

JAPAN GAME ON

CRAFTING A WINNING LEGACY

AS THE SUMMER OLYMPICS RETURN TO JAPAN, THE COUNTRY HOPES TO LEVERAGE THE EVENTS TO GENERATE POSITIVE SOCIAL EFFECTS ONCE AGAIN. BY TIM HORNYAK



Yoshinori Sakai, born in Hiroshima Prefecture on the day of the atomic bombing, lit the cauldron at the 1964 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. The Games symbolized Japan's postwar return to the international stage.

JAPAN IS GEARING UP FOR ITS BIGGEST PARTY IN DECADES.

Next July and August, Tokyo will host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, a series of events that will not only be a celebration of global sports but also a pivotal moment in Japan's transformation into a more globalized society. With a new emperor ascending the throne, Japan is entering a new era, benefiting from one of its greatest economic recoveries, along with record levels of inbound tourism and foreign workers. The Tokyo Games, the 2025 Osaka Expo, and other large-scale international events are bringing these changes into sharp focus.

REMEMBRANCE OF GAMES PAST

The 1964 Summer Games were also held in Tokyo, as the first Olympics in Asia. To symbolize Japan's postwar commitment to peace, Waseda Uni-

versity freshman Yoshinori Sakai—born in Hiroshima Prefecture on the day U.S. forces dropped the atomic bomb—lit the Olympic cauldron as Emperor Hirohito looked on.

Japan's capital underwent a massive makeover. Tokyo unveiled Olympic venues such as the Nippon Budokan Hall and the Yoyogi National Gymnasium, as well as key infrastructure, including the Shuto Expressway, the Haneda Airport monorail, and the iconic Shinkansen bullet train connecting Tokyo and Osaka.

Japan was telegraphing to the world its new status as an emerging economic superpower. But it also set a precedent for international sporting events as a force for change that ushered in new sports and better athletic performance. The latest example of this is the 2019 Rugby World Cup, which will draw athletes from around the world to venues across Japan.

"The Tokyo Olympics in 1964 marked Japan's recovery from World War II, and that was a tremendous legacy," says Morinari Watanabe, president of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, the governing body for worldwide gymnastics. "The 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano allowed winter sports to take root in Japan. With the FIFA World Cup in 2002, the level of football in Japan grew dramatically to catch up with the scale and standard of European football."

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The Olympics are rarely free from controversy, however, and they don't come cheap. Currently at \$27 billion, the projected cost of the 2020 Tokyo Games keeps climbing far above initial estimates.

"As a general matter, cities spend \$15 billion to \$20 billion in expenditures and they bring in about \$4 billion or \$5 billion in revenue," said Andrew Zimbalist, author of *Circus Maximus: The Economic Gamble Behind Hosting the Olympics and the World Cup*, on a 2018 Council on Foreign Relations podcast. "So obviously there's a substantial deficit there."

Certainly, many Japanese companies see benefits to backing the Olympics and Paralympics: Three Japanese multinationals are long-term worldwide partners, and dozens more support Tokyo 2020. Munehiko Harada, a professor in the School of Sport Sciences at Waseda University, says Japanese businesses are placing more value on sports. The old model of companies hiring star athletes for endorsements is shifting toward strategic sports marketing. Harada is coaching a growing crop of students enrolled in a nondegree curriculum called the Sports MBA Essence.

"Because of the Olympic Games and the Rugby World Cup, I think the importance of sports is now well understood among companies," says Harada, who is also chairman of the legacy committee of the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya.

Outside the private sector, the question is whether the economic ripple effects—which the Tokyo Metropolitan Government pegs at roughly \$295 billion over 18 years—and nonmonetary benefits can justify the outlays. The national government is targeting 40 million inbound tourists next year, up sixfold from 2010. According to an online survey of 6,600 people in 20 countries and regions by Japanese ad agency Dentsu Inc., nearly 58% of respondents said they want to visit Japan, either to attend the Games or to see how the Games have changed the country. Meanwhile, the event will stimulate corporate innovation as well as interest in sports, Japanese cuisine, and



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MUNEHIKO HARADA
PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF SPORT SCIENCES
WASEDA UNIVERSITY



To show its commitment to the environment, Tokyo has deployed a fleet of public buses powered by hydrogen fuel cells. (Toyota)

culture, according to the latest Japan Brand Research poll.

"I think the Olympics are the best trigger for Japan's growth, not just for 2020, but beyond," says Shusaku Kannan, executive communications director at Dentsu. "The Games can be a showcase for Japan as a leading-edge solutions provider."

