

# JAPAN AND THE OLYMPICS

## Asia's first Olympic host



**Opening ceremony of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games**

5,152 athletes from 93 countries competed in 20 sports at these games. (Photo courtesy of Photo Kishimoto)

## Introduction

Japan has been an enthusiastic participant in the Olympic Games since the Fifth Olympiad, held in Stockholm, in 1912. Although Tokyo was eagerly promoted as the site for the 1940 Games, they were canceled due to World War II. The hosting of the 1964 Summer Olympics (Tokyo) and the 1972 Winter Olympics (Sapporo) were, respectively, the first summer and winter games ever held in Asia. Tokyo is the only city in the world to have hosted both the Olympic and Paralympic games two times. The 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics marked the third time that Japan has hosted the games.

The International Olympic Committee selected Tokyo as the venue for the Summer Olympics in 2020, making it the fourth time that Japan has acted as host to one or other of the summer or winter games. This is due to the convenience of our transport network and

good public safety; facts that are highly appreciated.

The schedule for the second ever “Tokyo Olympics” is July 23 – August 8, 2021, with the Paralympics due to be held from August 24 – September 5 the same year. It was officially announced that baseball/softball, karate, skateboarding, sports climbing, and surfing would be added to the Games.

## History

Under the urging of Kano Jigoro, a *judo* athlete, the Japanese Olympic Committee(JOC) was established in 1911. Two athletes were sent to participate at the Fifth Olympiad in Stockholm the following year. The first two Japanese to participate as members of a Japanese team were Mishima Yahiko, a sprinter, and Kanakuri Shiso, a long-distance runner.



**Closing ceremony of the 15th Paralympic Games**

(Photo courtesy of Photo Kishimoto)

Though the next games were to be held in 1916, they were canceled due to World War I. By the 1920 Games at Antwerp, Japan fielded a team of 15 and earned its first awards: a pair of silver medals in singles and doubles tennis.

At the 1928 Games in Amsterdam, Japan took its first two gold medals, in track and field and swimming. Athlete Hitomi Kinue became the first woman to join a Japanese Olympic contingent. She received a silver medal in the 800-meter running event, and her success encouraged more women to take up competitive sports.

A contingent of 131 members represented Japan at the 1932 Games in Los Angeles, including 16 women. Japanese athletes earned a total of 7 gold, 7 silver, and 4 bronze medals in track and field, swimming, equestrian events, and field hockey.

At the 1936 Games in Berlin, Japan fielded one of the largest teams in its history: 249 athletes, including 17 women. The events were broadcast live via a Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK; Japan Broadcasting Corporation) radio linkup, and enthusiastic fans tuned into their radio sets late into the night (because of the time difference between Japan and Europe) to listen to the athletes' progress. At Berlin, swimmer Maehata Hideko became the first Japanese woman to take a gold medal in Olympic competition by winning the 200-meter breaststroke event.

In 1936, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) designated Tokyo and Sapporo as the venues for the Summer and Winter Games, respectively, to be held in 1940. However, the Tokyo Olympic Games were canceled because of World War II; the London Olympic Games to be held in 1944 were also suspended for the same reason, being realized at last in 1948.

Japan was not invited to participate in the 1948 Games in London, but was readmitted to the International Olympic Committee in 1951, and sent a team of 72 athletes to the 1952 Games in Helsinki. A team of 101 men and 16 women traveled to Melbourne in 1956, and won a total of 19 medals, including 4 golds.

In 1960, Japan organized a large team of 147 men and 20 women to take part in the Rome Olympics. At the closing ceremonies,

athletes from the 83 participating countries were reminded that in four years' time, they would be meeting again in Tokyo.

## The Tokyo Games and Beyond

In 1952, the postwar military occupation of Japan came to an end, and Japan made a bid to the IOC for Tokyo to host the Seventeenth Olympiad, to be held in 1960. The bid was won by Rome, but Japan was not discouraged. In October 1955, the Tokyo Metropolitan Legislature approved a decision to bid on hosting the Eighteenth Olympiad, to be held in 1964.

A Japanese delegation visited Munich, Germany, for the fifty-sixth meeting of the IOC. Japan had set its hopes on winning the right to host the games and waged an aggressive campaign to wrest votes from rivals Detroit and Vienna. Finally on May 26, 1960, the IOC delegates put the matter to a vote.

