

About the author:



**Mike Snaden** is the proprietor of Yume Koi in Bristol, specialising solely in very high end koi. He has supplied three out of the last four BKKS Grand Champions. Mikes' specialised field is water, and growing koi to their maximum potential, as a Japanese breeder would. This approach has given him considerable insight into koi.

# The 2008, Tokyo All Japan Combined Nishikigoi Show

Mike Snaden visits the All Japan Koi Show 2008 and gives us his take on proceedings...

**I**t's that time of year again, when many pay homage to the land of nishikigoi for the annual All Japan Combined Koi Show in Tokyo. The show was held as usual in the Ryutsu Center (or, 'Ryutsu Center monorail' if asking a taxi driver to take you there). This koi show is the largest one in the world, and one I have always had a gripe with, in respect of its lousy indoor lighting. The use of fluorescent lighting has a bad effect on the beni (red colour) of koi, making only certain types of beni look good, and other types look

very weak or thin. Outdoor shows such as the ZNA Show, Wakagoi, or Rinyukai are a much more level playing field in this regard. However, since the timing of the All Japan Show is usually around the end of January, the temperatures are prohibitive towards holding the venue outside, in natural light.

This year, the show was held on the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd of February. All koi arrived at the show on the Thursday prior to the show, with judging taking place on the Friday. The show covers, in my vague estimation, around 30,000 sq ft, with one end of the hall accommodating trade stands and a special 'dream koi' area, where breeders bring very special koi along to display, and possibly sell. Within the Ryutsu Center itself, there is an extensive choice of restaurants, so you don't have to venture away from the venue in order to satisfy your appetite!

There were many koi entered (over 1,600) at the show this year, with around 110 handling dealers. I don't know how many people attended the show last year, but I believe it to be around 3,000. It seemed to be much busier than last year. Nowadays, the show is held in what is referred to as a 'my pool' (English) style, which, given the risks of KHV is the only safe way to hold such an event.

For me, The All Japan Show is as much a social gathering as it is a chance to see some of the best koi in the world. It's great to see so many friends/dealers from around the world and to socialise with so many breeders in one place. The Saturday night for me was exceptional fun this year, having partied with no less than ten breeders, me being the only 'non-breeder'. An opportunity like this, to me, is priceless! It's also of great help in expanding my Japanese language skills. ▶



A time to relax and admire some of the best koi the world has to offer

## Further info

To see photographs of the winners and comments from Mike Snaden about the different quality that each fish possesses, please turn to page 12.

