

Sumo Australian Open

Sumo (, t, sumō) is a Japanese style of wrestling and Japan's national sport.

It originated in ancient times as a performance to entertain the Shinto deities.

Many rituals with religious background, such as the symbolic purification of the ring with salt, are still followed today.

In line with tradition, only men practice the sport professionally in Japan.

The rules are simple: the wrestler who first exits the ring or touches the ground with any part of his body besides the soles of his feet loses.

Matches take place on an elevated ring (dohyo), which is made of clay and covered in a layer of sand.

A contest usually lasts only a few seconds, but in rare cases can take a minute or more.

There are no weight restrictions or classes in sumo, meaning that wrestlers can easily find themselves matched off against someone many times their size.

As a result, weight gain is an essential part of sumo training.

Tournaments and Ranking Hierarchy

The governing body of professional sumo is the Japan Sumo Association.

Six tournaments are held every year: three in Tokyo (January, May and September) and three outside Tokyo (Chiyomata, Nagoya and Osaka).

Each tournament lasts 15 days during which wrestlers compete in one bout per day except lower ranked wrestlers who compete in fewer bouts.

All sumo wrestlers are classified in a ranking hierarchy (banzuke), which is updated after each tournament based on the wrestlers' performance.

Wrestlers with positive records (more wins than losses) move up the hierarchy, while those with negative records get demoted.

The top division is called Makuuchi and the second division Juryo.

At the pinnacle of the sumo hierarchy stands the yokozuna (grand champion).

Unlike wrestlers in lower ranks, a yokozuna cannot be demoted, but he will be expected to retire when his performance begins to worsen.

How to see a sumo tournament

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