

Grading the Games: Beijing Strikes Highs and Lows

Accolades for Beijing should become a torrent in coming days. The Olympics close without a major glitch as this report card is written on the day before the 2008 closing ceremony.

World records, smooth transport and the ubiquitous smiling and solicitous volunteers all made Beijing a pleasure to visit this month.

At the same time, the Beijing Olympic canvas is not perfect. Distances to events, a dull atmosphere outside the venues and chronic media relations failures were among the difficulties.

Our grading of the Games is based on the experiences and observations of the Around the Rings staff in Beijing as well as what people have told us about their time in the Olympic city.

Relying on comments from athletes, spectators, sponsors and federations, we have assessed our grades using a well-rounded perspective of the Games.

And while most of the grading is based on what has happened since the opening on Aug. 8, pluses and minuses encountered in the lead-up to the Games figure into our report card, as well.

We grade these Games in six broad categories:

Atmosphere	C
People	A -
Operation	B +
Media	C +
Venues	A -
Sport	A
Overall	B

(complete details inside, page 3)



Guillermo Perez of Mexico (blue) against Juan Antonio Ramos of Spain in the taekwondo Men's -58kg semifinal. / Getty Images

PHOTO OF THE DAY

Rivals in 2016 Olympics Race Share Stage

Leaders of bid cities contending for the 2016 Olympics make their cases in the first joint media appearance by the candidates. They gather at the Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast sponsored by McDonald's.

The panel was comprised of Patrick Ryan of Chicago, Mercedes Coghén of Madrid, Carlos Nuzman from Rio de Janeiro, and Dr. Ichiro Kono of Tokyo.

Around the Rings Editor and Founder Ed Hula moderated.

Ed Hula (EH): Give us a brief idea, from each city, why the Olympics for you?

Patrick Ryan (PR): The city of Chicago is wildly passionate about hosting the Games. The people love sport and love to celebrate. We would have the Games right on the lakefront, in the center city, and

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91 percent of the athletes will be 15 minutes or less from the venues. Hotels and restaurants are right within walking distance.

Ichiro Kono (IK): Japan has a love affair with Olympic Games and, secondly, the Olympics bring inspiration to younger generations. Olympic Games would provide new facilities for the younger people of Japan. The Games will help transform Tokyo to the 21st century (and) provide a showcase to the Olympics.

Carlos Nuzman (CN): To show a result, it is much more effective in all aspects of life. Immediately after the Pan American Games, we were told it was best games ever on the Olympics level; this continent that has never had the Games. We don't want a gift, we have the merit. And the Brazilian government has given guarantees to the IOC.

(continued, page 5)

Inside

Crowded Basketball Venue - Page 7

On The Scene In Beijing - Page 9

Event of the Day: Athletics - Page 11



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The Rio 2016 Bid Committee and the Brazilian Olympic Committee would like to congratulate the Chinese people and the Beijing Organizing Committee for the excellent preparation of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, which will make the dreams of over 10,000 athletes from 205 National Olympic Committees come true.



Grading the Games: *Anti-pollution Measures Deliver for Beijing*

(continued from cover)

Atmosphere: C



Smog did not last. / Getty Images

Within the venues, the spectator experience was typical of Olympic Games with enthusiastic crowds and mostly full venues. But step outside, even to the Olympic Green which should have been an electric place for crowds to gather, the mood was muted. Only in the final days of the Games did the activity and excitement pick up on the Olympic Green.

London leaders found themselves promising a bit more fun for Olympic visitors in 2012 in response to the dull scene in Beijing.

Distances between venues also helped to isolate Olympic crowds from one another and made it tough to attend après-Games soirees.

However, there was outstanding use of landscapes, banners and building wraps throughout Beijing, like no other Olympic host city before.

In the category of Atmosphere, we will also include the air in Beijing, which defied expectations and offered a mostly pleasant setting for the Games, including sunny days and starry nights for the final days. Some rain days helped cool the city and clear the air. The government deserves praise for its work to reduce air pollution by limiting cars and shutting factories.

People: A -



A smiling volunteer. (ATR)

Maybe the most consistent positive comment about Beijing was made about the people of Beijing, whether volunteers, staff or people on the street. They truly made the world feel welcome.

Language was sometimes a barrier, but not impossible to overcome.

