

To demolish or design: Japan split on 2020 stadium

By Elaine Kurtenbach
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — As Tokyo prepares to demolish the half-century old stadium that hosted the first Olympics in Asia, debate is raging over whether the colossal, futuristic replacement planned for the 2020 Games will help revitalize or indelibly mar Japan's famous capital.

Tokyo, the frenetic center of a mega-metropolitan area of 36 million people, is planning an ambitious reboot on par with its last big reincarnation for the Olympics in 1964. Those games were the catalyst for a far-reaching makeover of Tokyo and marked Japan's reemergence as an Asian power following its defeat in World War II.

Today, Japan faces altered circumstances. Its population is aging and shrinking. The economy, overtaken in size by China, has stagnated for two decades. National debt has reached epic proportions.

The Olympics building spree could be a welcome boon for the economy. But there are doubts over the costs and scale of some of the proposed projects, especially an 80,000-seat stadium designed by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid that was the centerpiece of Tokyo's 2020 bid. Detractors of the new stadium, a whopping 70 meters (230 feet) tall, say it clashes with Tokyo's urban planning and represents a "bigger is better" mentality that doesn't fit Japan's 21st-century limitations.

Even Tokyo's governor, Yoichi Masuzoe, who is among the biggest boosters of the Olympics, has seemed noncommittal. The plan requires cooperation between the Japan Sports Council, an arm of the central government that owns the existing stadium, the Tokyo government which owns the land the bigger stadium will occupy, and Tokyo Olympics organizers.

Prominent architects and other opponents are petitioning the government to upgrade the existing stadium. Built in 1958, it hosted an Olympics remembered as the first to be televised internationally by satellite, but now is showing its age.

An online poll by the *Nikkei* financial



newspaper found more than 60 percent opposed to building the new stadium. The self-selecting survey might overstate opposition.

Apart from cost, critics are unhappy with Hadid's signature sweeping-curves design, which many say resembles a bicycle helmet, and the stadium's size. It will have about four times the floor space of the current stadium and dominate the surrounding area of parks and other sports facilities.

"This is not just about the stadium, but about Japan's entire culture," said Shinichi Nakazawa, an anthropologist and popular social commentator. "We have a responsibility for the legacy we leave behind."

The sports council has already scaled back the original proposal to spend 300 billion yen (\$3 billion) on a 75-meter-tall stadium to a still hefty 169 billion yen (\$1.7 billion). Hakubun Shimomura, a cabinet minister, deemed the first plan "too massive."

That step back, however, is not giving hope to the retrofitting campaign, which admits its efforts might already be quixotic.

The sports council has scheduled demolition to begin in July. Even before the final "sayonara" concerts last month, workers were levelling parking spaces for

construction equipment and had removed boulders and other landscaping from the fringes of the park next to the stadium. Ichiro Kono, a top official at the council, has insisted the basic design plan "will not change."

"We don't have much time," said Nakazawa. "This is a very bad situation. We are right at the limit."

Nakazawa, scores of other architects, and critics of Hadid's design say upgrading the national stadium to increase its capacity from 54,000 people to the required 80,000 can be done at half the cost of a new structure.

Big new projects can generate jobs and revenues, but they also eat up taxpayer money, no small concern with Japan's public debt at more than twice the size of the national economy. And then there's the abundance of costly, underused former Olympic venues such as Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium.

Japanese media reports say it will cost about 4.6 billion yen (\$45 million) to operate and maintain the new stadium, compared with the current cost of 500 million yen to 700 million yen (\$5 million to \$7 million). The sports council says it expects some \$5 million in annual revenues from events will cover the higher cost.

Architectural economist Takashi Moriyama said the 2020 Games are an

STADIUM SCHISM. Fans support their team before a rugby match between Japan and Hong Kong at the National Stadium, which was used as the main stadium in the 1964 Olympics. Tokyo, the frenetic center of a mega-metropolitan area of 35 million people, is planning an ambitious reboot on par with its last big reincarnation for the Olympics in 1964. Those games were the catalyst for a far-reaching makeover of Tokyo and marked Japan's reemergence as an Asian power following its defeat in World War II. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

ideal opportunity to promote environmentally sound methods of renovating older buildings. Japan's 15,000 public buildings that need updating are a market potentially worth some 50 trillion yen (\$500 billion), he said.

"Japan is heading in exactly the opposite direction," said Pritzker-Prize-winning architect Toyo Ito, whose own design entry was not chosen. "This plan, how did they decide this was the way to go?"

