

Rowers Stay the Course Despite Lurking Weeds

Despite serious concerns over weeds threatening the Olympic rowing competition, the president of the International Rowing Federation tells Around the Rings the regatta is a success.

"We had a lot of problems with the weeds on many stretches of water. Some days we nearly had to postpone races," Denis Oswald said Sunday at the conclusion of competition at the Shunyi Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park.

"We had a few protests. But if you miss qualification for the final sometimes it may be easy to say it's because of the weeds," commented the IOC member from Switzerland.

"We had to put scuba divers at the start to make sure the boats were clean." There were no such issues at Athens 2004, he confirmed.

Oswald said the weeds shooting up from the bed of the course came too close to the surface in some areas and threatened to interfere with the rowing strokes of competitors.

The problem arose because the weeds were cut too soon before the Olympics, allowing them to grow back. With cables running along and across the 2 km course, there was no opportunity to utilize a machine to chop the weeds down.

"One night, 200 soldiers were pulling up the weeds," stated Oswald, adding that FISA and BOCOG had to deploy others to help with the task on one of the first days of competition.

Resolute Iraqi Delegation Flies Nation's Flag in Beijing

A small team of Iraqis represents its resurgent country at the Beijing Olympics, while national Olympic committee leaders face new elections with a wary Iraqi government watching.

A team of four athletes, two in athletics, two in rowing, paraded with team officials in the Aug. 8 opening ceremony.

Chef de mission Tiras Odisho told Around the Rings "it is still important for them to be here, no matter how they finish in the competition."

PHOTO OF THE DAY



© Getty Images

China's Wang Hao exhibits maximum focus in a men's team table tennis semi-final. / Getty Images

Venue staff and event organizers spent another morning collecting weeds from the surface; fortunately, racing was scheduled for the afternoon.

"That was the biggest challenge. Apart from that, it was a very good regatta. The venue is fantastic. The weather conditions were very good," Oswald remarked, noting the one black mark: a thunderstorm

that forced the regatta to be rescheduled on Friday.

Some uncollected weeds floating on the surface of the flatwater area did upset some rowers.

Theo Fledderus, the secretary general of the Dutch national Olympic committee, highlighted the weed problem as a concern through the week of

(continued, page 10)

NOC SPOTLIGHT

There would be no hope for Iraq, however; after their final athlete, discus thrower Haidar Nasser Shaheed, failed to advance to the finals.

A month ago, there was great doubt whether any Iraqis would be in Beijing, especially when the names of no athletes were submitted by the July 23 deadline.

It didn't help that the IOC had suspended the Iraq

NOC in June after the government announced the disbanding of the committee leadership, replacing them with hand-picked officials from the Ministry for Youth and Sport.

Negotiations at the end of July produced an agreement with the government and the IOC that allowed Iraq to send a small squad to Beijing. The agreement calls for elections later this year to elect new leadership for Iraq's national sports federations, to be followed by a vote for new NOC leaders.

(continued, page 7)

Inside

Olympex Unites Collectors - Page 3

On The Scene In Beijing - Page 9

Event of the Day: Badminton - Page 11

全世界同处一方 分享同一梦想

全世界各民族参加一个和平竞赛，庆祝我们拥有一个美好并充满青春活力的世界。这次，巴西有史以来最大的奥运代表团热切希望能亲身感受奥林匹克的价值，并且荣幸地期待上百万的巴西体育爱好者的支持。

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Expanded Olympex Attracts (Mostly Chinese) Collectors, Traders

Visitors to Olympex, the Olympic Expo Beijing 2008, collected more than memories during the 10-day show at the Beijing Exhibition Center.

About 80,000 individuals roamed 10 crowded exhibit halls full of people trading, buying, selling, photographing and simply gawking. Many spent time waiting in a long line outside the building to get special stamps with cancellations.

By 12:30 p.m. on Monday, the last day of the show, the Japan Post booth was completely empty. It had sold out.

"It's crazy; it's fantastic," David Maiden told Around the Rings.

Maiden, an Australian, worked in conjunction with the IOC and China Post to organize Olympex.



David Maiden, who helped organize the show. (ATR)

"This has succeeded all expectations," he stated. "It's a massive success."

