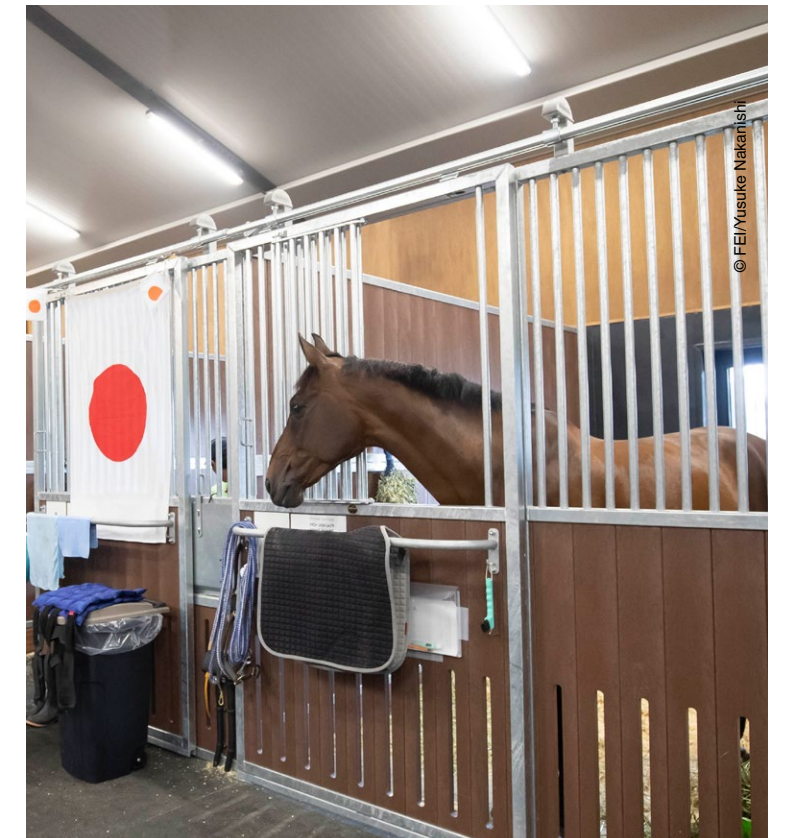


TOKYO OLYMPICS 2020

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

BY KARIM BADARO





ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR THIS CURRENT SUMMER, THE TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES AND THE TOKYO PARALYMPIC GAMES HAVE BEEN – UNSURPRISINGLY – POSTPONED.

THE REASON FOR THIS DECISION IS OF COURSE, THE OUTBREAK OF THE NEW COVID – 19 PANDEMIC WITH ALL WHAT IT IMPLIES OF CONFINEMENT, TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, BUDGETING CONSTRAINTS, ETC...

The decision of postponing the long awaited Games was taken on March 20, 2020.

The decision was taken by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), The Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee (TOCOG), The International Paralympic Committee (IPC), The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and The Government of Japan.

The reason: **“The unprecedented and unpredictable spread of Covid-19”**.

The decision was not easy to take. However, with the 2020 deadline pushed forward, this gave decision makers enough time to reflect on the subject. Several National Olympic Committees (NOC), declared a couple of days before this decision, that they would not send their athletes to Tokyo, if dates were kept in 2020. This was the case for the NOCs of Canada and Australia.

Taking into account all parameters, new dates were sent: The Tokyo Olympic Games would be held from July 23, 2021 till August 8, 2021 and the Tokyo Paralympic Games, from August 24, 2021 till September 8, 2021.

It is to note, that these Games, would still keep their original name of **“Tokyo 2020”**.

Will these Games, still be held on these dates in 2021?

This is the big question!

To this question, a definite answer will be given in October of this year.

In the meantime, the IOC and its President, Thomas Bach are multiplying contacts and consultations. On May 27, Thomas Bach had a marathon Visio Conference meeting with all IOC members.

The meeting started around 10:00 am, Swiss time and was divided into three sessions, depending on language spoken and time zones.

According the Agence France Press (AFP), Thomas Bach wanted to screen ideas, thoughts and experiences of all members, worldwide.

Next Visio Conference of IOC members is scheduled for July 17, 2020.

Thomas Bach, has also been on constant contact with all International Federations to evaluate their opinions and financial situations caused by the postponement of the Games.

What is at stake for the Equestrian sport?

The Equestrian sport is one of the disciplines that have finished their qualification procedures.

Only around 40% of the overall International Federations have done so.

Other International Federations have not completed their qualification procedure yet. This puts the Equestrian sport in a secure position.



Other positive points are that equestrian facilities and infrastructures have been completed and are ready to run. A Test Event has been organized in August 2019 in Tokyo, on the Olympic facilities, to check that everything is in good and running order. Very positive feedbacks were noted, in this respect and all aspects of our sport have been catered for.

New dates for equestrian (**Jumping, Dressage and Eventing**) have been scheduled now

from July 23, 2021 till August 08, 2021.

In addition, some riders and Chef d'Equipe, feel that the postponement of the Games, will be beneficial and would give them and their horses, additional time to get better prepared. This is the opinion of French Chef d'Equipe Thierry Pomel. According to him, this additional grace period of one year, will allow for new horses to mature giving his team a wider choice of horses.

On the other hand, In the possible – but unwished for probability – the Games being cancelled, this would give the **FEI**, the possibility to reschedule many Championships and Evens that were recently cancelled or moved, to accommodate the new Olympic dates. Namely, the European Jumping Championships, Eventing, Dressage and Para-Dressage.

Any chances of cancelling Tokyo 2020?

Many voices have loud concern.

Will the Games still be held if a covid-19 vaccine has not been found and made available globally?

Will the Games still be held if athletes or officials from certain regions or continent are not able to travel to Tokyo?

Will the Games be held behind closed doors?

Will quarantine for athletes and accompanying personnel (Team managers, medical staff, trainers, journalists, etc...), have a beneficial outcome, if possible at all?

Will the Games still be held if an international agreement on travel and quarantine is not reached?

All of these questions need answers. But one thing is certain: The Tokyo Games will either be held in **2021** or will be cancelled all together, as declared by Thomas Bach during an interview to **BBC**. He



added that you cannot constantly employ between **3,000** and **15,000** persons and keep athletes in an uncertain situation, ruling out the possibility to hold the Games between closed doors. He added during this interview: Once we have a clear vision on what the situation will be on July 23, 2021, all appropriate decisions will be taken, then.

In the meantime, on June 11, 2020, the Tokyo Olympic Games Organizers, together with the **IOC**, have agreed to host “**simplified**” Games, in order to cut financial weight caused by the postponement of these Games.

Some **200** items have been considered. At this point in time, no details were made available. However

the Olympic torch relay has been identified as being one of these items to be reconsidered. A final decision will be reached in September, **2020**.

As of this very date, IOC and Organizers have never discussed cancellation of the Games.

However, according the Italian sports media Corriere Dello Sport, a final decision might be taken as early as October, **2020**. It adds that the **IOC “will not hold the Tokyo Games, if even one athlete is left at the door”**. The Tokyo Games will be held with everybody or will not be held at all.

Troubled times ahead and difficult decisions, await all decision makers in Lausanne and Tokyo.