

Japanese Schoolgirls Go Wild Over 'Dump'

BY EDWARD NEILAN

Tokyo

The idol and role model of thousands of Japanese teenage girls is not the traditional and elegant Geisha but a 200-pound female professional wrestler named Dump — for dump truck — Matsumoto.

Dump's real name is Kaoru Matsumoto. If you bumped into her wearing everyday clothes at a Tokyo supermarket, you might think she was a shy Japanese woman of 24 with a punk hairdo who maybe eats too many pizzas.

In the wrestling ring, wearing a gaudy outfit, Dump's demeanor is anything but shy.

At a recent match of the Japan Women's Pro Wrestling Promotion, Dump swaggered into the auditorium for the main event leading her entourage.

First Dump headed for the press table and proceeded to beat sports writers on their heads with a bamboo stick. This was supposedly in punishment for writing disparaging copy about her shaved head, which is painted with a swastika and other vivid designs.

The crowd loved it.

Dump's chaperones were three other women wrestlers: Bull — for Bulldozer — Nakano, whose head is half shaved; Condor Saito, who wears handcuffs attached to her belt of chains, and Lei

Lani Kai, an evil-humored Hawaiian who flaunts nunchak fighting sticks.

After the bell sounded, Dump wasted little time in demolishing her opponent, Lioness Asuka, using every dirty trick in the book.

Ten thousand teenage Japanese girls in the audience screamed for blood.

Women's wrestling, which is shown every Sunday on national television, pulls more viewers than any of its competing shows.

In many countries, women's wrestling is a sleaze carnival at best. Not so in Japan, where lady wrestlers are sought as talk-show guests and command huge audiences made up mostly of giggling, chanting schoolgirls.

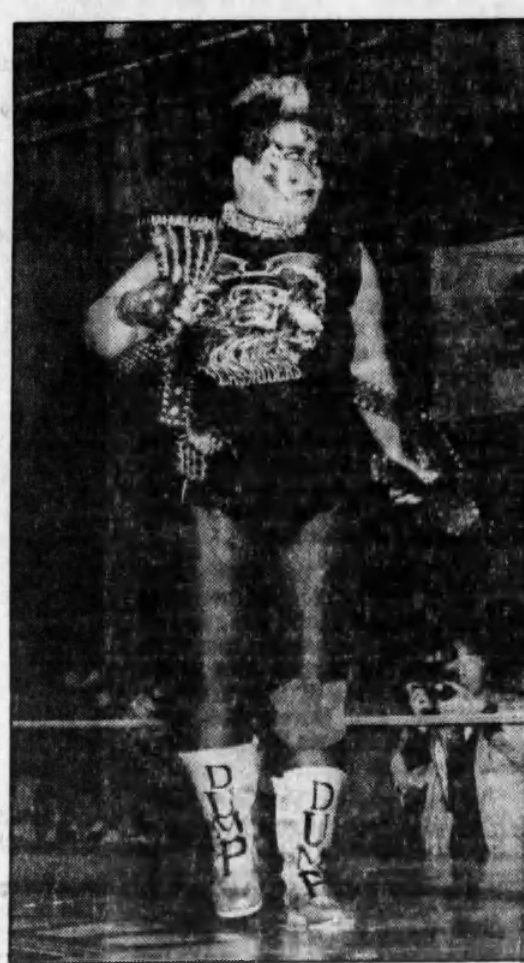
Although Dump Matsumoto is the current rage because of her blatant nastiness, it is the "Crush Gals" Asuka and Nagayo who make the most money. Their "something extra" is singing, and their records have sold millions among wrestling fans.

Asuka and Nagayo appear at ringside in cocktail dresses to sing one or two love songs, then peel off their glamorous clothes to get ready for a wrestling match.

How do you explain Japanese teenagers' passion for women's wrestling?

"They're seeing women do something they can't do," said a social commentator. "It's something like your women's movement in the United States. The wrestlers are tough; nobody pushes them around."

Some parents have expressed opposition to



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Woman wrestler 'Dump' Matsumoto, the current teen idol, spices up her fights with wild costumes, swaggers and grimaces

they're in training, says Shinji Ueda, commissioner of the Wrestling Association.

The group has a mandatory 25-year-old retirement age. It urges retirees to settle down and marry and raise families.

For Dump and the rest of her group — known as the "Super Bads" — the idea of calling it quits is not unappealing. "I would like to settle down," the wrestler said. "Can you imagine me getting my husband in a 'Standing Hackenschmidt' (wrestling hold) if we quarrel?"

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allowing young girls to attend wrestling matches, but school authorities say it's a good way of relieving stress.

For the wrestlers themselves, like Dump and Asuka and Nagayo, it's a tough duty.

Drinking, smoking, drugs, late hours and any kind of relations with men are taboo while