The fatal knife attack on two U.S. visitors on the first day of the Games remained an isolated incident and Chinese officials reacted with compassion.

But it wasn't the stabbing of tourists that led to a less than perfect score in this category for Beijing. Blame the taxi drivers for that. More times than not,

we found taxi drivers ill-prepared for the Olympics. They did not know how to reach venues or other spots in town. Their inability to communicate more than the cost of a ride was obvious. Fares were cheap compared to other world-class cities, but we'd pay more if their knowledge of the city was comparable to what London cabbies are required to deliver.

BOCOG staff we came in contact with for problem solving were always glad to help and effective finding solutions.

Operation: B+



Operations security / Getty Images

A smooth running Games overall, generally better than Games of recent vintage. Transportation moved athletes and media on thousands of bus trips without even a momentary meltdown. Public transit for spectators failed to get bogged down. Olympic lanes were a blessing for those able to use them.

Events began on time and weather-related postponements were handled easily.

Despite the concerns about how China would secure the Games, the presence of police, military and other security officers seemed no more obvious than past Games. New procedures for screening media and other credential holders reduced the number of passages through mag and bag screening, where the words "thank you for your cooperation" was the cue that a body wand was complete.

Objectionable was a requirement for mag and bag for media entering their residences in the two BOCOG-operated media villages, a requirement not imposed on people staying in hotels. Also offensive was the decision made one day to station an armored personnel carrier outside the Main Press Center. The tank was gone the next day.

Media: C+



The Main Press Centre (ATR)

Working conditions were among the best ever for media, but facilities alone do not make a great Olympics for journalists.

Press conferences of BOCOG and the IOC were often tedious meetings that tested the patience of both sides. While questions about human rights, protestors and Internet censorship might have had little to do with the staging of the Games, BOCOG was unprepared to deal with them in an effective way.

Changing the daily schedule of briefings to every other day came across as a scheme to avoid the press and exacerbated the media's distrust in both BOCOG and IOC.

Speaking of avoidance, where is Liu Qi, president of BOCOG? In every Olympics the OCOG president is a familiar face and willing to meet with the press when appropriate. Liu is a mystery man, despite his influential role in hosting the Games. His last known press conference with western media came more than two years ago.

We also give lower marks to BOCOG and the IOC for their inability to resolve issues over Tiananmen Square broadcasts by TV rights holders until just before the Games. And the IOC should never have let China have the upper hand on Internet access. The IOC host city contract must be strengthened in this regard.

Speaking of Internet access, the costs of Internet connections from the rate card for media seemed exorbitant, more than \$1,000 per month per wireless or ADSL connection.

We applaud China for easing up on its blackout of news reports on CNN, BBC and other international channels that are deemed unfavorable to China. With the media and the Beijing Olympics, it's been a mixed bag.

Venues: A -



Water Cube and Bird's Nest / Getty Images

About the only negative thing to say about the Beijing venues is the distance required to reach them from the Olympic Village/Main Press Center area. Judging from the comments of athletes and officials, the fields of play were at a high level of quality and no complaints were raised about venue conditions.

(continued, page 7)



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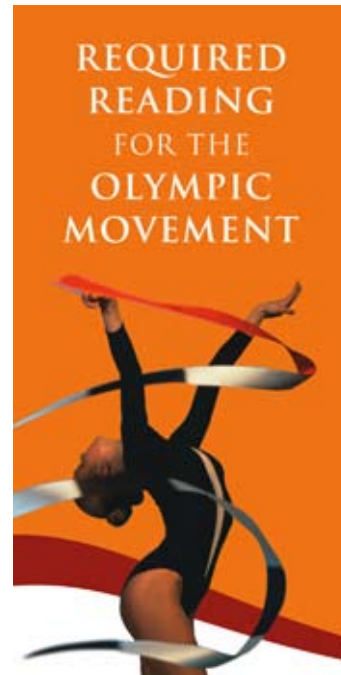
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Today's Highlights

- **3 p.m.** – Outgoing FIVB president Reuben Acosta formally transfers leadership to Wei Jizhong and addresses media and guests. Beijing Institute of Technology volleyball venue.
- **8 p.m.** – Closing ceremony at Bird's Nest Stadium.

Quote of the Day

"We have Federer and Nadal in tennis, LeBron James in basketball. We have the best cyclists. Ronaldinho is here in football. We want (the best) at the Games. We're not saying it should be an entire Major League team, but we want the top athletes here at the Olympics."



