

Japanese soccer player Yokoyama comes out as transgender

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese soccer player Kumi Yokoyama said they are transgender — a revelation praised in the U.S. where they play in the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) but an identity not legally recognized in Japan.

The 27-year-old forward for the Washington Spirit said they felt more comfortable with their own gender identity while living in the United States, where teammates and friends are more open to gender and sexual diversity.

“I’m coming out now,” Yokoyama said in a video talk on former teammate Yuki Nagasato’s YouTube channel. “In the future, I want to quit soccer and live as a man.”

Yokoyama’s revelation was praised by U.S. President Joe Biden.

“To Carl Nassib and Kumi Yokoyama - two prominent, inspiring athletes who came out this week: I’m so proud of your courage. Because of you, countless kids around the world are seeing themselves in a new light today,” Biden tweeted. Nassib is the first active NFL player to come out as gay.



The Spirit also expressed the team’s support and pride in Yokoyama. “Thank you for showing the world it’s ok to embrace who you are!” the team tweeted, adding that the player uses they/them pronouns.

Support and awareness of gender and sexual diversity has slowly grown in Japan, but LGBTQ people lack many legal protections and often suffer discrimination, causing many to hide their sexual identities. An equality law pushed by rights groups was scrapped recently due to opposition from the conservative ruling party.

Transgender people in Japan also must have their reproductive organs removed to



have their gender recognized on official documents — a requirement that human rights and medical groups criticize as inhuman and unnecessary and say should end.

Yokoyama said they weren’t enthusiastic about coming out but it was a choice made while thinking about the future and

BRAVE ANNOUNCEMENT. Washington Spirit forward Kumi Yokoyama (#17) warms up prior to a National Women’s Soccer League Challenge Cup match against Racing Louisville FC in Washington on April 15, 2021. In the right photo, Yokoyama dribbles the ball during a 2020 Challenge Cup soccer game against the Portland Thorns at Zions Bank Stadium in Herriman, Utah, on July 5, 2020.

that it would be harder to live closeted. “I would not have come out in Japan,” they said.

They thanked their teammates, friends, and girlfriend for their support and courage.

Yokoyama played for Japan at the 2019 Women’s World Cup in France and moved from Japanese club AC Nagano Parceiro to the Washington Spirit.

Yokoyama said they felt a strong pressure to conform and remain closeted in Japan but hoped to live as a man after retiring as a professional soccer player and to help raise awareness for sexual minorities in Japan.

“More people in Japan are becoming familiar with the word LGBTQ and it’s seen more (in the media), but I think awareness won’t grow unless people like myself come out and raise our voices,” Yokoyama said.

Creative summer activities available to youth

Continued from page 6

caring. The podcast is available on Apple, Spotify, iHeartRadio, and Amazon Music. To learn more, visit <www.octc.org/intergenerational-project>.

Other free online content that sparks the creativity of young people is offered by both OCT and NWCT. I urge readers to check them out. To all the parents and guardians reading this, hang in there. Your efforts are important and appreciated!

Golf’s 60-player field set for the Tokyo Olympics

By Doug Ferguson
The Associated Press

Nelly Korda goes to the Olympics as the No. 1 player in the world, and the Americans will have one extra player than they had in 2016.

The 60-player field for Tokyo was set late last month. Countries were allowed two players until the field was full, with a maximum of four provided they were among the top 15 in the women’s world

ranking. South Korea, the powerhouse in women’s golf, again had all four, with Hyo-Joo Kim at No. 6 in the world getting the last spot.

Inbee Park easily made it back in her bid to win a second gold medal. The other medal winners from Rio de Janeiro, Lydia Ko of New Zealand (silver) and Shanshan Feng of China (bronze), also will be in Japan.

The Americans had only three players

within the top 15 in the world for the 2016 Games.

This time they will have four, including a pair of sisters. Korda, coming off her first major title in the Women’s PGA Championship, will be joined by older sister Jessica, who is No. 13 in the world.

The other Americans are Danielle Kang (No. 5) and Lexi Thompson (No. 9). Thompson is the only returning American in the Olympics.

Continued on page 8



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