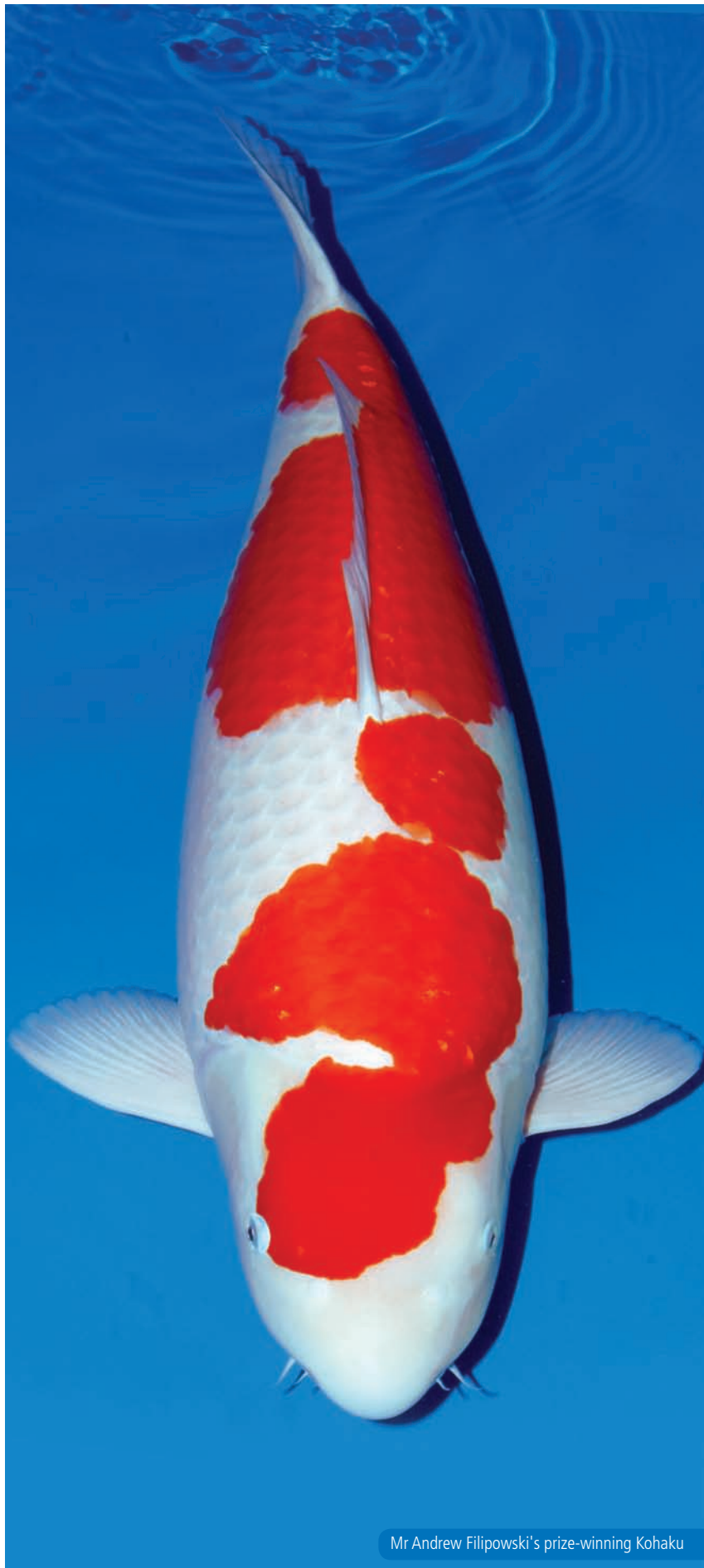
## The Grand Champion

This prize was won by a magnificent Kohaku bred by Sakai Koi Farm (Hiroshima) and owned by an American; Mr Andrew Filipowski. I greatly admired how this koi won, as she was originally sold when nisai (two years old). Joel Burkard of Pan Intercorp bought and sold her as 'Ake Yonsai' (3½ years old, but into her 4th year).

Many people (particularly foreigners) commented on the head not being big enough for the koi. However, I felt that the head was actually more in proportion to the koi than last years winner. The head may not be the biggest or longest, but if you can imagine the same koi with a slim body, the head would look a lot more proportionate. It's a case of the koi's immense body volume making the head look small.

Last year, I told Joel that I thought this koi had an outstanding hibana (red pattern element or red area) which showed thickness, shine and consistency throughout its length. To me, this aspect of the koi was its most admirable point.

She also has a wonderful pattern with truly wonderful kiwa (rearward edging to the pattern) and Shiroji (white skin). The fukurin (skin growing out from between the scales) on this koi was also nicely developed, adding to the appearance of the Shiroji. To my mind, she was truly a justified winner!



Mr Andrew Filipowski's prize-winning Kohaku



Mr Tsutomu Aoki's prize-winning Sakai Kohaku

### Superior Champion

Another Sakai Kohaku belonging to Mr Tsutomu Aoki. This is one to watch out for in the future! In my opinion, this koi had the best hiban of any koi in the show. Only one word can describe it... precious! This koi's beni is of a rare thickness and shine. The koi's pattern is simple, yet elegant.

The body is such that although a little slim for one getting so big it is likely that this koi still has a lot of growing to do, after which, I hope it will put on much weight. The bone structure is strong, but how well it can put on weight whilst holding a nice belly line and a straight backbone, remains to be seen. However, I have high hopes for it!

The only weakness that I can see in this koi, is in the kiwa of the second step of the pattern. In this area, I feel that some of the kiwa lacks definition. Being a big koi, it is hard to say whether it can sharpen or not, we will just have to wait and see. A fantastic specimen nonetheless, and like I said, definitely one to watch out for next year! ▶

## Superior Male Champion

This Showa, belonging to Mr Hiromi Muramatsu, is living proof that male koi can get big! This Showa is a beautiful specimen indeed, or should I say handsome? His body is comparable to a good slim female. This Showa has both excellent hiban and kiwa. Showa are particularly prone to weaknesses in the hiban, stray beni (secondary hi spots), inconsistent sashi, and sketchy kiwa. This one has none of these problems! This koi also possesses a good pattern, with excellent sumi (black) patterning and placement. The sumi is neat and tidy in each area with no jami sumi (stray speckled spots of sumi) anywhere to be seen. The quality of the sumi itself is also very good.



Mr Hiromi Muramatsu's prize-winning Showa



Mr Tepsit's prize-winning Sanke

### Mature Champion

This Sanke, belonging to Mr Tepsit from Thailand, had a lot of admirers at the show. The pattern is simply beautiful and the sumi is really neat and nicely placed, something seldom seen in Sanke nowadays!