- IOC President **Jacques Rogge** on MLB players in the Olympics

Main Press Centre

- **10:45 a.m.** – Press conference with IOC president.

Beijing International Media Center

www.2008bimc.cn

- **10 a.m.** – Tang Xiaoquan, BOCOG EVP and president of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, briefs media on Paralympics preparations. Hall 1.
- **4:30 p.m.** – Movie Screening: "When Ruoma was Seventeen".
- **Aug. 25, 5 p.m.** – The BIMC hosts a thank you reception. Hall 1.

First Ever Interview With All Four 2016 Bid City Representatives

(continued from cover)

Mercedes Coghén (MC): Madrid and the Spanish people are committed to sport and committed to the Games. It is one of the only big capital cities in Europe not to have the Games. This is a model of living together. We have many other nationalities living in Madrid and this would help bring the cultures together.

EH: What important lessons have you learned in Beijing?

PR: I'm taken with the friendliness and openness (of) the volunteers. We will go back and say it is important to understand the value of service.

IK: I'm focusing on the sports venues. These are fantastic venues. Every athlete is saying the Athletes Village is fantastic.

CN: The Games here are the Games of the country, not only Beijing. It's not only for one city, of one group of people. It's for the whole country and it changed how people view the country.

MC: I have learned that cooperation and plans are important and transportation is important. Not only the athletes. The Olympic family and spectators need to be on time.

Media Question: How will you improve security? Will you tone it down?

PR: I think we will have new technology in the way of security. It's good to be unobtrusive. To be open but secure is a common goal.



ATR editor and founder Ed Hula moderates the breakfast. (ATR)

IK: We have already done our test. We hosted the G-8 Summit this year and we were very successful.

CN: During the Pan American Games, we showed the ability and capability of our government and people. We accredited 100,000 people without incident.

MC: In the last year we have organized over 30 championships and events. We are prepared.

- ATR Staff

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SOME EXAMPLES OF MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS HOSTED IN DENMARK:

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World Orienteering Championship 2006 (IOF)
World Match Racing Championship for women 2006 (ISAF)
World Standard Championship 2006 (IDSF)
World Floorball Championship for women 2007 (IFF)
World Sailing Farr 40 Championship 2007 (ISAF)

SOME EXAMPLES OF UPCOMING MAJOR EVENTS TO BE HOSTED IN DENMARK:

World Taekwondo Championships 2009 (WTF)
UEFA Congress 2009 (UEFA)
World Wrestling Championship 2009 (FILA)
121st Session & XIII Olympic Congress 2009 (IOC)
World Track Cycling Championship 2010 (UCI)
World Road Cycling Championship 2011 (UCI)



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Venues Rate A-Minus

(continued from page 3)

Hong Kong delivered on its promise to deliver a spectacular setting for equestrian events, but it would have been better to have the sport close by. Such an arrangement was not possible due to concerns over the spread of equine disease.

Sailing in Qingdao was the only alternative for landlocked Beijing, 1,000km from the sea. But the venue was sterling and the local support for sailing impressive.

Architectural marvels were created in two venues, the Water Cube and National Stadium. But the stadium in particular, while a striking edifice, proved to be a very ordinary stadium inside, right down to the cheap molded plastic seats.

Legacy plans for most of the venues are still not clear, which would be a shame for China given the great leap forward sport has taken in the country thanks to the Olympics and the billion of yuan spent to arrive at this point.

High marks for the Olympic Village, winner of best-ever comments from athletes and officials, and slated to become private residences after the Games.

Sport: A



Yelena Isinbayeva / Getty Images

World records became a commonplace occurrence in Beijing at the swimming pool and on the track. This despite complaints over the finals for swimming being scheduled in the morning and the worries that air pollution and heat would suffocate any such records in track and field.

Doping charges cost a half dozen athletes their place at the Games, but fewer than that might have been expected, and none involved Chinese athletes.

India and Mongolia won their first gold medals, while other countries made their first appearances on the podium.

Chinese athletes won a record number of medals, confirming the growing sporting prowess of the country. Disappointing was the loss of hurdler Liu Xiang, whose injury in the heats deprived the Games of a defining moment.

But the Games brought out other stars, such as Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt and Yelena Isinbayeva.

