

Organizers expect postponed games to go ahead in 2021 despite a recent poll

Tokyo Games face skeptics, 1-day COVID-19 infection record

TOKYO, July 9, (AP) — The spokesman for the Tokyo Olympics expects the postponed games to go ahead in 2021 despite a recent poll in Japan in which 77% of respondents said they did not believe the games could be held next year.

The poll by the Japan News Network said only 17% thought it could be held next year in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Masa Takaya, the spokesman, was speaking Thursday on remote hookup on a day of contentious news for the Tokyo Olympics.

Tokyo's city government reported a single-day record of 224 new coronavirus infections on Thursday, surpassing a high of 204 in April.

Though low by many standards, it marks a steady increase over the

last week in the Japanese capital.

Japan has recorded about 1,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

Takaya said the way the polls are constructed "may result in very different messages." He said Tokyo's only plan was to open the games on July 23, 2021.

Also, Takaya did not flatly deny

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a leaked report in almost all Japanese media that said organizers were on track to secure all venues for next year's Olympics.

"Tokyo 2020 is aware of these media reports," Takaya said. "I need to be very clear that this is not something that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government or the organizing committee has made a formal



In this June 3, 2020 photo, the Olympic rings float in the water at sunset in the Odaiba section in Tokyo. (AP)

announcement." Details of any progress are sure to be presented next week at scheduled meetings of the Swiss-

based International Olympic Committee.

Organizers had previously said that 80% of the venues had been secured. Few expect local venue owners to defy the Japanese government, or the IOC, particularly if there are incentives in the new contracts.

Estimates in Japan put the cost of delay at \$2 billion to \$6 billion. The IOC and local organizers have not given any estimate.

A poll published last month by Japanese news agency Kyodo and a Tokyo television outlet found that 51.7% did not think the games should be held next year. But 46% wanted to see the rescheduled Olympics go forward.

Among those opposed, 27.7% said they should be canceled alto-

gether, and 24% said they should be postponed again because of COVID-19.

The IOC and local organizers have ruled out another postponement and say they will be canceled if they don't happen in 2021.

Takaya also dismissed a recent comment attributed in Japanese media to Yoshiro Mori, the president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee. Mori reportedly said April was the deadline for deciding to go ahead with the Olympics.

"We don't know in what kind of environment he might have made" such a comment, Takaya said. "In that respect, we don't even know if he made such a comment."

Takaya added: "We do not have any such deadline."

Lozano starting to fit in at Napoli

Atalanta move into 3rd place as Roma end skid

ROME, July 9, (AP) — Small in stature and with the speed to match fellow forwards like Dries Mertens and Lorenzo Insigne, Hirving Lozano fits right in at Napoli.

The Mexico forward ran onto a ball over the top from Fabiano Ruiz and scored the winner two minutes after he came on in a 2-1 victory at relegation-threatened Genoa in Serie A.

It was the exact type of goal that Mertens, Insigne and José Callejón have made Napoli's signature play in recent years.

It was also Lozano's second goal of the restart after getting thrown out of training by Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso for a lack of dedication.

The 5-foot-9 (1.76-meter) Lozano became Napoli's most expensive player in history a year ago when he was signed from PSV Eindhoven for a club record 42 million euros (\$46.5 million).

After a difficult start to the season that coincided with Gattuso replacing Carlo Ancelotti, Lozano is starting to show he can be a worthy substitute for Mertens, whom he replaced in the sec-

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ond half at the Luigi Ferraris stadium. "He's doing better," Gattuso said. "He deserves everything he's done lately. Right now he's a player showing great things."

Still, Napoli's all-time leading scorer Mertens remains the first choice at center forward and the Belgium international showed why when he curled a shot from the edge of the area into the bottom corner to put Napoli ahead in first-half added time.

Shortly after the break, Edoardo Gollaniga equalized for Genoa with a header.

Freshly crowned Italian Cup champion Napoli has lost only one match of the restart. This win meant the Partenopei remained level on points with fifth-place Roma, which beat Parma 2-1.

"We're doing well and I'm satisfied with the team but I want even more of a competitive mentality," Gattuso said. "You don't get anywhere with technical skills alone. Soccer is made up of a lot of components, both physical and mental."

Genoa remained one point from safety.

Atalanta moved provisionally into third place with a 2-0 win over visiting Sampdoria courtesy of late strikes from Rafael Tolói and Luis Muriel.

Atalanta has won all six of its games in the restart and extended its overall winning streak to a club-record nine matches.

Atalanta moved two points ahead of Inter Milan, which visits Hellas Verona on Thursday, and within two points of second-place Lazio, which lost at Lecce on Tuesday.

Both goals came following corners: first a header from Tolói, then an accurate shot from Muriel, his 17th of the season - 10 of which have come as a substitute.