Maiden said he attended expos during Olympic Games in Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney and Athens. "This is so far superior," he remarked.

He credited China Post for its attention to detail, such as picking trade booth owners up at the airport.

The Olympic Expo, created by former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, was jointly sponsored by the IOC, BOCOG, the Chinese Olympic Committee and China Post. In the past, the expo was known as Olympihelix, a nod to its emphasis on philately, or the study of stamps. This expo was broader in scope.

A Museum Experience

The most popular displays contained items most people will never see, much less own. The Olympic Museum in Lausanne loaned a breathtaking and unprecedented display of Olympic medals and torches - one from each Games, including a rare Helsinki torch that is one of 12 known to exist. Another Helsinki torch sold at auction recently for about \$150,000.

The IOC also loaned a section of items from the ancient Olympics, national uniforms from previous opening ceremonies and artwork including sculptures and paintings.

In another hall, about a dozen sponsors, including

postal services in China, London and Vancouver, had large showcase booths. So did China Golddeal Investment Co., Ltd. Heng Yuan Xiang (HYX) showed off its needlepoint portraits of past and present IOC presidents.

"The idea was just to inject the broader Olympic spirit," Maiden said.

He said the non-stamp items appeal to a broader cross section of the general public and he expects London to follow the same example in four years.

"I call it a new beginning," Maiden predicted.

Import Taxes Lifted

Inside Coca-Cola's pin-trading center, also a part of Olympex, negotiations were intense. "Trade a pin, share the shuang," declared a sign. Visitors also posed for photos with a Beijing Olympic torch.

Next door, about 40 trade booth owners from all over the world did a brisk business.

Tonke Schneider, representing German Post, remarked to ATR that Chinese customers asked mostly for Olympic stamps.

"They haven't had many opportunities to buy foreign stamps yet," he explained to ATR.

One of the benefits of the show for dealers was its status as an Olympic cultural event. That meant there was no import tax on items dealers sold, giving them a better margin to help cover the costs of traveling to China.

Mostly Chinese Visitors

Although there were some foreigners, the crowd was predominantly Chinese.

"I was expecting to see a fair number of foreign visitors. There have been hardly any, probably because they didn't know about it," David Fletcher of Mint Coins Ltd. from Coventry, England, informed ATR.



The Coca-Cola pin trading center in Beijing's Exhibition Center. Coke introduced the trading center concept at the 1988 Calgary Games. (ATR)

"Few foreigners could get tickets. You had to apply online before arriving in China and then arrange to pick them up."

Chinese visitors could pick up a ticket at their local post office.

"The Chinese people are great museum-goers," explained Fletcher, who spends six months of the year living in Beijing. "They want to learn."

Yang Yongsheng, director of the media and publicity division for China Post, said China has about 2 million stamp collectors. He added that about 8,000 people a day visited Olympex.

Maiden says he had NOCs ask for tickets, but couldn't help them.

The lack of foreigners could be considered a criticism of the expo, Maiden acknowledged, but it's hard to find fault when the show is sold out. He said he hopes London publicizes it more so it can bring in more people from around the world.

Well-known visitors included Marjorie Jackson, the great Aussie Olympian, and Harry Gordon, the official historian for the Australia Olympic Committee. "He's gob-smacked," Maiden said.

- ATR Staff

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An advertisement for NORTH design advertising new media. It features a black and white photograph of a fencer in a white uniform and mask, holding a sword. The text "YOUR BRAND TO THE POWER OF" is above the word "NORTH" in large white letters. To the right of "NORTH" is the text "design advertising new media". At the bottom, there is a blue bar with the text "Sochi 2014 | Moscow 2012 | Moscow 2010 | Doha 2016 | BHP Billiton | Detroit Red Wings" and the website "northdesign.com" in the bottom right corner.



