

Want Tokyo Olympic tickets? No problem if you have \$60,000

By Stephen Wade
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Having trouble getting tickets for next year's Tokyo Olympics?

That's no problem if you have \$60,000 to spare.

Tokyo Olympic organizers are offering high-end hospitality packages to Japan residents with prices soaring to 6.35 million yen — about \$60,000. This is good for the opening and closing ceremony, nine days of track and field with luxury seating, and sumptuous dining. Low-end packages dip down to about \$1,500 for one session at a less popular event.

Tokyo is shaping up as a very pricey Olympics.

Ticket demand is unprecedented, so unofficial re-selling likely will flourish. Hotel rates are soaring. And getting here will be costly, particularly for people travelling from the Americas and Europe.

"I don't know if I can afford to go to the Olympics," Brant Feldman, a Los Angeles-based sports agent, told The Associated Press. He's attended seven straight Olympics and represents American and Canadian athletes for AGM Sports. "For the average family right now to head to the Olympics, it's going to be the most expensive in history."

Organizers of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics say the luxurious hospitality packages are an "opportunity for family, friends, and business contacts" to enjoy the games. In the words of organizers, here's what's included with the tickets:

- ♦ specially selected champagne, saké, and beers
- ♦ gourmet dining menu prepared by top international chefs
- ♦ fine wines chosen by our sommelier
- ♦ elegant commemorative souvenir VIP access pass
- ♦ first-class personal service capable of dealing with any request
- ♦ event host and celebrity guests appearances

Hospitality packages, of course, are aimed at the wealthy, targeting executives who treat the Olympics as a venue for doing business and schmoozing with sports as an alluring sideshow.

There's also an old-fashioned way for residents of Japan to get scarce tickets: a so-called "second-chance" lottery that is now closed. Results will be announced this month,



BIG-LEAGUE SHUTOUT. Starting pitcher Yusei Kikuchi of the Seattle Mariners throws a pitch against the Toronto Blue Jays during a baseball game in Toronto. Kikuchi threw his first big-league shutout in the game. (Fred Thornhill/The Canadian Press via AP)

Seattle's Yusei Kikuchi throws 2-hitter for first shutout

By Ian Harrison
The Associated Press

TORONTO — After watching his team use seven pitchers in the previous game, Seattle's Yusei Kikuchi wanted to give the bullpen a break.

His first big-league shutout fit the bill perfectly.

Kikuchi needed just 96 pitches to complete a two-hitter that led the Mariners over the Toronto Blue Jays, 7-0.

Kikuchi (5-8) struck out eight, walked one, and retired the final 14 batters in his first win since beating Baltimore on June 23. The rookie left-hander went 0-3 with a 6.53 ERA in eight starts covering 40 innings between victories.

"It being a bullpen day yesterday for the team, I felt like I was able to step up," Kikuchi said through a translator. "I haven't been getting the results I've wanted to and I felt like I was good for the team today, so I was proud of that."

The 28-year-old Kikuchi was a star in Japan before signing a \$56-million, four-year deal with Seattle in the offseason. This was his 26th start for the Mariners and first complete game.

"Yusei was really focused today," manager Scott Servais said. "Outstanding. Heck of an outing. If you can throw a complete game anywhere at any time in the big leagues in less than 100 pitches, it really doesn't get any better than that."



OVERPRICED OLYMPICS. A man rides a bicycle (left photo) past sailboats at Enoshima Yacht Harbor, a venue for sailing at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, on Enoshima Island in Fujisawa, west of Tokyo. In the right photo, a restaurant worker on Enoshima Island cooks squid. Tokyo is shaping up as a very pricey Olympics, with the cost of tickets, hotels, and travel soaring. (AP Photos/Jae C. Hong)

and another lottery for Japan residents will be held in the fall.

For now, those living outside Japan must go through Authorized Ticket Resellers, which are deluged with unprecedented demand. They also offer high-end packages and are allowed to tack on a 20% service charge to each ticket. And many of the best tickets are tied to expensive hotels.

A random search of well-known hotel booking sites by AP found prices for most 3- and 4-star hotels between \$1,000 and 1,500 per night with few available. There have been complaints that many hotels are cancelling previous reservations to secure the markup.

Even Japan's famous capsule hotels — or sleep pods — will cost more to crawl inside with prices up three or four times on booking sites.

In a statement to AP, Tokyo organizers said they are working with "the government and the accommodation industry and travel industry in order to control prices."

Quoting a government report, organizers say there are 300,000 rooms "in different classes" in Tokyo and in neighboring prefectures.

Olympic athletes are guaranteed housing and have access to a few tickets for event sessions in which they participate. After that, family and friends are on their own.

