

## Olympic robots offer 'virtual' attendance, help out on field

A cart-like robot scuttles across the field to bring back javelins and discs. A towering screen-on-wheels is designed for "virtual" attendance. The cute ones are, naturally, the likeness of the Olympic and Paralympic mascots.

Japanese automaker Toyota Motor Corp., a major Olympic sponsor, is readying various robots for next year's Tokyo Olympics. The robots were shown to reporters for release Monday.

The mascot robots have moving limbs and its eyes change to the image of stars and hearts. It cannot speak at all or walk very well. But the engineer in charge, Tomohisa Moridaira, suggested various possibilities, such as getting the robot to hold the Olympic torch using magnets.

The T-TR1, developed by Toyota's robotics institute in the U.S., highlights "virtual mobility", taking the automaker's usual business of transportation to another

dimension. It's a moving human-size display designed to represent people who can't be there.

Think a faraway grandma at a child's birthday party or a legendary athlete not able to attend but "virtually" taking part in Olympic festivities.

Like all the world's major automakers, Toyota uses robotics in production plants. But it has also designed human-like robots, including those that play musical instruments.

The Cue 3, which computes a three-dimensional image with sensors and adjusts motors for the right angle and propulsion to accurately throw basketballs, recently got listed in the Guinness World Records for making 2020 free throws without missing, a record for a robot and an homage to the Tokyo Olympics.

An earlier Toyota robot that glides around like R2-D2 is devoted to picking things up, to help the sick and elderly. (AP)



In this July 18 photo, Toyota engineer Takeshi Kuwabara speaks about a "field support robot" (foreground), to the media at Toyota Motor Corp headquarters in Tokyo. The Japanese automaker Toyota, a major Olympic sponsor, is readying various robots for next year's Tokyo Olympics, including the one which has intelligence to avoid obstacles in its path and helps bring back thrown objects like javelins and discs. (AP)

# Sports Plus



Local sponsorship revenue passes \$3 billion, about three times more than any previous games

## Scandals, high costs but unrivaled demand for Tokyo Oly



Mascots 'Miraitowa' (left), of Olympics and 'Someity' of Paralympics unveil a robot mascot at Tokyo Stadium as organizers prepare to celebrate one year to go until the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics on July 22 in Tokyo. (AP)

By Stephen Wade

Despite scandals, rising costs and doubts about the economic payoff, the Tokyo Olympics will be a must-see event — if you can find a ticket or a hotel room — when they open in a year.

Tokyo was supposed to be a "safe pair of hands" after Rio de Janeiro's corruption and near-meltdown three years ago.

Mostly, it has been. Local sponsorship revenue has passed \$3 billion, about three times more than any previous games, driven by Japan's giant advertising and marketing company Dentsu Inc, the exclusive marketing agency for the Tokyo Games caught in a French probe into alleged vote-buying connected with Tokyo winning the 2020 Olympics.

Ticket demand is unprecedented and few Japanese can even get them. Estimates suggest up to 90% of Japan residents who applied were unsuccessful in the first phase of a ticket lottery in June. Tickets prices are sure to soar with scalping a certainty, though Japan just passed a law banning the practice.

"This is probably going to be the most popular Olympics, and possibly one of the most popular events of all time," Ken Hanscom told The Associated Press. He follows ticketing

around the globe as the chief operating officer of Los Angeles-based TicketManager.

Roy Tomizawa, a Japanese American who lives in Japan and published the most definitive book on Tokyo's 1964 Olympics, said he applied for 16 tickets and got zero in the June lottery.

Organizers have quickly thrown together a so-called second-chance lottery in August, and have another lottery set for later in the year. But this will not change the reality: Demand exceeds supply in Japan by at least 10 times. And it's a similar story for buyers outside Japan.

"I thought that putting myself down for the most expensive tickets would ensure me of winning seats, but that wasn't the case," Tomizawa told the AP. "I struck out resoundingly. The high demand appeared to surprise everyone, Japanese and non-Japanese alike."

Tomizawa, whose father was a producer for NBC News at the '64 Olympics, said the "measured demeanor" of the Japanese hides their Olympic enthusiasm. There are great expectations. Japan is shooting for a record 30 gold medals, almost twice the previous best of 16 in Tokyo.

This is also the second of three straight Olympics in Asia, another factor driving interest.