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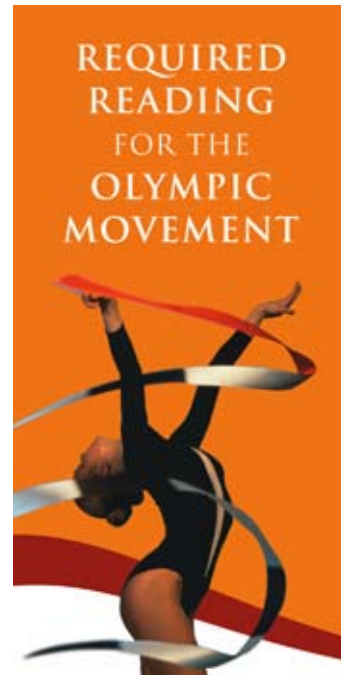
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Today's Highlights

- **8 a.m.** - Squash, golf, softball and baseball present their argument to be included in the Olympic Games at the Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast on the McDonald's in the Olympic Green.
- **5 p.m.** - British Columbia party night, open to the public at British Columbia Pavilion.
- **5:30 p.m.** - Right to Play presentation at Johnson and Johnson Pavilion.
- **6 p.m.** - Presentation of the Coca Cola Live Positively Award at Shuang Experience Center.

Quote of the Day

"There's nothing like running scared."



- Australian gold medalist in the women's triathlon, **Emma Snowsill**, on the final race leg

Main Press Centre

- **11 a.m.** - Joint IOC/BOCOG press briefing.

Beijing International Media Center

www.2008bimc.cn

- **10 a.m.** - Press conference on Sichuan post-disaster Reconstruction and Economic Development, Hall 1.
- **12 p.m.** - Press conference on Meteorological Monitoring in Beijing, Hall 1.
- **2 p.m.** - Press conference on China's Energy Situation and International Cooperation, Hall 1.

Coming Up!

- **Aug 23, 8 a.m.** - Representatives from the four 2016 bid cities will discuss their bid to host the Games at the Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast.
Venue: McDonald's, Olympic Green, north end.

2008 Medal Projections

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
U.S.	45	24	34	103	Japan	8	8	16	32
China	44	18	29	91	Netherlands	6	5	8	19
Russia	30	29	26	85	Ukraine	5	7	8	20
Germany	19	13	20	52	Poland	4	8	5	16
Great Britain	19	11	17	47	Canada	4	6	5	15
Australia	11	11	16	37	Kenya	4	5	4	13
Italy	10	12	11	33	Romania	4	5	3	12
Korea	10	12	9	31	Czech Republic	4	5	2	11
Spain	9	4	10	23	Cuba	3	9	6	18
France	8	13	15	36	Hungary	3	6	6	15

Based on results in recent World Championships. Projections are by Luciano Barra, former director of sport for the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), and deputy CEO of TOROC 2006. Barra has been projecting medal counts for 10 years by analyzing past performances.



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Bidding in Beijing: We Don't Influence 2016 Host City Choice, Sponsors Say

Major Olympic sponsors say they do not try to influence decisions on which city hosts future Games.

Representatives from three key Olympics partners – GE, McDonald's and Panasonic – told an Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast on Sunday they do not interfere in the bid process.

The headquarters of McDonald's is near Chicago, but vice president of global marketing Johan Jervoe doesn't have any favorites among the 2016 bid cities – Chicago, Madrid, Tokyo and Rio.

"Yes, we are based in Chicago, but we are also based in Tokyo," he told reporters and guests at the event.

"We have a significant presence in Spain and obviously it comes as no surprise that we are in Rio de Janeiro, too.

"We do not call the IOC. It is clearly not our role and I'll be happy – I'm from Denmark – when the result is decided in Copenhagen next October, whoever it goes to."

Peter Foss, GE general manager for enterprise selling, said his company abides by IOC regulations forbidding bid city contact, but has no problem revealing his personal favorite.

"We're not allowed to interface with bid cities in terms of any attempt to influence the result, Foss explained.

"So we actually have very little contact with anyone from the bid cities. Those are the regulations and we abide by them.

"But as a U. S. citizen, I'd love to be able to go to Chicago."

The leader of Panasonic's worldwide Olympic marketing



Johan Jervoe of McDonald's. (ATR)

said he is not necessarily swayed by the prospect of being able to catch a bullet train from his headquarters in Osaka, if the Tokyo bid succeeds.

"We are the worldwide sponsors, so we are not putting pressure for the IOC to select Tokyo," Panasonic's Ken Yoshida said.