But Tokyo is one of the world's biggest and wealthiest cities and many here believe it should have a stadium to match that stature.

Those in favor of a new stadium also contend that project would allow Japan to showcase its architectural prowess.

"This will enable us to demonstrate our leading technologies. We certainly should realize this goal," said Junji Ogura, honorary chairman of the Japan Football Association.

Masuzoe, the Tokyo governor, said he plans to consult the management of the Meiji Shrine before making any decisions, including the infrastructure the city must provide to support the stadium. The shrine, built to venerate the Meiji Emperor who oversaw Japan's leap into the modern age, is part of an expansive green belt that includes the stadium, baseball fields, tennis courts, gardens, and galleries. Its management has not voiced any opposition to Hadid's design.

The stadium must be able to accommodate 80,000 spectators, said Masuzoe. "If not, you cannot meet the condition enforced by the IOC."

Still, Masuzoe said he won't be rushing his decision.

"We have not yet started the open deliberation and consultations," he said. "I will decide in one year's time."

Samantha Kerr voted NWSL Player of the Week

Samantha Kerr, a forward for the Western New York Flash of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), was voted the league's Player of the Week during Week 9 of the season.

Kerr, who has Indian heritage, is a member of the Australia Women's National Team that last month placed second in the AFC Women's Asian Cup held in Vietnam. Australia beat Korea Republic 2-1 in the semifinal, but lost to world champion Japan 0-1 in the final match.

During a road trip to Portland shortly after returning from Vietnam, 20-year-old Kerr scored two goals and gave an assist in Western New York's 5-0 win over Portland at Providence Park.

With the win in Portland, the Flash set NWSL records for the largest margin of victory and biggest road win. It also tied the record for most goals in a game as well as most goals scored by an away team. Kerr's two goals in the match were her second and third of the season.

Already up 2-0, Kerr extended her team's lead over Portland when she headed a corner kick off the post and then headed the rebound into the goal in the 32nd minute. Just before halftime, she gave the Flash a 4-0 lead after playing a one-two pass to team-



PLAYER OF THE WEEK. Forward Samantha Kerr (right) of the Western New York Flash and defender Emily Menges (#21) of Portland Thorns FC watch the ball in the penalty area at a match between the two squads on Saturday, June 7 at Portland's Providence Park. Kerr was voted Player of the Week during Week 9 of the National Women's Soccer League's regular season. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

mate Jasmyne Spencer then hitting a left-footed shot past Portland goalkeeper Michelle Betos.

In the 50th minute, Kerr contributed to her team's fifth goal with an assist to midfielder Carli Lloyd.

The NWSL Player of the Week

honor is voted on by a selection of journalists who cover the league on a consistent basis.

To learn more about the league, visit <www.nwslsoccer.com>. To buy tickets to an upcoming Thorns FC match, call (503) 553-5555 or visit <www.portlandthornsfsc.com>.

Spoelstra reacts to Pacquiao becoming hoop coach

By Tim Reynolds
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI — Erik Spoelstra might not be the Philippines' favorite basketball coach anymore.

Manny Pacquiao is taking over as a basketball coach in the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA). The longtime boxing champion was introduced this month as the coach of a new Kia team in the league, with the season opening in October.

Spoelstra is wildly popular in the Philippines, as the Filipino-American coach of the two-time NBA champion Miami Heat. But even he acknowledges his status might have been surpassed by superstar Pacquiao.

"Well, I'm not taking a boxing job," said Spoelstra, who has close ties to his mother's homeland. "But I know he's a huge basketball fan, so it doesn't surprise me."

Pacquiao's love for basketball is no secret, and he said in the Philippines earlier this month that he was taking the coaching position seriously.

"A great responsibility," Pacquiao said.

That being said, his next fight is scheduled for November, or shortly after the PBA season begins. The opponent remains unclear, though there's speculation it could be a fifth bout against Juan Manuel Marquez.

Pacquiao has been fighting professionally since age 16 and is 56-5-2 in his brilliant career.

Spoelstra is planning to visit the Philippines this summer and might cross paths with Pacquiao.

But a Spoelstra-Pacquiao coaching matchup is probably not going to happen. Spoelstra simply shook his head at that farfetched notion.

"I'll hopefully be able to see him this summer, see what's up," Spoelstra said. "Maybe I'll check out a practice."