

# MLB scraps 2020 Asia opener; Manfred eyes more Europe games

By Ronald Blum  
The Associated Press

**L**ONDON — Major League Baseball (MLB) has scrapped plans to open its 2020 season in Asia and hopes to play more games in Europe.

MLB started its season in Tokyo for the fifth time in 2019, and its labor contract with the players' union called for a 2020 opener in Asia.

"We just decided it probably wasn't the right time to try to do it," Manfred said.

In addition to Tokyo and London, MLB had two series in Monterrey, Mexico.

"We have a fairly small international staff. This was a really aggressive play for us this year," Manfred said.

Union head Tony Clark said baseball is focusing on a 2020 offseason tour.

"So we still have Asia tentatively on the calendar as far as we're concerned," Clark said in a text. "The 2019 events have taxed the initial play plan that was anticipated during the term of this agreement."

The New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox played MLB's first games in Europe in late June at London's Olympic Stadium, the home of the Premier League soccer club West Ham. The Chicago Cubs and St. Louis Cardinals are to play at the same venue next June.

"I would like to have sustained play in Europe," Manfred said. "I'm glad we're coming back next year. I'd like to be back after that. But I am interested in having play in other cities in Europe."

Manfred would not identify which cities interest him. "We're really at a very preliminary point. The key thing with any city is the facility," he said. "A lot of people will



**BASEBALL IN BRITAIN.** New York Yankees starting pitcher Masahiro Tanaka throws a pitch against the Boston Red Sox during the first inning of a baseball game in London. Major League Baseball made its European debut game at Olympic Stadium. (AP Photo/Tim Ireland)

tell you they can build a ballpark. Until you get on the ground and figure whether a particular facility can be configured for baseball, it's just premature to get into other cities."

Manfred said 70% of the tickets for the Yankees-Red Sox games were sold in Britain and 30% in the U.S. Red Sox season ticket holders purchased an average of 5,831 seats per game and Yankees buyers 4,752 during the presale.

"We're trying to bring baseball to the U.K., so that 70% is important to us," he said. "That 30% is our most loyal, devoted, interested fan base, and the fact that those people want to travel either from New York or Boston to

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