

Beat: Sports

Tokyo beats Istanbul and Madrid to host 2020 Olympic Games

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USPA News - The Japanese capital of Tokyo was chosen Saturday to host the 2020 Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee announced after a secret ballot, beating rival bids from the Turkish city of Istanbul and the Spanish capital of Madrid. The secret ballot by members of the IOC took place in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, during the 125th IOC Session.

It took a total of three rounds of voting to choose the winner, after Istanbul and Madrid both received the same number of votes during the first round of voting. "Congratulations to the city of Tokyo on its election as host of the 2020 Olympic Games," said IOC President Jacques Rogge, whose 12-year term in office comes to an end next week. "Tokyo presented a very strong technical bid from the outset - and it needed to in competition with two such high-caliber bids from Istanbul and Madrid." During a question-and-answer session earlier on Saturday, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was asked about the recent leaks and radiation problems at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant, which was damaged by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that triggered the world's worst nuclear accident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. The question was in response to a serious incident last month in which highly contaminated water was found to be leaking from a tank, causing radiation levels near the bottom of a storage tank to reach 1,800 millisieverts per hour. But Abe assured the IOC members that the situation is under control, and that the nuclear plant "has never done and never will do any damage to Tokyo." Tokyo previously hosted the 1964 Summer Olympics while the Japanese cities of Sapporo and Nagano hosted the Winter Olympics in 1972 and 1998, respectively. Tokyo was also chosen to host the Summer Olympics in 1940 but later notified the IOC that it would be unable to host the Games due to the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the event was eventually canceled due to the outbreak of World War II. Neither Istanbul nor Madrid have had experience with hosting the Summer Olympics, although the Spanish city of Barcelona hosted the Summer Olympics in 1992. Istanbul lost four previous bids to host the event while Madrid lost three previous bids, the most recent one being for the 2016 Summer Olympics. "All three cities were capable of staging excellent Games in 2020," Rogge said. "But in the end it was Tokyo's bid that resonated the most with the IOC membership, inviting us to `discover tomorrow` by delivering a well-organized and safe Games that will reinforce the Olympic values while demonstrating the benefits of sport to a new generation." Tokyo received 42 votes during the first round, with rivals Istanbul and Madrid both receiving 26 votes each, after which Madrid was eliminated after losing a tie-breaker 45 to 49. The Japanese capital, which previously lost its bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics, received 60 votes to Istanbul's 36 in the third and final round. The bidding process for the 2020 event began in September 2011, when National Olympic Committees were required to notify the IOC if a city within their jurisdiction was interested in applying to host the Games. The cities that came forward were Baku in Azerbaijan, Doha in Qatar, Istanbul in Turkey, Madrid in Spain, Rome in Italy, and Tokyo in Japan. The six cities then proceeded to Phase 1 during which the IOC conducted a technical review of cities to determine if they would be able to host the massive sports event. But just months before the IOC was due to select the cities that would become Candidate Cities and move on to Phase 2, Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti announced in February 2012 that Rome would withdraw its bid, citing uncertain costs and unknown financial benefit. The 2020 Olympics in Tokyo are scheduled to be held from July 25 to August 9, 2020, during which the average high in the capital is about 29 degrees Celsius (85 degrees Fahrenheit). If Doha had been chosen as the host city, it would have requested the event to be held at the end of October and the start of November.

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