And don't forget: Greater Tokyo has a population of more than 35 million —

the world's largest metropolitan area.

The Olympics will be simply a sideshow for some Tokyo visitors, astounded by the cleanliness, courtesy and order. Japan's sprawling capital is a dense mix of the traditional and eccentric where bowing meets bustle. Small shrines or temples nestle alongside gleaming towers, passengers wedge silently into commuter trains and pedestrians meander through a labyrinth of alleyways, always lined with places to eat and drink.

"I've never, never seen interest in attending the Olympics like I have for Tokyo," said Greg Harney, who works at Cartan Global, an Authorized Ticket Reseller for much of Latin American and the Caribbean, and is preparing to attend his 19th Olympics.

Tokyo's 1964 Olympics marked a turning point for Japan, highlighting the country's recovery just 19 years after World War II. It was the first games in Asia and left behind breathtaking architecture — such as Kenzo Tange's Yoyogi National Gymnasium and its suspension roof — and showcased dozens of consumer brands that became household names around the world.

Ambitions are more modest this time. Organizers are emphasizing the rebuilding of the Fukushima area northeast of Tokyo, which was devastated by a 2011 earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear

reactors. Some baseball and softball is being played there, a gesture to convince the world the area is safe.

Tokyo appears to be a watershed for the International Olympic Committee, which is recasting the Olympics and its bidding process as "cost-sensitive" after years of coaxing cities to splurge on white elephant sports venues. Rio de Janeiro is the last example, still littered three years later with money-sapping arenas, bribery trials and an organizing committee facing bankruptcy.

The IOC already has awarded the next two Summer Olympics to Paris and Los Angeles, cities that promise to control costs and use existing venues.

"The Olympics have become more sponsor- and television-driven," David Wallechinsky, president of the International Society of Olympic Historians, told the AP. "In Rio it was a mess, yet on television it looked fine. Let's face it, 99% of the people who follow the Olympics do so on TV. So whatever you present them on TV is reality, though those of us on the ground see a different reality."

The games will open on July 24, 2020, at the height of Tokyo's hot, humid summer. Events like the marathon will start just after dawn. Beating the heat is a worry, which it wasn't in '64 when the Olympics were held in October. That was before the demands

of television.

Tokyo is building eight new venues. The other 35 venues are defined as "temporary" or older buildings being reused, which Tokyo organizers say has saved billions. The centerpiece is the \$1.25 billion National Stadium, and the Olympic Village for more than 10,000 athletes on the edge of Tokyo Bay.

The Summer Olympics don't come cheaply, and even existing venues need renovation when the games come to town. Exact costs — what are, and are not Olympic expenses — are difficult to sort out. But Tokyo is spending at least \$20 billion to get ready, 70% of which is taxpayers' money.

Critics point out that the biggest Olympic sponsor is the Japanese government, which is picking up many of the bills.

IOC President Thomas Bach will be in Tokyo on Wednesday for the one-year countdown ceremony as the gold, silver, and bronze medals are unveiled. A small group called "Hangorin no kai" — roughly translated "No Olympics" — is also scheduling seminars and protests around the date. Scandal has also lingered.

Tsunekazu Takeda, the head of the Japanese Olympic Committee, was forced to resign earlier this year when he was implicated in a vote-buying scheme to land the games. He has denied wrongdoing but acknowledged he signed off on about \$2 million that French investigators allege went to buy votes of some IOC members.

Yasuhiro Yamashita, who won a judo gold medal in the 1984 Olympics, took over recently for Takeda and acknowledged: "We have seen some scandals in sports, including the JOC. And therefore the trust and confidence is now in question. We have to grapple with these issues very seriously."

Organizers were also forced to redesign their logo when the original draft faced charges of plagiarism, and an international labor union has alleged work-safety violations at Olympic venues, largely regarding migrant labor.

A futuristic design for the new stadium by the late British architect Zaha Hadid was scrapped when costs soared to \$2 billion. Japanese architect Kengo Kuma was chosen instead with a design focused on wood lattice and greenery that will be finished by the end of the year.

Sports economist Rob Baade has written extensively on the Olympics. He says the games have reached an "inflection point" as cities realize they are expensive, the short-term benefits are scant and the long-term payoffs are unclear.

