

Wrestlers Are Multitalented

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Inside the ring, they are professionals. They send their opponents flying across the ring into the ropes and greet them as they bounce off with a headlock embrace. Dragging their adversaries by the hair, they slam them to the mat for the winning pin of the match.

These were professional women wrestlers, performing their skills for the first time on Guam last week.

"It's a sport and profession," said 18-

year-old Maki Uea, speaking through an interpreter. "We like to win on the strength of stamina, not through cheating."

Ueda is one of 11 women members of the All-Japan Women Professional Wrestling Association who tumbled their ways into the hearts of more than 2,000 screaming fans at the Guam Recreation Center last Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

Ueda, coupled with her 20-year-old tag team partner Jackie Sato, is a veteran in the ring with three years of

professional experience. The two call themselves the "Beauty Pair" and have adopted a Batman and Robin approach in becoming the most popular winning team in Japan, they said.

"They've gone through a lot of intensive training so they understand each other," said Hitoshi Yoshida, chief producer of Fuji Telecasting Company and general manager of the wrestling team.

In the ring, the Beauty Pair is known for its unique wrestling maneuver, the "beauty special," they said. "That's when one of us would jump from the top of the ropes and come landing down on our opponents. Then we take turns doing it," they said.

Of the more than 30 different wrestling holds they are required to know, Sato demonstrates the "airplane hold" without much difficulty. Grabbing a hold of an opponent's right thigh with one hand and grasping onto her left shoulder with the other, Sato painlessly sweeps her opponent off the ground.

Once lifted above her head, Sato continues to twirl her opponent in the air three to four times. Dropping her to the ground, Sato says the effectiveness of the hold lies in the dizzy state inflicted upon her opponent.

Although wrestling is a full-time profession for the Beauty Pair, the two wrestlers are engaged in another career which has increased their popularity in Japan. They sing.

Their greatest hit, entitled "The Beauty Pair," was released a year ago and has sold 600,000 copies in Japan, they said.

The Beauty Pair anticipates spending the next three years in the wrestling profession. Ueda intends to open a beauty shop once she retires, and Sato is interested in the restaurant business, they said.

With the money they are saving from their two careers, the Beauty Pair expects to see their dreams materialize, they said. They receive \$6,000 a month for their wrestling matches.

The wrestling profession is not as profitable for beginners in the ring, Yoshida said. The newest members of team, 16-year-old Nancy Kumi and 17-year-old Victoria Fujimi, earn slightly more than \$350 a month, he said.

Kumi is called "Slow Nancy" because of her build, but she is a growing sensation in the ring, Yoshida said.

Specializing in the "neck-breaker drop" hold, Kumi finds her new profession exciting but painful at times, she said. Although she has never suffered a major injury resulting from a match, Kumi frequently experiences back problems, she said.

Kumi and Fujimi have been wrestling for a year and a half. Like the Beauty Pair, they fight together as a tag team in the ring, and they make up a singing and dancing duet.

Having completed formal education through the junior high school level, Kumi and Fujimi are uncertain about their careers after they retire from professional wrestling.

"I think I just want to get married when I retire," Kumi said.

The young pair intends to continue wrestling for the next six years. They have just completed their first year of intensive training and now are proving themselves in the ring, Yoshida said.

The women wrestlers undergo light warm-up exercises the day of a match, Yoshida said. Starting at 6 a.m., the women run for an hour then perform such body conditioning exercises as rope skipping, sit-ups and jumping jacks, he said.

"The one very basic skill they must acquire is the art of judo, Yoshida said. From their judo skills, the wrestlers not only learn the technique of throwing their opponents but they learn how to fall without hurting themselves, he said.

The requirements for entering professional women's wrestling are minimum, Yoshida said. A woman "must be 5-feet-6-inches tall, have a pretty face and a pretty body, must complete her education through the junior high school level and must obtain permission from her parents," he said.

The popularity of women's wrestling in Japan began last February, Yoshida said. Young girls swarm the manager's office by the thousands seeking to enter the profession, he said. "Earlier this year, more than 5,000 girls applied for the three open positions in the team," he said.

"This profession is perfect for any young woman who would like to make a lot of money quickly, and after the age of 22 or 23, she may enter any other profession with good finances," Yoshida said.



Masumi Sukisaki, top in above photo, and Nancy Kumi provided a unique entertainment experience for more than 2,000 fans last week. Angel Sarminto, 50, of Santa Rita, was one of them. (Daily News photos by Manny Crisostomo)



Chris Ford Still Working

The education liaison officer for Rep. A.B. Won Pat, Chris Ford, has not been relieved of his duties despite pressure from Department of Education Director Elaine Cadigan, according to reports from Washington, D.C.

While on-island last month investigating complaints from constituents, Ford said Cadigan ordered him out of the schools and demanded that Won Pat reassign him.

Although Cadigan denied the allegations, Won Pat's staff confirmed them to officials of the Guam Federation of Teachers.

Since that time, educators as well as legislators have come out in support of Ford. Some even have written letters to Won Pat, including UOG professors.

Sen. Katherine Aguon, chairman of the Legislature's Committee on Education, has also come out publicly in support of Ford.