It had one weakness that I found disappointing and this was in its hiban. What worries me with this koi, is that the teri (pigment thickness/lustre) seemed to be very weak around the lateral line area of the koi. To explain further, if you look at the inset picture, you will see that many of the scales within the pattern have very weak, or no beni in some parts of each scale.

It is possible, that this weakness is perhaps the result of bad water during raising or lack of daylight during the growing period last year, but I somehow doubt it. Although you may not regard this as being a problem, if it doesn't fix up, it will become far more evident when the koi gets big and puts on weight, forcing any pattern above the lateral line to get pushed up as the body thickens. I'm not saying that the pattern will move up through the scales but that the change in body weight will make this more apparent. Let's keep our fingers crossed for this one.



Many of the scales within the pattern have very weak or no beni in some parts of each scale. ▶

### Mature Male Champion

This Kohaku was bred by Momotaro, and is owned by Mr Eisaku Kato. This koi has a great pattern, and proves that male koi are capable of having great bodies!

However, for a male koi to get big, it has to have the right kind of body type. Note, that although this Kohaku has a great body, with big volume, the body type is still a little different to a good female.

The thickest part of the body is at the shoulder area, as it would be with any 'heavy' male. However, a female's thickest point will usually be around the area where the front of the dorsal fin starts. To summarise, this koi has a great body, lovely pattern, with excellent hi quality, kiwa, and sashi (front part of each step of pattern). The skin is also wonderful, with excellent fukurin.



Mr Eisaku Kato's prize-winning Kohaku



Mr N Budiono Gunawan's prize-winning Showa

### Jumbo Champion

This Showa belongs to a hobbyist from Indonesia called Mr N Budiono Gunawan. Whilst it is not a koi that I particularly like, I believe it to have won because of its technical merits. You see, Showa are all about sumi. Showa are prone to many problems, so getting one with good qualities when big is extremely difficult.

Apart from physical faults, Showa often suffer with a lack of Kohaku pattern at the back end or lack of sumi pattern at the back. Even if the koi is good in these areas, they then often fall down because of jami sumi (a little like the koi developing dusty sumi, or shimis), or just low quality sumi (grey, or kage appearance).

For me, although I don't favour this koi, you have to think about its qualities... The koi has an extremely balanced Kohaku pattern. The hibana is showing its age a little, but the actual colour quality is simply precious! The sumi pattern may not be to everyone's liking but it's positioning is extremely balanced, more so from front to back, rather than side to side. For me, the sumi quality is probably amongst the best I have seen! To further explain this, look at the appearance of the sumi where it lies on top of the red pattern, and it's appearance on the white ground! The sumi is incredibly black and glossy irrespective of where it falls. Low quality sumi will look better on top of the pattern, than on the white ground.

The body, whilst not full of volume, is pretty strong, with the area around the rear end and tail tube being excellent. ▶

### Adult Champion

This lovely Sanke is owned by Mr Tepsit of Thailand. I don't find the Kohaku pattern of this koi particularly exciting, but as an overall package, it is wonderful! This koi has a nice body, albeit hard to judge right now from a growth perspective, a perfect and wonderful head and then some!...

The hiban of this koi is magnificent. The modern style sumi placement and appearance is also outstanding. Nowadays, modern sumi originating from magoi lineages has a habit of being extremely messy in its placement and appearance, which isn't the case with this one. This koi has beautifully placed sumi, of extremely high quality, with wonderful sumi kiwa, each part being tight and orderly. Simply stunning! ▶



Mr Tepsit's prize-winning Sanke



### Young Champion

This Showa is owned by Mr Yoshio Kubota. This koi is simply stunning, and as such, koi like this are hard to find. This Showa has a great Kohaku pattern and a very complimentary sumi pattern. The hiban is also exceptional! I would imagine this koi to be a male, and hope that this is the case, as female koi with this beni type are somewhat hard to keep in good condition. The body is slim, but this is something that can be improved upon later on. It's not good to see fat koi at this size. A beautiful koi indeed.



Mr Yoshio Kubota's prize-winning Showa



Mr Tadashi Koguchi's prize-winning Sanke

### Baby Champion

This is a nice example of a young Sanke owned by Mr Tadashi Koguchi. This koi possesses a very desirable head shape, proportion and ideally matched body length. The hiban is of wonderful quality and is well placed. You would be forgiven for thinking that the area around the rear of the dorsal fin is lacking in pattern, but I feel that the sumi will fill this area too wonderful effect in the future. It is a very attractive koi, one that is difficult to find fault with. ▶