"We have customers all over the world – it's different from my personal view – but as a company, we are happy with whichever city is selected."

- Anthony Stavrinis

Iraq NOC Awaits Elections

(continued from cover)

The two men serving as president and secretary general of the National Olympic Committee of Iraq have been doing so on a provisional basis since 2006 when the duly-elected president and secretary general were kidnapped in a brazen raid on a meeting of the NOCI. President Ahmed Al Sammarai and two dozen of his NOC colleagues have not been heard from since.



Iraq chef de mission Tiras Odisho says Iraq still needs investment in sport infrastructure. He talked with leaders of the International Triathlon Union in Beijing. (ATR)




This is the second team Iraq has sent to the Olympics following the fall of Saddam Hussein and his son Uday Hussein, who was the leader of the NOC. The IOC suspended that NOC in 2003; it was re-formed in early 2004, in time to allow Iraq to compete at the Athens Games. In 2004, the squad numbered more than 50 as it included the men's football team, which almost won the bronze medal of the tournament.

- Anthony Stavrinis



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On the Scene in Beijing: A Fallen Star Devastates China

China's dream of Liu Xiang defending his Olympic title on home soil is shattered. Liu hobbled away from the starting blocks of his heat in the 110-meter hurdles.



BOCOG Vice President Wang Wei and IOC Communications Director Giselle Davies. (ATR)

The tears flowed as thousands of fans mourned the shocking exit of 25-year-old Liu – one of the principal faces of the Olympics – at the Bird's Nest stadium and across the nation.

The 91,000 crowd was stunned into silence as China's best hope of athletics gold pulled up after a false start in his heat, grimacing with pain and clutching his right leg.

Burdened with the weight of the country's expectations, Liu had been struggling to shake off an Achilles tendon injury in recent weeks and he never looked comfortable in the warm-up to his eagerly-anticipated appearance.

The stadium emptied quickly soon after his departure down the trackside tunnel.

"Surprise, pity and sadness... It seems that no words can describe our mood now. However, no one could feel the pain more than Liu Xiang," wrote one Chinese commentator.

"I came here especially to see him. I am devastated. I just bought one ticket. The Olympics is over for me



International Squash Federation President Jahangir Khan, president emeritus Susie Simcock and IOC member and former federation President Tunku Imran of Malaysia visit ATR Beijing office. (ATR)

as well as Liu Xiang," one dejected fan told Agence France-Presse.

Liu's coach Sun Haiping broke down in tears at a press conference as he explained the nature of the hurdler's heel injury. Liu became an icon in China after claiming the country's first track gold at Athens 2004.

IOC, BOCOG Cancel Co-Commission Meetings

Organizers of the Beijing Olympics take the unprecedented step of cancelling a week of meetings where the daily progress of the Games is monitored.

Declaring that "the IOC is very relaxed and happy," IOC Communications Director Giselle Davies says that by mutual consent, BOCOG and the IOC have ended their daily meeting of the coordination commission. This group of IOC members, staff and BOCOG leaders began the Olympics meeting daily at the Beijing Hotel, but then moved to an every-other-day schedule when few problems came up to solve.

The day before the Games end, Aug. 23, is the next scheduled meeting for the commission, eight days after the group's last meeting Aug. 15.

"It very much reflects the very relaxed and happy position the IOC is in terms of how we view the success of the Games," explained Davies.



Staff of the medical clinic at the Main Press Center. (ATR)

While gaps between meetings of a day or two have become commonplace at the Games, Davies confirms that eight days is an unprecedented development.

She added that should issues occur, the commission is available to meet. But she also noted that IOC and BOCOG staff do work together on a continual basis outside of formal meetings.

Davies spoke at the joint IOC/BOCOG briefing which resumed after a two-day absence. Unless news breaks out, the next briefing is set for Aug. 20, with an every-other-day schedule to follow.

Where's Jacques?

IOC President Jacques Rogge visited the equestrian venues in Hong Kong on Monday. Rogge witnessed jumping events at the Shatin facility.



