



FANS IN THE STANDS. Fans wearing face masks to help protect against the spread of the novel coronavirus cheer during a Korean Baseball Organization league game between the Doosan Bears and LG Twins in Seoul, South Korea. Masked fans hopped, sang, and shouted cheers in baseball stadiums in South Korea as authorities began bringing back spectators in professional sports games amid the coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

Baseball fans in South Korea back in stands amid COVID-19

By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Masked fans hopped, sang, and shouted cheers in baseball stadiums in South Korea last month as authorities began allowing spectators to return to professional sports amid the coronavirus pandemic.

After a weeks-long delay, South Korea's 2020 baseball season began in early May without fans in the stands amid a then-slowing virus outbreak in the country. Seats in baseball stadiums had since been filled with cheering banners, dolls, or pictures of fans.

The Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) allowed a limited number of fans — 10% of the stadium capacity — to watch games live. They entered stadiums after their temperatures and smartphone QR codes were checked. During the games, they were required to wear masks and sit at least a seat apart while being banned from eating food and drinking any alcoholic beverages in line with the KBO guidelines.

During a game between Doosan Bears and LG Twins at Seoul's Jamsil baseball

stadium, fans wearing the teams' jerseys still shouted their favorite players' names, raised banners, and sang fight songs. Some Bears fans jumped from their seats when Choi Joo-hwan hit a two-run home run in the bottom the second inning.

"Players will likely be cheered up when they hear fans rooting for them. I hope the coronavirus outbreak will be eased so that more fans can come in and we can play games in front of as many fans as we used to do," Bears outfielder Jung Soo-bin said before the game.

Kang dong-yeop, a 35-year-old fan, said he was "so excited about watching the game live that I screamed with joy in the car on the way" to the stadium.

Two of the five baseball games that weekend still continued without fans because they were held in areas where stricter social-distancing guidelines were in place.

Health authorities were allowing the professional soccer league to also have fans back in the stands over the weekend, and also starting with 10% of the stadium capacity. Senior Health Ministry official Yoon Taeho told reporters that profes-

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Heat! What heat? Tokyo Olympics would have been on cool side

By Stephen Wade
The Associated Press

TOKYO — July 31 would have been Day 7 of the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics — almost the halfway point.

The focus has shifted to how — or if — the Olympics will happen next year. The pandemic will call the shots. How will Tokyo remain safe with 15,400 Olympic and Paralympic athletes arriving in the country? Will there be any foreign fans, or only Japanese? Or will there be any fans at all? What about staff, media, volunteers, or officials who work behind the scenes?

Organizers say it will be months before they will supply any specific answers. Recent polls show about 70% of Japanese doubt the games will happen, or believe they should not happen.

Here a quick look at what's going on:

Question: What about Tokyo's worrisome summer heat? How has it been so far?

Answer: Before the pandemic and the postponement, the major worry for organizers was Tokyo's stifling summer heat. The summer of 2019 was tough, but so far this summer has been mild and damp.

Temperatures this first week have been in the 27°-30° Celsius range — low 80s Fahrenheit — with some morning and evening showers, a few sunny afternoons, and no real heat although it's almost always humid.

The upcoming forecast looked nearly perfect with mild temperatures and more sunshine.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was so concerned about the heat that president Thomas Bach pressured Tokyo organizers last year to move the marathons and the race walks 800 kilometers (500 miles) north to Sapporo, which is also a leading candidate to land the 2030 Winter Olympics.

The move set off a public squabble between the IOC and Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike. It also cost millions.

Question: We saw Japanese swim star Rikako Ikee in a brief ceremony at the new national stadium. What are her plans?

Answer: Ikee was the star of the Asian Games two years ago, winning six gold medals in Jakarta. She was billed as Japan's "Golden Girl" and was sure to be the face of the Olympics. However, she was diagnosed with leukemia in 2019 and has undergone a year of difficult treatments. The 20-year-old Ikee says she hopes to compete in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Holding the Olympic flame in a tiny lantern, she gave an emotional speech at the new national stadium, which was empty for the 15-minute ceremony on July 23 to mark the one-year-to-go mark for the games. She symbolizes the struggles facing Tokyo 2020 as it tries to pull off an unprecedented postponement.

"Let this year that starts today not be just a delay, but instead be thought of as 'plus one' more year," Ikee said, speaking in Japanese. "I feel that is a way of thinking that looks to the future and is optimistic. Of course, I understand well that there are some voices opposing even discussing sports when the world is in such a critical situation."



OLYMPIC UNCERTAINTY. Japanese swimmer Ikee Rikako holds a lantern containing the Olympic flame during a ceremony and photo session at Olympic Stadium in Tokyo, on July 23, 2020. (Du Xiaoyi/Pool Photo via AP)

"But on the other hand, I think that when crawling out of adversity, you certainly need the power of hope. As long as hope is glimmering far away, you can continue facing the future no matter how hard it gets."

Question: What are some of the scenarios that organizers are considering for next year?

Answer: IOC vice president John Coates, who heads the inspection team for Tokyo, gave several interviews recently in Australia. He repeated what he said a few weeks ago in an online meeting with all IOC members. Everything is on the table.

"There's obviously different scenarios under which the games might take place, depending where COVID-19 is," Coates told the Australian Associated Press.

He ran down some possibilities.

"One scenario may be that COVID is gone," he said. "A scenario might be COVID is under control in some countries but not in others among the 206 that send teams to the games. A scenario may be COVID is totally eradicated in Japan; or not eradicated in Japan."

He repeated what IOC president Thomas Bach said: Fans are preferable, but not guaranteed.

Question: What is the status of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics?

Answer: Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin was asked this week about the possibility of the Winter Olympics being called off.

"China will continue to support Japan in hosting the Olympics, and we also hope the Tokyo Olympics to be held as scheduled," Wang said.

"At present, the preparations for the Beijing Winter Olympics are going on in an orderly manner as planned, and all parties, including the International Olympic Committee, have spoken highly of the progress in the preparations," Wang added.

If Tokyo were cancelled, the focus would shift immediately to China where the coronavirus was first detected. Beijing was awarded the Winter Games in 2015, ahead of Almaty, Kazakhstan, after several European bidders pulled out.

IOC president Thomas Bach warned [several] weeks ago about any threatened Olympic boycott. He didn't mention China, but the possibility would seem to be there with the rising tension between China and United States.

AP Tokyo correspondent Yuri Kageyama contributed to this report.

PROPER HANDWASHING

Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds

- 0 Wet hands with water;
- 1 Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;
- 2 Rub hands palm to palm;
- 3 Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;
- 4 Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;
- 5 Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;
- 6 Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;
- 7 Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;
- 8 Rinse hands with water;
- 9 Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;
- 10 Use towel to turn off faucet;
- 11 Your hands are now safe.

World Health Organization | Patient Safety | SAVE LIVES Clean Your Hands

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