Up next for Atalanta: a visit Saturday to eight-time defending Italian champion Juventus, which squandered a two-goal lead in a wild 4-2 loss at AC Milan on Tuesday.

Roma ended a three-match losing streak with a 2-1 comeback win over Parma. After Juraj Kucka's penalty for Parma, Roma hit back with goals from Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Jordan Veretout.

Also, Sassuolo moved up to eighth by beating Bologna 2-1 in an Emilia-Romagna derby with goals from Domenico Berardi and Lukáš Haraslin; Torino came back to defeat relegation-threatened Brescia 3-1 with scores from Simone Verdi, Andrea Belotti and Simone Zaza; and Fiorentina was held 0-0 at home by Cagliari.

In another night of protests from the benches, both Sampdoria coach Claudio Ranieri and Bologna counterpart Siniša Mihajlović were sent off.



Atalanta's Hans Hateboer heads the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Atalanta and Sampdoria at the Gewiss Stadium in Bergamo, Italy on July 8. (AP)

Orlando City beat Inter Miami 2-1

MLS returns to action after poignant moment of silence

KISSIMMEE, Florida, July 9, (AP) — Nani called it beautiful and emotional. He wasn't talking about either goal he played a part in during Orlando City's 2-1 victory over Inter Miami.

Nearly 200 players took the field for an 8-minute, 46-second moment of silence to protest racial injustice before Major League Soccer's return to action. Players wore black T-shirts, black gloves and black facemasks emblazoned with Black Lives Matter. The shirts had varying slogans that included Black And Proud, Silence Is Violence and Black All The Time.

The players walked toward midfield, raised their right arms one at a time and held the pose so long that some could be seen stretching fatigued muscles afterward.

It was a poignant moment that put two of the nation's most prominent changes over the last four months - masks and movements - at the forefront of the sport's return.

The group setting the tone was formerly called the Black Players Coalition of MLS but changed its name this week to Black Players for Change. Originally announced on June 15, the group started in the wake of George Floyd's death with the hope of combating systemic racism both in soccer and the players' communities. The league and the players' union endorsed the organization.

Several other players from Orlando

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City and Inter Miami took a knee near midfield during the demonstration.

The two in-state teams delivered their own moment of silence by taking a knee along with the referee and the line judges just before the opening kick.

The national anthem was not played before or after the demonstration. MLS previously said it would not be played because no fans were in attendance.

Floyd, a Black man, died May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes. Prosecutors said that a police officer had his knee on the neck of Floyd for 7 minutes, 46 seconds - not the 8:46 that has become a symbol of police brutality.

MLS players had weeks to decide what to do prior to the MLS is Back tournament at ESPN's Wide World of Sports complex at Disney World.

The league's teams are sequestered in resorts for the duration of the World Cup-style tournament, which began



Orlando City's Hjegson Mendez (8) heads the ball next to Inter Miami's Lee Nguyen during the second half of an MLS soccer match on July 8 in Kissimmee, Florida. (AP)

with a Group A match that was the first meeting between two Sunshine State teams.

FC Dallas withdrew Monday after 10 players and a coach tested positive for COVID-19. A day later, Nashville SC's status was thrust into doubt with five confirmed positive tests.

Nashville was supposed to play Chicago in the second game of a doubleheader Wednesday but it was postponed.

MLS shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic on March 12, after the league's teams had each played two regular-season games.

The reboot had a considerably different feel - without fans and with plenty of concern even amid a safety bubble.

But 25 teams that include nearly 700 players plus coaches, trainers and other support staff do everything right for a month? And what's the threshold for more positive tests?

The NFL, the NBA and Major League Baseball surely have a close eye on what's happening outside Orlando.

The NBA should get an up-close look. The league already has part of its bubble established at the sprawling ESPN venue. NBA team flags fly on every flagpole, and some areas have been sanitized and cordoned off for basketball's return later this month.

MLS is using three fields near the back of the complex, two of the ones the NFL used for Pro Bowl practices the last four years. The league man-

OL Reign edge Utah Royals 1-0

Sky Blue defeat Dash for 1st win of Challenge Cup

HERRIMAN, Utah, July 9, (AP) — Paige Monaghan and Nahomi Kawasumi scored to give Sky Blue FC a 2-0 victory over the Houston Dash in the National Women's Soccer League's Challenge Cup tournament.

Monaghan scored Sky Blue's first goal of the tournament in the 17th minute, when Dash goalkeeper Jane Campbell came out of the goal and Monaghan slipped around her on the

run for a shot into an empty net.

Kawasumi also caught Campbell out of goal to put Sky Blue up 2-0 in the 34th minute. It was the team's first win of the group stage at Zions Bank Stadium.