"If your son or daughter qualifies for the Olympics in 2020, I don't know how any of those families are going to be able to afford the airline tickets, the Airbnb, the hotels, or get the tickets," Feldman said.

Those planning to wait until the last minute to book rooms, which sometimes become available because organizers typically overestimate the number of rooms needed and the number of foreign visitors, could miss out.

It may not happen this time.

Tokyo's demand is driven partly by a giant metropolitan area of 35 million, its safe streets, and long-time support for the Olympics.

Sun Wen appointed China football vice president

By Christopher Bodeen
The Associated Press

BEIJING — Former FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) female player of the year Sun Wen has been elected vice president of the Chinese Football Association (CFA) as China seeks to revamp its lagging national program.

Sun, who became captain of the Chinese team in 2000, is currently director of the women's youth training department at the CFA.

Sun scored 16 goals over two Olympic and four World Cup tournaments, including the 1999 edition in which China was runner-up to the United States. She also played two seasons with the Atlanta Beat of the now-defunct Women's United Soccer Association.

In addition, Chen Xuyuan, former president of Shanghai International Port Group, which owns China Super League team Shanghai SIPG, was elected CFA president and former China national team coach Gao Hongbo and deputy sports minister Du Zhaocai were also voted in as vice chairmen.

The Chinese women's team is 16th in the FIFA rankings and its men are 71st.

Coached by former Italy manager Marcello Lippi, China is pushing ahead with a reform program issued in 2015 that envisions the men qualifying for the 2022 World Cup and becoming a top-ranked national team by 2050. That includes allowing the China Super League to operate along more market-oriented lines with greater independence from the CFA.

It would also allow nationalized Chinese players onto the national team, including London-born Nico Yennaris and, most recently, Brazil-born Elkeson, who, while having no Chinese heritage, qualified under FIFA's



OVERPRICED OLYMPICS. A man rides a bicycle (left photo) past sailboats at Enoshima Yacht Harbor, a venue for sailing at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, on Enoshima Island in Fujisawa, west of Tokyo. In the right photo, a restaurant worker on Enoshima Island cooks squid. Tokyo is shaping up as a very pricey Olympics, with the cost of tickets, hotels, and travel soaring. (AP Photos/Jae C. Hong)

Australia-based Kingdom Sports Group, an official reseller that deals primarily with Asia and Africa, said on social media that Tokyo is "30 times more popular" than London was in 2012. London is often seen as the benchmark for Olympic interest.

Ken Hanscom, a ticketing expert who runs Los Angeles-based TicketManager, told AP, "This is the biggest (Olympic) demand ever — by far."

The big winner could be the Paralympics, which open a few weeks after the Olympics close on August 9, 2020. The lottery in Japan for the Paralympics recently opened with 2.3 million tickets available.

Just over 80% of Japan residents who applied got nothing in the first Olympic ticket lottery earlier this year. Of those who landed tickets in June, many got far fewer than they expected.

Organizers say 3.22 million tickets were sold in the first phase. Demand appears to exceed supply by at least 10 times. Another 680,000 tickets are available in this lottery, but only for those who were shut out the first time.

Tokyo organizers say there are 7.8 million tickets for the Olympics. They estimate between 70% and 80% will go to the general public in Japan. The difference between the larger and smaller percentage is 780,000 tickets, giving organizers flexibility in how tickets are distributed.

The remaining tickets are sold abroad, or go to sponsors, national Olympic committees, and sports federations.

Organizers hope to earn \$800 million from ticket sales, a big chunk of income for the privately funded, \$5.6-billion operating budget.

A report released last year by the national government's Board of Audit said Japan is likely to spend \$25 billion overall to prepare the games. This is public money, except for the operating budget. Organizers dispute the figure and say it's about \$12 billion, though what are Olympics costs — and what are not — is subject to heated debate.

Back in 2013, Tokyo projected total costs of about \$7.5 billion in its winning bid for the games.



SOCCER SUPPORTER. Chinese star and winner of the 1999 Golden Ball during the FIFA Women's World Cup, Sun Wen, stands during the FIFA world player of 1999 gala at the Palais des Congres in downtown Brussels, in this January 24, 2000 file photo. (AP Photo/Yves Logghe, File)

five-year residency requirement.

China's World Cup qualifying campaign begins away against the Maldives on September 10.

The country's lack of success in international football — having qualified for only one World Cup in 2002 under Bora Milutinovic — has long confounded China's leaders. President and head of the ruling Communist Party, Xi Jinping, has taken a personal interest in changing its fortunes, ordering a massive program of youth leagues, football academies, and pitch construction.