exercise.

One junior high school girl asked defiantly, "Why should it be bad for me to show off my power just because I am a girl?" After watching her put on a mean headlock, few boys would challenge her right to display her talents.