

Sports

SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES SCHEDULED TO START JULY 23

Officials deny claims that Tokyo Olympics will be canceled in 2021

By Stephen Wade
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — IOC President Thomas Bach and local organizers are pushing back against reports that the postponed Tokyo Olympics will be canceled.

Now set to open July 23, the Tokyo Games were postponed 10 months ago at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and now the event appears threatened again.

The Times of London, citing unidentified government sources, reported that the games will have to be canceled. It quoted an unidentified senior member of the ruling government coalition.

“No one wants to be the first to say so but the consensus is that it’s too difficult,” the person said. “Personally, I don’t think it’s going to happen.”

In a statement Friday, Jan. 22, the local organizing committee did not address directly The Times story, but said the Olympics were going forward and had the support of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

“All our delivery partners including the national government, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, the IOC and the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) are fully focused on hosting the games this summer,” the statement said.

“We hope that daily life can return to normal as soon as possible, and we will continue to make every effort to



Philip Fong/Getty Images-TNS

A Japanese houseboat, also known as yakatabune, sails past the Olympic Rings as seen from Odaiba Seaside Park in Tokyo.

prepare for a safe and secure games.”

The IOC released a brief statement saying it is “fully concentrated on and committed to the successful delivery of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 this year.”

The IPC added that it’s goal of having the games this year has not changed.

“There is no doubt the Tokyo 2020 Games will be very different to any previous games and that this summer’s event looks a long way off right now. However, we believe that with the robust measures and plans we have in place, the games can and will go ahead safely,” the IPC said.

Managu Sakai, the deputy chief cabinet secretary and

an ally of the prime minister, also shot down the story.

“There is no such fact and we clearly deny (the report),” he said.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike told her regular news conference on Friday that she has “never heard such a thing.” She even suggested action against the British newspaper.

“Perhaps we should file a protest,” she said.

The Times of London said Japan hoped to land the 2032 Olympics. The IOC has already awarded the 2024 Olympics to Paris and the 2028 version to Los Angeles.

The idea of Tokyo waiting a decade seems unlikely, given the cost of maintaining venues, negotiating new leases, and so forth. Tokyo

has already spent about \$25 billion to organize these Olympics, most of which is public money.

Several reports of a cancellation began to surface this month when the Japanese government put Tokyo and other prefectures under a state of emergency order to counter a surge of rising COVID-19 cases.

“We have at this moment, no reason whatsoever to believe that the Olympic Games in Tokyo will not open on the 23rd of July in the Olympic stadium in Tokyo,” Bach told the Japanese news agency Kyodo on Thursday, Jan. 21.

He also said there is “no Plan B.”

PAC-12 MEN’S BASKETBALL

Utah dominates Washington State

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — Branden Carlson scored 14 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the first double-double by a Utah player this season, and the balanced, potent Utes offense handed Washington State a stinging 71-56 defeat at home on Thursday night.

Washington State had lost but once at Friel Court this season, 86-82 in double overtime to Arizona on Jan. 2.

Thursday, Utah (6-6, 3-5 Pacific-12 Conference) made seven of its first 10 shots and never looked back, building a 43-26 lead at the half on 66.7% shooting — tied for its best first-half percentage this season (versus No. 17 Oregon Jan. 9).

Four other Utes reached double figures with Timmy Allen scoring 13, Alfonso Plummer and Riley Battin 12 each and Mikael Jantunen 10. The win was Utah’s first on the road this season.

Noah Williams led the Cougars (9-5, 2-5) with 17 points, five assists and four steals. Efe Abogidi added 12 points. Only one other Cougar scored more than six as WSU was 20-of-53 shooting (38%).

Arizona rallies to nip Sun Devils

By John Marshall
AP Basketball Writer

TEMPE, Ariz. — Azoulas Tubelis had a hard time adjusting to Arizona State’s tempo and was a nonfactor well into the second half.

With the game on the line, the Lithuanian freshman came up with the two biggest plays of the night — maybe of the season.

Tubelis scored on a tip-in at the buzzer seconds after blocking Remy Martin’s layup, capping Arizona’s 84-82 comeback victory over rival Arizona State Thursday night.

“It wasn’t until about the 15-minute mark that he came alive for us and obviously had that big offensive rebound,” Arizona coach Sean Miller said.

Arizona State (4-7, 1-4 Pac-12) appeared to be in control after taking a seven-point lead, but Arizona rallied to tie it at 82-all with a minute left.

The Sun Devils set up for a final shot and Martin took the ball down the lane, but Tubelis got a piece of the ball, along with his arm.

The Wildcats (11-3, 5-3) rushed the ball up the floor and James Akinjo shot an air ball on a 3-point attempt — he said it was a pass — while being harassed by Marcus Bagley. Left alone in the lane, Tubelis plucked the ball out of the air and laid it over the rim.

Hank Aaron, one-time home run king, dies

By Paul Newberry
AP National Writer

ATLANTA — Hank Aaron, who endured racist threats with stoic dignity during his pursuit of Babe Ruth’s home run record and gracefully left his mark as one of baseball’s greatest all-around players, died Friday. He was 86.

The Atlanta Braves, Aaron’s longtime team, said he died peacefully in his sleep. No cause was given.

Aaron made his last public appearance just 2 1/2 weeks ago, when he received the COVID-19 vaccine.

“Hammerin’ Hank” set a wide array of career hitting records during a 23-year career spent mostly with the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves, including RBIs, extra-base hits and total bases.

But the Hall of Famer will be remembered for one swing above all others, the one that made him baseball’s home-run king.

It was a title he would hold for more than 33 years, a period in which the Hammer slowly but surely claimed his rightful place as one of America’s most iconic sporting figures, a true national treasure worthy of mention in the same breath with Ruth or Ali or Jordan.

Before a sellout crowd at Atlanta Stadium and a national television audience, Aaron broke Ruth’s home run record with No. 715 off Al Downing of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Aaron finished his career with 755, a total surpassed by Barry Bonds in 2007 — though many continued to call the Hammer the true home run king because of allegations that Bonds used performance-enhancing drugs.

Bonds finished his tarnished career with 762, though Aaron never begrudged someone eclipsing his mark.

His common refrain: More than three decades as the king was long enough. It was time for someone else to hold the record.



Curtis Compton/Atlanta Journal-Constitution-TNS

Baseball Hall of Famer Hank Aaron waves to the crowd while the Atlanta Braves honor Aaron by naming a street after him on Feb. 18, 2020.

No one could take away his legacy.

“I just tried to play the game the way it was supposed to be played,” Aaron said, summing it up better than anyone.

He wasn’t on hand when Bonds hit No. 756, but he did tape a congratulatory message that was shown on the video board in San Francisco shortly after the new record-holder went deep. While saddened by claims of rampant steroid use in baseball in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Aaron never challenged those marks set by players who may have taken pharmaceutical short cuts.

Besides, he always had that April night in 1974.

“Downing was more of a finesse pitcher,” Aaron remembered shortly before the 30th anniversary of the landmark homer. “I guess he was trying to throw me a screwball or something. Whatever it was, I got enough of it.”

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