Liu Xiang bows out of the Olympics with an injury. / Getty Images

Beijing by the Numbers

The medical clinic at the Main Press Center said that by midday Aug. 18, more than 1,630 patients will have been treated since opening last month. The clinic is staffed by students, nurses and doctors from the Beijing Hospital.

Britain in Good Shape for London 2012

British Olympic Association Chairman Colin Moynihan tells ATR that the Beijing Olympics can be the inspiration to achieve fourth place in the medal table at London 2012 after a golden weekend for Team GB.

"It's a fantastic performance all-around. I think the overall performance, the strength of funding, the attention to detail [and] the preparations have all been first-rate," he said.

"We have got another week to go here, but it clearly motivates the team with London 2012 in sight."

Team GB had bagged 11 golds and 26 medals by late Monday; Britain started the day sitting third in the medals table behind the U.S. and China after winning 17 medals over the weekend. They have surpassed their nine golds from Athens in 2004 to equal the gold medal tally of 11 from Sydney.

"The team has come very well prepared, it has delivered," Moynihan told ATR. "We have seen a whole series of outstanding personal bests."

Moynihan applauded the Chinese, but insisted London 2012 organizers can match the Beijing Olympics in all areas.

- Ed Hula and Mark Bisson

'Absolutely Magnificent' Rowing Despite Weeds

(continued from cover)

competition, saying it may have hindered the chances of his men's four qualifying for the final; they were a big medal prospect.

"When you say 'what can be the problem', it is the only thing I can imagine," he told ATR.

Nevertheless, Fledderus was all smiles and "a little flabbergasted" after the women's eight grabbed silver in a closely fought contest. The team failed to medal four years ago in Athens and Fledderus was hoping for bronze at most.

"It is a beautiful day for Holland," he extolled after the women relegated Romania to bronze by the finest of margins. "They had a difficult qualification, [but] the team [was] getting better and better."

There was plenty of Dutch orange support in the seven spectator stands on the other side of the water from the medal podiums. British rowing fans were also in good voice after Team GB won several medals on the water Sunday. However, the stands were only two-thirds full.

Fledderus paid tribute to BOCOG for delivering "fantastic" rowing facilities, saying the good weather aided rowers and produced quick times and the atmosphere added to the spectacle.

The British Olympic Association chair, Colin

Moynihan, was another wearing an ear-to-ear grin. And not just because Great Britain was sitting in third place in the medal table.

"They rowed very well. The Canadians were outstanding; they went out very, very strong, sustained their lead and resisted the pressure in the last 500m. Great performance by them and by the British eight," he told ATR.

"Every international rowing course is different: the setting, the wind conditions, the water. This is a fantastic course," he said.

Describing conditions Sunday as "absolutely magnificent" with a very slight tailwind making for fast times, he said: "If we have this sort of weather for London 2012, I will be very pleased."

Kieran Kerr, a rowing judge at his first Olympics, had only praise for BOCOG and the volunteers. "I found it very good. Everything we needed was here and the organization was absolutely top class," said Kerr, who has officiated at five world championships.

The Shunyi park, where canoe and kayak flatwater racing kicked off Monday, has 1,200 permanent seats, 13,800 temporary seats and space for a further 10,000 people.

As well as the 2 km competition course, the facility



Haidar Nozad and Hussein Jebur of the Iraqi Rowing Team. / Getty Images

includes a 1.7 km warm-up course. Canoe and kayak slalom racing were held at a 280 m course in the southwestern corner of the park last week.

Oswald was happy with the venue, which lies 36km from the Olympic Village. He said it's much bigger and with more space than the Schinias rowing complex used for the Athens Games.

Oswald certainly thinks London 2012 can deliver, but said London "should not try to compete or compare" with the Beijing facility.

- Mark Bisson

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Event of the Day: *Badminton Nets Big Gains*

Badminton is poised for a bright future after a successful Olympic tournament in Beijing and changes to its world governing council, a senior official says.

Badminton World Federation (BWF) Vice President Torsten Berg told *Around The Rings* he believes Beijing 2008 has been the best Olympics tournament for the sport.

Local enthusiasm for the sport was evident on Sunday night when China's He Hanbin and Yu Yang defeated Indonesia for the bronze medal in the mixed doubles.

