

# Sports

## Japanese newspaper calls for Tokyo Olympics to be canceled

■ International Olympic Committee still plans to open the Games on July 23

By Stephen Wade and Kantaro Komiya  
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's Asahi Shimbun newspaper on Wednesday, May 26 called for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled with the games set to open in less than two months.

It is the first of Japan's major newspapers to make the move and joins some regional newspapers that have recently added to the growing opposition to holding the Olympics.

Coming out against the Olympics could be significant since the newspaper, like many in Japan, is a sponsor of the postponed Tokyo Games that are scheduled to open on July 23. Asahi is typically liberal-leaning and often opposes the ruling party led by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

"We cannot think it's rational to host the Olympics in the city this summer," the newspaper said in its editorial under a headline that read: "We Demand PM Suga Decide Cancellation."

"Distrust and backlash against the reckless national government, Tokyo government and stakeholders in the Olympics are nothing but escalating," the editorial added. "We demand Prime Minister Suga to calmly evaluate the circumstances and decide the cancellation of the summer event."

Asahi has a morning circulation reported at 5.16 million, and 1.55 million for its evening edition. It is second in circulation behind Yomiuri Shimbun, and subsequently is the second largest circulating newspaper in the world behind Yomiuri.

Despite the editorial, there is no indication the International Olympic Committee or local organizers have any plans to pull the plug on the games. But opposition is mounting with only a tiny percentage of Japanese people now vaccinated.

Tokyo organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto said Wednesday he was aware of



Carl Court/Getty Images-TNS

A boat sails past the Olympic rings in Tokyo.

the editorial, but offered little response.

Asahi is one of about 70 local Olympic sponsors that have chipped in almost \$3.5 billion to the organizing committee budget. It is also one of a half dozen newspapers that are sponsors.

"Of course, different press organizations have different views. And that's very natural," Muto said, adding local partners, or sponsors, continued to offer "support."

Senior IOC member Richard Pound said in an interview with Japan's JiJi Press last week that the final deadline to call off the Olympics was still a month away.

"Before the end of June, you really need to know, yes or no," JiJi quoted Pound as saying.

The British Medical Journal called last month for a hard look at going forward with the Olympics. Local medical officials have also been skeptical, and billionaire businessman Masayoshi Son suggested over the weekend that the IOC was forcing the Olympics on Japan.

"Right now, more than 80% of the nation's people want the Olympics postponed or canceled," said Son, the founder and CEO of SoftBank Group Corp. who also owns the SoftBank Hawks baseball team.

"Who is forcing this to

go ahead, and under what rights?" Son added.

Asahi also criticized the IOC, calling it "self-righteous" and also lambasted IOC vice president John Coates. Last week, Coates was asked if the Olympics would be held if a state of emergency were in force.

"Absolutely, yes," he replied. The newspaper said there was a "huge gap" between Coates' words and the sentiments "of the people."

"Despite its overgrown size and excessive commercialism and many other problems, the Olympics have been supported because of empathy for its ideals. ... But what is the reality now?" Asahi asked.

On Tuesday, the Japanese government said a warning by the United States to avoid travel to Japan would have no impact on holding the Olympics.

Japan has officially spent \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics, and government audits suggest it might be much larger. The IOC gets billions from selling broadcast rights, which amounts to about 75% of its income.

Public opinion polls in Japan show between 60-80% want the Olympics canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and an online petition asking the games be canceled has gained 400,000

signatures in a few weeks.

Tokyo, Osaka and other regions of the country are under a state of emergency that is likely to be extended past its May 31 expiration.

Organizers and the IOC, often citing the authority of the World Health Organization, say the games can be held safely with 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes entering Japan, joined by tens of thousands of judges, officials, sponsors, broadcasters and media.

Fans from abroad have already been banned, and organizers are to announce next month if any fans at all will be allowed into Olympic venues.

### NBA PLAYOFFS

## Lakers top Suns to even series

By David Brandt  
AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX — The Los Angeles Lakers were reeling late in the fourth quarter on Tuesday night. The Phoenix Suns had made a big run, their home crowd was in a frenzy and the defending NBA champions were in danger of going down two games to none in the first round.

LeBron James and Anthony Davis weren't about to let that happen.