- Ed Hula

Basketball's Seating Dilemma Leaves VIPs Fuming

FIBA president Bob Elphinston is urging a new policy on seating allocation at high-demand Olympic basketball tournament games.

The basketball competitions have reached their gold-medal stages in Beijing. The USA defeated Australia for the gold medal in the women's final Saturday. Spain meets the USA in the men's final today.

The FIBA president said there have been difficulties with seating during the tournament in Beijing at the limited-capacity Wukesong Gymnasium.

"There's been a problem when the venue gets a visit from Chinese dignitaries or royals and outside security comes in," Elphinston tells Around The Rings.

"We have a fight on our hand to regain the seats for our federation officials, or the IOC Family."

He said representatives of NOCs, and even FIBA board members, are among those that have been left without a seat during high-demand matches.

The problem relates to various accredited areas within the venue, particularly those designated to broadcast, print media and photographers. Some of those seats go unused, even in high-demand matches.

According to Elphinston, the situation has led to "ill feeling" within the venue.



The men's basketball tournament in Beijing ends the final day of the Games. / Getty Images

"All sports have the same problems, so we're not unique," Elphinston said.

"There has to be a way where you can expand and decrease some of the accredited seating areas according to the games that are being played," he said. "We'd like to better understand the process of allocating seating and make some improvements for London (2012)."

Conversely, Elphinston said basketball has experienced the best ever Olympic competition "without doubt" in Beijing.

He told a FIBA media briefing that broadcasting of basketball has achieved a new milestone - the most watched tournament in history.

"There were 27 million Americans who watched that game," he said, "and more than 100 million in China, in addition to other major markets."

- Anthony Stavrinos

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On the Scene in Beijing: *Beckham's Kick Will Launch London 2012*

BOCOG promises to stage a spectacular closing ceremony with a cast of some 7,000 performers Sunday.

Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou, who directed the opening ceremony, is the mastermind behind the dramatic finale. It is expected to be watched by about 1.6 billion people worldwide.

Heads of state and dignitaries from around the globe will attend the ceremony, where London Mayor Boris Johnson receives the Olympic flag from Beijing's mayor to kick-start the countdown to London 2012.

England footballer David Beckham and a red London double-decker bus are among the stars of London's eight-minute handover segment.

Beckham will bend a ball like only he can from the top of the bus into a field of athletes at the conclusion. Musicians Jimmy Page and Leona Lewis will perform along with three dance groups. Britain's Olympic gold medalists Chris Hoy and Victoria Pendleton are also involved.



IOC president Jacques Rogge sits with IBF president Harvey Schiller to watch the U.S. top Japan for Olympic bronze. / IBAF

Bill Morris, London 2012 director of ceremonies, said the handover would mark the beginning of a journey.

"The handover will not be a distilled version of the 2012 opening ceremony," he told a press briefing Friday. "Our opening ceremony will be youthful, proud, athletic."

In London, the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows will perform a spectacular flyby. More than 40,000 people are expected in the Mall for the Visa-sponsored London 2012 Party.

No Rice in Beijing

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will not attend the closing ceremony as planned "because of ongoing events around the world," said National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao will instead be the leader of the U.S. delegation.

Rice was in Brussels on Tuesday for a NATO meeting on Russia's invasion of Georgia. She is also dealing with the resignation of Pakistan's

President Pervez Musharraf.

Baseball Must Have Marquee Players

IOC President Jacques Rogge, who sat behind home plate for the bronze-medal baseball game between the U.S. and Japan, said star Major League Baseball players must participate if the sport is to return to the Olympics in 2016.

MLB banned its players from consideration for the Beijing Olympic roster.

"Yeah, it's a big factor," Rogge told MLB.com. "We have [Roger] Federer, [Roger] Nadal in tennis, LeBron James in basketball. We have the best cyclists. Ronaldinho is here in football. We're not saying it should be an entire Major League team, but we want the top athletes here."

Rogge said that he attended baseball despite its lame-duck status because he wanted to pay thanks to the eight teams that participated. "I am pleased to go to at least one event of all the Olympic sports."

Football Finishes in Stadium

A near-capacity crowd of 89,102 saw Argentina defeat Nigeria 1-0 for football's 2008 Olympic gold medal in the first and only Olympic soccer match at the Bird's Nest Stadium. It was a rematch of a 1996 final in which Nigeria prevailed.