Sky Blue, based in New Jersey, was playing in Utah without U.S. national team players Carli Lloyd and Mallory Pugh, who are both nursing injuries.

It was the first loss of the tournament for the Dash, who were a surprise of the Challenge Cup after finishing seventh in the league last season. Houston co-captain Rachel Daly has two goals and an assist.

With Sky Blue's victory, the North

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Carolina Courage secured the top seed for the knockout round of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Bethany Balcer scored in stoppage time and OL Reign defeated the Utah Royals 1-0 in the National Women's Soccer League's Challenge Cup tournament.

It was the Reign's first victory in three group-stage Challenge Cup matches played without fans at Zions Bank Stadium.

Balcer's header came off Nicole Mommiki's well-placed cross in the 91st minute. Royals goalkeeper Nicole Barnhart appeared to get a hand on the ball, but she couldn't keep it out of the net. Barnhart was starting for Utah after Abby Smith started in the team's first two games.

Reyes had trouble breathing as teammates and the referee called for help.

Adding to the growing concern on the field, the emergency crew got hung up trying to gain access to him.

Security personnel struggled to open a gate, delaying the medical team's response. It was slow enough that one of Reyes' teammates, Juan Agudelo, ran across the field to help and ended up assisting in pulling the stretcher across the soggy grass.

Miami coach Diego Alonso said afterward that he had "no information" on Reyes' condition.

Padres Mateo out

Giants return, so do some players

WASHINGTON, July 9, (AP) — As Major League Baseball cautiously tiptoes closer toward beginning its delayed 2020 season, several teams welcomed back players who might have been exposed to the coronavirus, and the San Francisco Giants resumed workouts after finally receiving the results of COVID-19 tests administered over the weekend.

The San Diego Padres, however, revealed that newly acquired infielder Jorge Mateo's intake test for coronavirus came back positive and he's experienced symptoms. Mateo was obtained last week from Oakland for a player to be named or cash in the first trade since the transaction freeze was lifted.

Padres manager Jayce Tingler said Mateo has not been to the ballpark and is self-isolating.

San Diego announced last week that outfielder Tommy Pham tested positive for coronavirus and was asymptomatic. He has not yet rejoined the team.

In Boston, third baseman Rafael Devers practiced at Fenway Park for the first time since the Red Sox opened summer camp.

Devers and an unspecified number of other players were working out at nearby Boston College and have since tested negative three times.

When tests reveal "pending" or inconclusive results, the Red Sox have decided to keep those players out of full-team workouts - even if a player hasn't had a positive test.

Devers batted .311 with a league-leading 54 doubles, 32 homers and 111 RBIs in 2019. He is scheduled to get a few at-bats when the Red Sox hold their first intrasquad scrimmage on Thursday.

The Giants, meanwhile, resumed workouts at Oracle Park after receiving test results from Saturday, all of which were negative for players and staff. A delay in receiving the outcome of those tests forced the club to cancel practice Tuesday.

Devers wasn't the only player in the big leagues to get a late start joining his team.

Texas Rangers first baseman Ronald Guzman was on the field Wednesday after missing the first five days of workouts. Although he was at the facility, he wasn't cleared for workouts while still going through intake screening.

The only Texas players still not cleared to participate are right fielder Joey Gallo and left-hander Brett Martin, both of whom tested positive for coronavirus.

In Cleveland, outfielder Frammil Reyes was cleared by the team's medical staff to return to the field after being isolated for attending a party over the July 4 weekend.

The Indians kept Reyes away from Progressive Field after he attended a holiday gathering without wearing a mask. The Indians learned of Reyes' off-field actions on a social media posting.

Manager Terry Francona said Reyes was re-tested and can now participate in the team's training camp.

Also, Indians outfielder Delino DeShields Jr., who tested positive for COVID-19, is traveling to Cleveland after he had one negative test. He will be tested again when he arrives.

DeShields is in his first season with the Indians, who acquired him in December from Texas in the trade involving ace Corey Kluber.

In Oakland, right-hander Mike Fiers returned to the field for workouts after being delayed by what manager Bob Melvin referred to as a "pending issue," which wasn't injury-related. Fiers pitched his second career no-hitter last season and was the whistle-blower in the Houston Astros' sign-stealing scandal last fall.

The defending AL champions Astros were without infielder Alex Bregman on Wednesday because his test results were delayed.

Pittsburgh Pirates reliever Hector Noesi has opted out of the season after speaking with his family. The 33-year-old, who pitched for Miami last year, was attempting to make the team as a non-roster invitee. Pittsburgh manager Derek Shelton said closer Keone Kela has yet to practice with the team but declined to elaborate on the reason for Kela's absence.

The Cubs has thus far avoided any positive tests, a development outfielder Kyle Schwarber insists cannot be attributed to mere luck.



Mateo