James made a turnaround 18-foot jumper, Davis followed with a 3-pointer and the Lakers held on for a hard-fought 109-102 win over the Suns in Game 2 of the playoff series.

"This was a must win," Davis said. "We all came out with that mindset and we were able to get the job done."

It was a big bounce-back game for the Lakers, and especially Davis, who struggled in Game 1 and took personal responsibility for the team's 99-90 loss on Sunday. His crucial 3-pointer with 2:15 left on Tuesday put Los Angeles up 98-92 and ended a late Suns rally.

Davis made 18 of 21 free throws and added 10 rebounds and seven assists. James added 23 points and nine assists.

"Those are two of the top five players in the NBA," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "We have a formula where those guys carry a big load, especially at crunch time."

James said he wasn't surprised Davis bounced back quickly. He said the Lakers made it a point to get him involved as much as possible.

"Get him the ball early, often and always," James said. "It's that simple."

Game 3 is today in Los Angeles and the Lakers suddenly have a lot of momentum.

"That's what I came here for," James said. "To be able to play a playoff game in front of the Lakers faithful."

The Lakers had a 63-48 lead after a 10-1 run to open the third quarter. James splashed home a 3-pointer to start the scoring and Los Angeles looked like it might put this one away comfortably.

But the Suns slowly clawed their way back. Cam Johnson made two 3-pointers late in the third quarter, including one at the buzzer, to pull Phoenix within 79-72 heading to the fourth.

Jae Crowder made a 3-pointer from the corner and was fouled, converting the free throw for a four-point play that pulled the Suns within 84-83 with 8:09 left in the fourth. Crowder had missed his first 11 3-pointers in the series before that attempt.

Deandre Ayton's dunk off an offensive rebound with six minutes left put the Suns up 88-86, which was their first lead since the opening minutes. But they couldn't hold on, struggling to guard James and Davis in the final minutes.

### NBA PLAYOFFS

## Dallas takes 2-0 lead over Clippers

By Beth Harris  
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — A familiar face sat behind the Dallas Mavericks' bench. Dirk Nowitzki, who led the franchise to its only championship in 2011 during his 21 seasons, came to see his old franchise that hasn't won a playoff series since its title.

Led by Luka Doncic, this edition is looking pretty good.

"I certainly believe him being there tonight was a lucky charm for us," Mavs coach Rick Carlisle said.

Doncic scored 39 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. added 28 and the Mavs again outshot the NBA's best 3-point team in a 127-121 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night to take a 2-0 lead in the first-round playoff series.

"We can't rest," Hardaway said. "We know what they're capable of."

Kristaps Porzingis added 20 points and Maxi Kleber had 13. Hardaway hit a playoff career-high six 3-pointers and Doncic had five as fifth-seeded Dallas was 18 of 34 from long-range. The Mavs made 17 3-pointers in winning Game 1 on Saturday.

"The mentality was, go out there, play aggressive, have fun," Doncic said.

The fourth-seeded Clippers were led by Kawhi Leonard, who scored 30 of his 41 in the first half. Paul George had 28 points and 12 rebounds.

"I'm pretty sure everyone expected us to win this," George said. "They're playing free and with confidence and I think we're giving

them a little too much confidence. It's up to us to shut that down."

Leonard added, "Just got to stay focused and keep an eye on the prize. We got to play defense. Too many easy baskets out there for Dallas."

Game 3 is Friday, May 28 in Dallas, where the Mavs will have several thousand more fans on hand than were allowed at Staples Center.

"I'm not concerned," first-year Clippers coach Tyronn Lue said. "They won two games on our home floor and now we got to return the favor."

The Clippers threw just about every body they had at Doncic in an effort to slow the player that burned them with a triple-double in Game 1. But once again, the All-Star got plenty of help from his supporting cast.

"To this point, we've been very focused and very determined. We've just got to make sure that continues," Carlisle said. "The challenge is always, when you win a game or two games in a playoff series, how do you measure up against the human nature curve where a lot of teams will have letdowns?"

The Clippers, who led the league with 41% 3-point shooting, went 13 of 33 from long range. They regained their touch in the fourth, when they made five and twice cut their deficit to four points, but Josh Richardson made four straight free throws over the final 21 seconds to preserve the victory.

George was just 1 of 7 from long range. The Clippers made 11 3-pointers in Game 1.

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