A NEW KIND OF LEGACY

Featured technological advances will range from hydrogen-powered public buses to 5G phone networks and driverless taxis. These will complement the traditional "hardware" being rolled out in the form of new facilities, such as the New National Stadium, the Olympic Aquatic Centre, and the Olympic Village/Paralympic Village. Many of the laborers building these sites are from overseas—part of a more open attitude to foreign workers that has seen the government approve new visa categories for 340,000 expats.

But while the Games will add useful infrastructure, organizers are keen to bequeath a different kind of legacy this time. For one, they want to maximize participation in sports by the country's aging population. With Japan's low birth rate, and low immigration rate by international standards, the population is aging rapidly, with one in five citizens now 70 or older.

"What helps aging societies are sports and health care systems," says Watanabe, who's also a member of the International Olympic Committee. "When the proportion of the population engaged in sports increases, social security expenses decrease."

Japan's public and private sectors are also running international sports programs, like Sport For Tomorrow (SFT), a promotional effort that hopes to reach more than 10 million people in more than 100 countries by 2020. In one example of SFT outreach, physical education specialists from Peru were invited to Japan to learn about best practices. In another, SFT officials visited 10 locations in Mongolia to introduce people to radio calisthenics, a popular regimen launched in Japan in 1928.

Another legacy emphasis is accessibility and mobility. Tokyo will be the first city to host a

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"I INTEND FOR THE
TOKYO 2020 GAMES
TO LEAVE A MORE
INTANGIBLE LEGACY."

YURIKO KOIKE
TOKYO GOVERNOR



FOR 2025...WE WOULD
LIKE VISITORS TO
REFLECT AND CHANGE
THE WAY THEY LIVE
AND THINK ABOUT
WHAT THEY CAN DO TO
ACHIEVE THE SDGs."

IEAKI TAKEDA

DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL
EXHIBITIONS AT JAPAN'S MINISTRY
OF ECONOMY, TRADE
AND INDUSTRY



Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike accepts the Olympic flag at the closing ceremonies of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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summer Paralympics twice, and it plans to make lodgings and other facilities barrier-free. Under the Open Stay Tokyo project, doors and corridors in hotels are being widened for wheelchair users.

"I intend for the Tokyo 2020 Games to leave a more intangible legacy," Gov. Yuriko Koike of Tokyo told reporters earlier this year. "I also intend for the 2020 Games to leave a cultural legacy, and for the Games themselves to be a celebration of culture."

Even though the Olympics may not have as big an impact on Japan as they did in 1964, they and other sporting events can add sparkle to the nation's brand overseas, says Harada. He points out how the U.K. benefited from hosting the Olympics in 1912, followed by the 2014 Commonwealth Games, the 2015 Rugby World Cup, and the 2017 World Championships in Athletics.

"By hosting these big events," says Harada, "Great Britain really enhanced its image as a sporting nation."

LOOKING BEYOND 2020

While 2020 is a prism, focusing light on transformation in Japan, many wonder how the momentum will continue afterward. For one, tourism is likely to keep driving growth, as the number of inbound visitors is expected to double to 60 million over the next 10 years.

Some travelers will head to another large international event on the horizon: Expo 2025 in Osaka. Focused on sustainable development, the Expo is a world fair projected to attract 28 million people and follows the city's Expo 1970. While showing

off the health care strengths of the surrounding Kansai region, the Japanese government wants to use the fair as a means to check progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have 2030 as a target for achievement.

"At Expo '70, the legacy included hardware such as artist Taro Okamoto's Tower of the Sun," says Ieaki Takeda, director for international exhibitions at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. "For 2025, rather than focusing on a hardware legacy, we would like visitors to reflect and change the way they live and think about what they can do to achieve the SDGs. That's what we call a 'soft legacy.'"

Aside from demonstrating Japanese innovation and sustainable practices at international events, the government wants to leverage technology across the country to offset demographic woes and keep the economy growing. It aims to create what it calls Society 5.0—a new industrial revolution in which robotics, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of things innovate society.

For Watanabe, however, the key to ensuring a lasting success for Tokyo 2020 is evaluating how the Games are remembered.

"The Olympic Games are a showcase for sporting excellence," he says. "The impact will benefit a wide range of businesses, including the IT and tourism industries. Truly speaking, my dream is that the 21st century's industrial revolution will start from sports, and I believe that Tokyo 2020 will make that dream come true." ■