
Rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympics to open on July 23 in 2021

By: Michael Pavitt
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The rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games will open on July 23 next year, with the Closing Ceremony taking place on August 8.

Agreement was reached by Tokyo 2020 and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on the new dates for the Games today.

Dates in both the northern hemisphere spring and summer had been considered by organisers, following the declaration last week that the Games would take place "no later than summer 2021" because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The schedule of July 23 to August 8 was believed to be favoured.

Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori spoke in favour of summer dates last week, while IOC Coordination Commission chair John Coates had said the organisation was working with International Federations to find a window in July and August next year.

Full confirmation was given by Mori and Tokyo 2020 chief executive Toshiro Muto in the Japanese capital today.

This year's Olympics were due to begin on July 24 and run to August 9.

The Paralympic Games will take place from August 24 to September 5.

The original schedule for both Games now looks set to shift one day, following confirmation of the new dates.

"IOC President Thomas Bach and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee held a conference call today to discuss in detail the revised dates of the Tokyo 2020 Games," said Mori.

"Minister for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games Hashimoto Seiko and Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko joined the call.

"I proposed that the Games should be hosted between July and August 2021, and I really appreciate that President Bach, having discussed this proposal with the various international sports federations and other related organisations, kindly accepted my proposal.

"A certain amount of time is required for the selection and qualification of athletes and for their training and preparation, and the consensus was that staging the rescheduled Games during the summer vacation in Japan would be preferable.

"In terms of transport, arranging volunteers and the provision of tickets for those in Japan and overseas, as well as allowing for the COVID-19 situation, we think that it would be better to reschedule the Games to one year later than planned, in the summer of 2021.

"Notwithstanding the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for the first time in history, and various other issues that have already been highlighted, the event schedule is the cornerstone of future preparations, and I am convinced that taking this decision promptly will help speed up future preparations.

"I would like to thank all the stakeholders, including the host city Tokyo and the Government of Japan, for their hard work during this short period.

"The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee will continue to work hard for the success of next year's Games."



"I want to thank the International Federations for their unanimous support and the Continental Associations of National Olympic Committees for the great partnership and their support in the consultation process over the last few days," Bach said.

"I would also like to thank the IOC Athletes' Commission, with whom we have been in constant contact.

"With this announcement, I am confident that, working together with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Japanese Government and all our stakeholders, we can master this unprecedented challenge.

"Humankind currently finds itself in a dark tunnel.

"These Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 can be a light at the end of this tunnel."

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and IOC President Thomas Bach agreed to postpone the Olympic Games last week.

The decision came amid mounting pressure from athletes and National Olympic Committees, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Concerns were raised over health risks, as well as athletes access to training facilities and the uncertain qualification pathway for the Games.

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons also welcomed confirmation of the dates of the Paralympic Games, saying it provides certainty and reassurance.

"It is fantastic news that we could find new dates so quickly for the Tokyo 2020 Games," Parsons said.

"The new dates provide certainty for the athletes, reassurance for the stakeholders and something to look forward to for the whole world.

"When the Paralympic Games do take place in Tokyo next year, they will be an extra-special display of humanity uniting as one, a global celebration of human resilience and a sensational showcase of sport.

"With the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games 512 days away, the priority for all those involved in the Paralympic Movement must be to focus on staying safe with their friends and family during this unprecedented and difficult time."



Tokyo 2020 and the IOC say the dates have the "added benefit that any disruption that the postponement will cause to the international sports calendar can be kept to a minimum", which they say is in the interests of the athletes and the International Federations.

The dates, it is claimed, will provide sufficient time to finish the qualification process.

A knock-on effect from the date confirmation is now expected, with several International Federations already having indicated their events will move to create space in the sport calendar for the rescheduled Olympics.

World Athletics have already confirmed the governing body would be flexible with the dates of the World Athletics Championships, which are currently scheduled to take place in Oregon from August 6 to 15.

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe said last week the World

Championships could be moved to 2022 to accommodate the Olympic Games.

“If we were to hold the next World Championships in 2022, a year after the Games, you would have the next ones in 2023, and then be in the Olympic Games in 2024,” Coe said.

“You would have athletics centre stage for four consecutive years...I think we could live with that, and that athletes could live with that.

“But it is still a matter for consideration.”

The World Swimming Championships are currently scheduled to take place from July 16 to August 1 in the Japanese city of Fukuoka.

The International Swimming Federation also pledged last week to be flexible regarding the dates of its major event, but has ruled out the prospect of postponing the competition to 2022.

Confirmation of the exact dates for the first Olympic Games to be postponed in history was the first key area for organisers to solve.

It is expected the confirmation of the dates will allow the focus to move to other key areas, including venues and qualification.

Concern over the high summer temperatures in Tokyo will remain, following confirmation of the new dates of the Games.

Heat concerns were cited by the IOC in November, when the organisation pushed through decision to move the Olympic marathon and race walk events to Sapporo.
