

# Tokyo's 1964 Olympics echo through the city's 2020 games

By Stephen Wade  
AP Sports Writer

**T**OKYO — Mariko Nagai walked outside Yoyogi National Stadium — the late-architect Kenzo Tange's masterpiece from Tokyo's 1964 Olympics — and pictured the city in that era.

She was a university student from northern Japan who landed a job as an interpreter at the dazzling swimming venue, where American Don Schollander would win four gold medals.

"I wouldn't say Japanese people were confident about the ability to become one of the advanced nations," Nagai said. "But we wanted to show how much recovery we had made."

Tange's jewel, with a soaring roofline that still defines modern architecture, symbolized Japan's revival just 19 years after the ravages of World War II. A centerpiece in '64, it will host handball in Tokyo's 2020 Olympics, a link between the now and then in the Japanese capital.

In less than two years, the 2020 Games will hold its opening ceremony. A new National Stadium is rising on the site of the demolished one that hosted the opening in 1964. Tokyo organizers, though, chose to reuse several older buildings, partly to cut costs. They include the Nippon Budokan, the spiritual home of Japanese judo and other martial arts that became a well-known rock concert venue in the ensuing decades.

For Nagai, the theme of recovery also links now and then. She grew up in Sendai, a city near the northeast coast that was devastated by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The 9.0 quake destroyed the house where she lived until she was 18 years old. No one was living there at the time, but family treasures were lost or destroyed.

"Again, this is an opportunity to showcase to the world how much recovery we have made," she said.

Nagai still has her blue Olympic blazer,



now faded and minus a breast-pocket patch that she removed after the games and has since lost, possibly in the earthquake rubble. The embroidered emblem featured Japan's rising sun, the Olympic rings, and "TOKYO 1964" etched across the bottom.

Few foreigners walked Tokyo's streets back then, unlike in today's tourism boom. Japan had 29 million foreign visitors last year and expects 40 million in 2020.

"A lot of ordinary people who were not used to seeing foreigners felt extraordinary that they could be surrounded by so many non-Japanese," Nagai said. "It was something very extraordinary, very special."

She was an exception more than 50 years ago, having picked up English as a high-school exchange student in Dallas.

"In 1964, you could say almost nobody was able to speak English," she said. "So the organizing committee had a very hard time recruiting interpreters."

She laughs about it now. The job didn't even involve interpreting.

"The text would be handed to me in English. All I had to do was read it aloud. I

remember that announcing the names was very difficult," she said, still able to recall the tricky pronunciations of some Swedish swimmers.

Her part-time job as a 21-year-old announcer turned into a career at Simul International as one of Japan's best-known interpreters. She has worked with American presidents, British royals, and Japanese prime ministers, from Masayoshi Ohira four decades ago to current leader Shinzo Abe.

Japan has joined the ranks of the world's rich nations, but the Yoyogi stadium fits into 21st-century Tokyo, just as it did in the 1960s and much in the way a 500-year-old European cathedral remains timeless.

"That's the beauty of a classic building," said American-born architect James Lambiasi, who has worked in Tokyo for 25 years. "It does not age. It's always wonderful. Remember, Tokyo was a wooden city recovering from the war, and these new technologies of steel and concrete gave the city its rebirth."

The stadium's sweeping roof is anchored to earth by steel cables, like a suspension bridge, and mixes the modern with traditional forms found in Japanese temples and shrines.

**HISTORY REPEATS.** Japanese interpreter Mariko Nagai holds up the jacket she wore during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics with a backdrop of Yoyogi National Stadium in Tokyo, which symbolized Japan's revival just 19 years after World War II. The stadium hosted swimming in 1964 and will host handball in 2020. Nagai was a university student from northern Japan who landed a job as an interpreter at the dazzling swimming venue, where American Don Schollander would win four gold medals. (AP Photo/Koji Ueda)

Lambiasi, who teaches design at Shibaura University and the Japan campus of Temple University, called the stadium "the pinnacle of modern architecture."

He minced few words when talking about its importance and that of its designer, Tange, whose tools were slide rules and his imagination.

"The building is a technological wonder," Lambiasi said. "And you have to keep in mind he did it before any type of computer graphics, any computer modelling."

Cutting costs for host cities has become a priority for the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has been criticized for pressuring them to overspend on new venues in the past.

John Coates, who heads the IOC's planning for Tokyo, acknowledged that avoiding "white-elephant" venues is a high priority after the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, which produced a half-dozen without tenants or futures.

"These days we are pushing this, and it seems like they (Tokyo) have had the good sense to go that way," Coates told The Associated Press.

Masa Takaya, a spokesman for Tokyo 2020, said using the older "venues will tell the worldwide audiences a fantastic story."

Besides the Yoyogi stadium, the Nippon Budokan is the most well-known venue being used from '64. A series of Beatles' concerts in 1966 gave the building its world fame, probably more so than the Olympics.

"If you have a favorite band or an album, I'm sure you have one that says 'Live at

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**MOB KILLING.** People look at the carcasses of crocodiles slaughtered by villagers in Sorong, West Papua, Indonesia. A mob slaughtered hundreds of crocodiles at a breeding ground in retaliation of the death of a 48-year-old man who was killed by crocodiles after entering the area around the breeding pond. (AP Photo/Irianti)

## Indonesian mob kills hundreds of crocodiles after man dies

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A mob slaughtered nearly 300 crocodiles at a breeding ground in Indonesia's West Papua province in retaliation for the death of a local man, according to officials.

A total of 292 crocodiles were killed by hundreds of villagers following the funeral of a 48-year-old man who was killed by crocodiles after entering the area around the breeding pond, said Basar Manullang, the head of the local Natural Resources and Conservation Agency.

The man was believed to have entered the sanctuary in the Klamalu neighborhood of Sorong district to cut grass for his cattle.

"Since killing the crocodiles is illegal, we

are coordinating with the police for the investigation," Manullang said.

The agency said in a statement that the villagers were armed with machetes, hammers, shovels, and other sharp weapons. They killed two large crocodiles of up to 13 feet and many babies measuring 20 to 60 inches.

Witnesses said about 40 policemen came to the scene, but were too outnumbered to stop the mob.

Police said about five witnesses were questioned but no suspects have been named. The police are encouraging mediation between the victim's family and Mitra Lestari Abadi, the company that operates the sanctuary.