In stark contrast to the controversial "phony spectators" mentioned in reports during the early stages of the Games, the crowd – almost all Chinese – was rowdy and apparently very familiar with the game and its rules.

Making a significant contribution to the ambience was the purpose-built venue, which has earned praise from Berg, especially for the technology it uses to control air movement.

"It is a tremendous facility," Berg declared to *Around the Rings*.

"I've been refereeing longer than anybody in the world and this is the best badminton venue I've ever seen – beautifully decorated, it's well-organized and playing conditions are superb."

Engineers spent several years modeling, designing, constructing and testing the \$1.5 million air control technology at the venue.

The custom-made, computer-controlled system pushes cool air into the gym through 9,100 small round vents built under spectators' seats.



Badminton Stadium Venue. / Getty Images

Berg also says the international council for the sport convened on Sunday and established an IOC Commission to facilitate better communication with the ruling global Olympics body.

"We have had quite a bit of turmoil in our federation over the last few years," he admitted.

"But this meeting all the decisions were unanimous, everyone was strongly behind our president Kang Young Joong.

Berg says it is the first time in more than a decade that the badminton Olympic tournament has been staged in a country with strong traditions in the sport.

"We were in Barcelona, we were in Atlanta – I was

the technical delegate for those two – we were in Sydney, of course, and then in Athens," he said.

"They are great cities in great nations, but they are not in great badminton nations."

He remarked that the sport now has a great opportunity to benefit from the momentum that will follow the Beijing Olympics.

"This is the first time we are in a great badminton city and we look forward to London; it's another great badminton city," Berg explained.

"We would love to see Great Britain do better on court and win a few medals like they did last time."

- Anthony Stavrinou

View full story at www.aroundtherings.com

"THE Go-to Source for Host-City Speculation"

Newsweek, October 16, 2006

"THE Comprehensive Olympic Web site"

Chicago Sun-Times, November 2007

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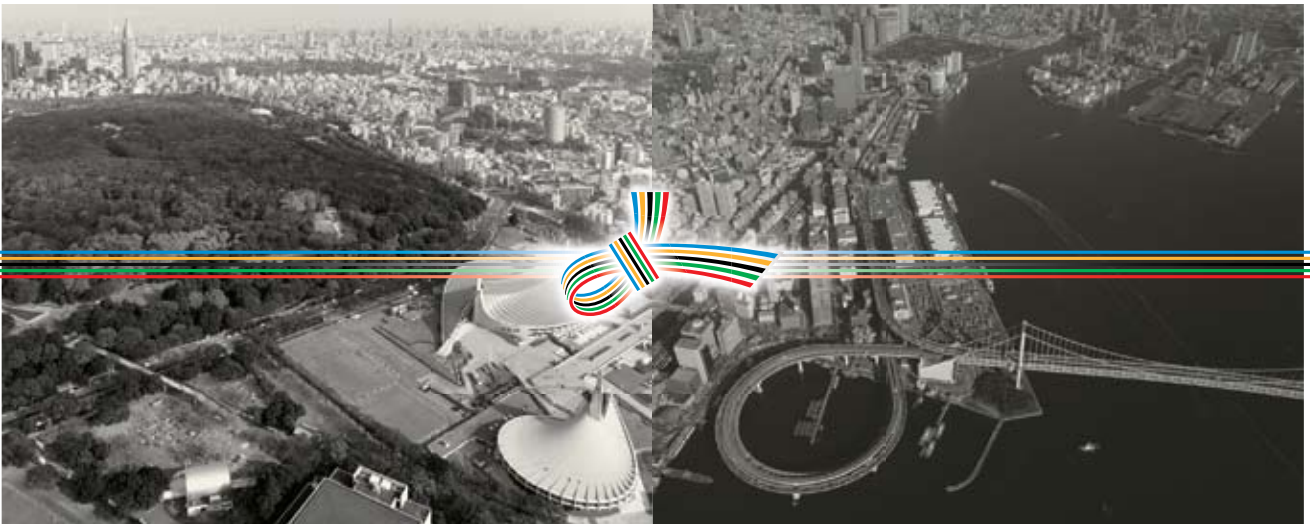
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