"There are fewer cities and nations willing to compete in this international auction of the games," Baade, who teaches at Lake Forest College outside Chicago, told the AP. "And in absence of this, the IOC is not going to be able to write the kind of concessions from potential host cities that they did before." (AP)

## FINA sends warning letter to Swimming Australia

## Horton applauded by fellow swimmers for stand against Sun

GWANGJU, South Korea, July 22, (AP) — Mack Horton walked into the dining room at the athletes' village and the applause began. It swelled into a standing ovation for the Australian swimmer after his personal protest against China's Sun Yang at the world championships.

Horton refused to step onto the podium or shake Sun's hand after losing to Sun in the 400-meter freestyle final on Sunday night.

"Gutsy move, for sure," US backstroke Matt Grevers said Monday.

FINA's executive board met Monday in Gwangju to discuss Horton's protest and decided to send a warning letter to Swimming Australia and to Horton.

"While FINA respects the principle of freedom of speech, it has to be conducted in the right context," the board said in a statement.

Horton is angry that Sun, who served a three-month doping suspension in 2014, is being allowed to compete in Gwangju before he faces a Court of Arbitration for Sport hearing in September that could potentially end his career.

The World Anti-Doping Agency is challenging a decision by FINA, swimming's world governing body, merely to warn Sun over incidents during a doping control team's attempts to take blood and urine samples at his home in China last September.



China's Sun Yang (center), holds up his gold medal as silver medalist Australia's Mack Horton (left), stands away from the podium and bronze medalist Italy's Gabriele Detti after the men's 400m freestyle final at the World Swimming Championships in Gwangju, South Korea on July 21. (AP)

"I don't feel like it really hurt Sun Yang," Grevers said of Horton's protest. "I think it just let him know that, 'Hey, it's a weird incident and until it gets uncovered, we don't fully trust you.'"

Horton is the only swimmer to beat Sun in the 400 free in the last eight years, taking gold in the event at the 2016 Rio Olympics, where the Aussie also refused to shake Sun's hand. Horton went further at a news conference later, calling Sun a "drug cheat" to his face.

That prompted China's swimming federation to demand an apology, but none was forthcoming.

With such history between the two, American Lilly King said other swimmers were waiting for the awards ceremony Sunday "to see what was going to happen."

Horton stood behind the podium when given his silver medal. He didn't join Sun and bronze medalist Gabriele Detti of Italy for the

traditional photos on the top spot afterward.

"I don't think I need to say anything," Horton said Sunday. "His actions and how it has been handled speaks louder than anything I could say."

Sun said Sunday he was aware Horton has a problem with him.

"Disrespecting me was OK, but disrespecting China was unfortunate," Sun said through a translator. "I feel sorry about that."

King, an outspoken critic of doping, was in the dining hall when Horton arrived back at the village.

"It was pretty great to see the athletes united on his stance and supporting him as well," she said. "I don't think anyone at FINA is going to stand up for the athletes, so the athletes have to stand up for themselves."

Horton's teammate, Mitch Larkin, voiced a familiar concern among swimmers about a clean playing field.

"You can never be confident," he said. "You've got to trust the authorities, but with what's going on in sport these days it's hard to be 100% sure."

Horton didn't alert the Australian coaching staff of his podium plans in advance, according to head coach Jacco Verhaeren.

"I understand him very much," the coach said. "You can only respect him for what he does."

Detti told Italian media that Horton

approached him before the medals ceremony and asked if he would be willing to stand behind rather than on the podium while receiving his award.

Detti declined, explaining that he worked hard to earn a medal and wanted to enjoy it.

None of the anti-Sun sentiment goes over well in China, where he is viewed as a star and his fans demand respect for him via social media. A large contingent of Chinese fans cheered and shouted as Sun made his victory parade around the pool. Banners featuring his face hung from the stands.

Larkin estimated that 99% percent of swimmers at the meet back Horton.

"He's not really standing alone," Larkin said. "What he did was certainly brave and gutsy, and I have a lot of respect for him for doing that."

Not everyone agreed with Horton, however.

"That's his opinion, not mine," said British swimmer James Guy, who described himself as a close friend of Horton's.

Guy was the leading qualifier going into the 200 free semifinals Monday night; Sun was second-fastest.

American backstroke Ryan Murphy said he didn't consider Horton's protest to be directed at Sun "but more so standing against FINA and WADA for their response to these things."

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