Players competed in heat that was 32 degrees Celsius (89.6 F). Hungarian match referee Viktor Kassai stopped the match briefly in the first and second halves for water breaks.

Stadium workers had a busy afternoon to return the Bird's Nest to its athletics set-up.

Paralympic Torch Relay Plans

Four days after the Olympic flame is doused, the Paralympic flame will be lit Thursday at Beijing's Temple of Heaven.



Hellenic Olympic Committee vice president Isidoros Kouvelos. (ATR/A.Stavrinos)

"The Temple of Heaven is where ancient Chinese people offered sacrifices to Heaven," said Jiang Xiaoyu, executive vice president of BOCOG. "The Paralympic flame will be lit at the Temple of Heaven to help 'integrate Heaven and Man,' a core concept in traditional Chinese culture."

The Paralympic Torch Relay will follow two



England football star David Beckham will take part in closing ceremony. / Getty Images

routes through 11 cities, cover 13,181 km, and involve 850 torchbearers.

First Medal for Afghanistan

Rohullah Nikpai gave Afghanistan its first Olympic medal after winning the Taekwondo men's under-58kg bronze medal. He defeated Spanish world champion Juan Antonio Ramos.

"We're too happy, and even can't express in words how happy we are," Ghulam Jillani Gharob, a spokesman for the Afghan Olympic Committee told Xinhua, China's state news agency.

Nikpai, 21, is an Olympic Solidarity scholarship holder benefiting from training opportunities abroad.

Greek NOC Resolute On Anti-Doping Stance

Greece will not tolerate drug cheats and will cooperate with the relevant authorities to ensure they are caught, a senior Hellenic Olympic Committee official said Saturday.

The decision of HOC Vice President Isidoros Kouvelos to immediately eject Athens women's 400m hurdles gold medalist Fani Chalkia from the village on news of her positive test won praise from the IOC.

Her 'B' sample also tested positive for Methyltrienolone. The IOC later formally expelled Chalkia.

"(Doping) is something the Hellenic Olympic Committee is determined to fight," Kouvelos told Around the Rings. "We'll cooperate at the top level with the IOC and with WADA in every aspect."

Where's Jacques?

IOC President Jacques Rogge was in attendance at Wukesong Baseball Sports Field Saturday.

Beijing by the Numbers

A total of 680 million Chinese television viewers - 56 percent of China's television audience - tuned into CCTV's major Olympic broadcasting channels in one day, according to a recent study.

- ATR Staff



Event of the Day: Athletics Steals Show Inside Nest

As a venue, the Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing is one of the imposing symbols of the 2008 Olympics. Just as imposing may be the performances this week inside the stadium by Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt and the boost he gives athletics.

Bolt won an unprecedented three gold medals in world record time to dominate the second week of the Olympics, giving athletics a performer of Michael Phelps' stature.

The 6-foot-5 Jamaican is the first man to win both men's 100-meter and 200-meter gold medals since Carl Lewis in 1984, and the first ever to win both while setting world records. He also ran a blistering third leg on the 4-by-100 meter relay. Then, unlike Phelps, he ran out of events.

"All I can say is, yo, Jamaican sprinters taking over the world," Bolt said.

By the end of Saturday's competition, Jamaica had six gold medals in athletics, one fewer than the United States, which was just 2-for-8 in relay victories.

Going Global with Medals

As of Friday, 37 different countries had won medals after 39 of 47 events, and 22 won golds, including Bahrain, New Zealand, Belarus, Slovenia and Cameoon.

"We are an unusual sport indeed," IAAF President Lamine Diack said. "With 201 countries and



Usain Bolt of Jamaica won three gold medals this week in Beijing./ Getty Images

2,000 athletes, everyone stands a chance. It has nothing to do with the size of the country. It's a very democratic sport."

Doping's Constant Shadow

Athletics had only two positive doping tests through Friday. Heptathlete Lyudmila Blonska of Ukraine was stripped of her silver medal after her test revealed methyltestosterone, a steroid. Blonska, 30, was suspended for two years in 2003 after testing positive for steroids and now faces a lifetime ban.

Greek sprinter Fani Chalkia, a 2004 Olympian, tested positive in Beijing and was sent home before competing.

Perhaps athletics got its doping scandal out of the way before the Games began. The IAAF banned seven Russian female athletes, including 1,500-meter favorite Yelena Soboleva, for tampering with the doping control process.

- ATR Staff

View full story at www.AroundTheRings.com

London 2012 Impressed Not Awed by Beijing's Games

London 2012 organizers say they are learning valuable lessons from Beijing even as the baton is about to be passed by the Chinese leadership on Sunday.

LOCOG chair Sebastian Coe and John Armit, chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), have been impressed with Beijing's slick organization and sports presentation. Both are undaunted about delivering Games to match the standards set by China.

"We don't sit here cowed by anything we have seen," Coe said in a briefing with reporters in Beijing.

"Nothing much surprises me," he said, explaining that he has worked closely with BOCOG and within the IOC's program of knowledge transfer for more than two years.

"We knew the venues were going to be superb, we knew that the planning was clearly in place," he said. Coe also applauded BOCOG for its focus on construction timelines, overall organization and "embracing the fact that this is the biggest show on earth."

BOCOG's greening of Games venues has brought

acclaim, but the size and scale of some facilities, such as the 91,000-seat Bird's Nest stadium, may never again be replicated.

"Big is not necessarily better," Coe said. "I think that the Olympic Movement recognizes that to remain relevant it also has to provide a Games that goes on providing benefits long after the show has left town."

The Bird's Nest has wowed visitors during the Olympics. Meanwhile, designs of the London Olympic stadium drew criticism for lack of imagination when they were unveiled last year. With 55,000 (out of 80,000) temporary seats, it will be downsized to provide a multipurpose stadium after the Games.

"There is no possible justification for leaving a second 80,000-seater stadium in London," he said. While China has poured billions into the Beijing Games without creating headlines, London's \$18 billion budget remains the subject of intense scrutiny, especially by the British media.

Coe said there would be no cost overruns despite a tight construction budget. LOCOG is operating under a \$4 billion budget to stage the Games.

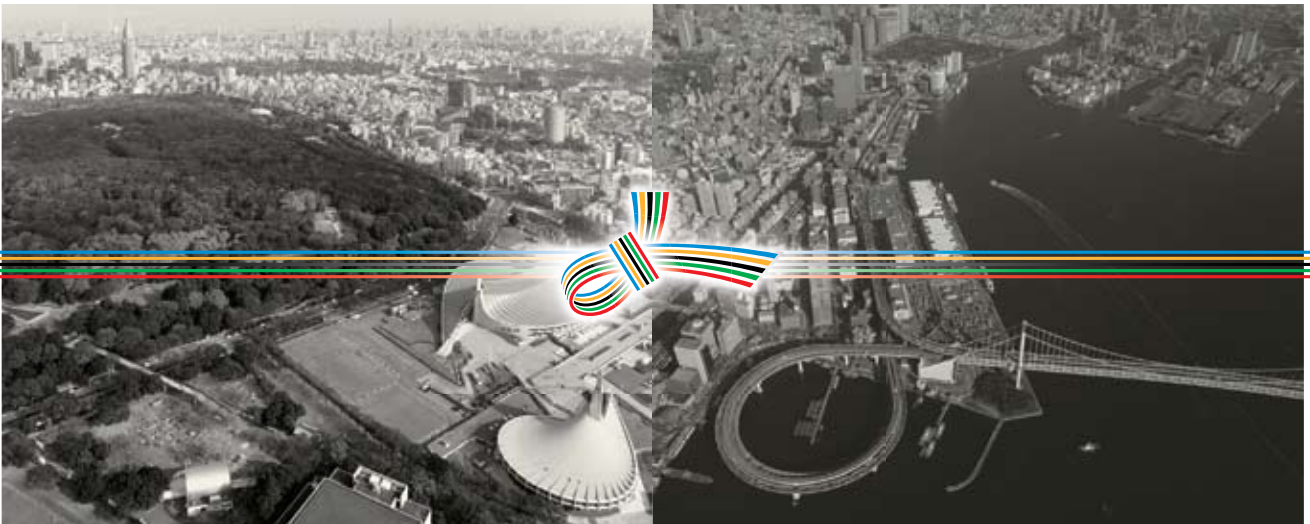


John Armit, chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority, spent 10 days in Beijing looking at overlay, operational issues. / Getty Images

- Mark Bisson

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