For Japan, the hosting of the Eighteenth Olympiad in October 1964 was a historical landmark event that signified the end of the postwar reconstruction period and underscored Japan's high economic growth. During the five years leading up to 1964, preparations for the games literally transformed the face of Tokyo. Roads in the city and suburbs were widened. A huge Olympic Village sprang up in Yoyogi, and NHK built a new broadcast center nearby to cover the event. Total expenditures in preparation for the event were said to be the highest in Olympic history.

But perhaps the greatest showpiece project associated with the Olympics was the Shinkansen bullet train—billed as the world's fastest—which began service between Tokyo and Osaka on October 1, nine days prior to the start of the games.

The Tokyo Games attracted 5,152 participants from 93 nations. Sixteen national contingents, mainly from developing countries, participated in the Olympics for the first time. The opening ceremony on October 10 recorded an 84.7% television viewer rating.

As host nation, Japan sent the largest team it had ever organized: 294 men and 61

**Yoshida Saori**

Yoshida Saori won gold medals in three consecutive Olympics starting with the 2004 Athens Games. She received the People's Honor Award in 2012. (Photo courtesy of Photo Kishimoto)



**The Shinkansen**

So-called bullet train was first launched in the year of Tokyo Olympic, 1964.

women. Urged on by rousing cheers from their compatriots, Japanese athletes took medals in boxing, gymnastics, wrestling, track and field, weightlifting, and shooting. One of the most emotional events of the games was in women's volleyball, where the Japanese team won a hard-fought victory over the Soviet Union to take the gold medal.

Also at the Tokyo Games, a native Japanese sport—*judo*—was included as an Olympic event (men only) for the first time. Japanese athletes took gold medals in all weight classes except the unlimited division, which went to the Netherlands.

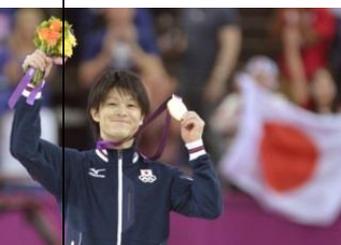
The Tokyo Games saw the establishing of 47 new world records and 111 Olympic records. The 16 gold, 5 silver, and 8 bronze medals earned by the Japanese team marked its best Olympic performance in history, placing Japan third in the overall medal standings behind the United States and the Soviet Union.

## The Paralympics

The Tokyo Games also saw the second Paralympic Games held after Rome in 1960. Although Japan had only 16 para athletes at the event, Yasunori Igari and Fujio Watanabe took home Japan's first Paralympic gold medal for table tennis. Medals were also won for archery, darts, swimming and wheelchair fencing.

The Nagano Paralympic in 1998 was the first time that a winter Paralympic was held outside of Europe, and was the 7th in history. More than 560 para-athletes participated in Nagano winter Paralympic and this represented the largest number of para-athletes to compete in a winter Paralympic. There were 70 participants from Japan, and it was a significant increase from 27 in the previous winter Paralympics in Norway in 1994.

In 1998, the summer Paralympics were held in Rio de Janeiro with more than 4000 para-athletes from 159 countries. 132 para-athletes from Japan competed in 17 categories of sports.



**Uchimura Kohei**

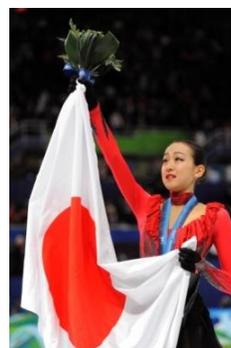
Winner of the gold medal in men's all-around gymnastics

In addition to the Winter Paralympics held in Nagano in 1998, Tokyo will host the Paralympics for a second time in 2021, making Tokyo the first city to host two combined Olympic and Paralympic games. In preparation for the 2020 Paralympic Games, Tokyo has been making special efforts to make the city "barrier free" and more accessible to people with disabilities as well as heavily promoting the Paralympics together with the Olympic games.

## The Winter Olympics

Japan's first Winter Olympic team took part in the Second Games, held at St. Moritz, Switzerland, in 1928. The first team to be accompanied by a female member was at the 1936 Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Japan has since participated in every one of the Winter Games with the exception of St. Moritz, in 1948. In 1956, Igaya Chiharu took second place in the slalom event at Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. It was the first medal taken by Japan in Winter Olympic history.

The city of Sapporo, in Hokkaido, won the bid to host the Eleventh Winter Olympic Games in February 1972. Those games attracted 1,006 athletes from 35 countries. The Sapporo Games also marked the first time a Japanese earned a gold medal in the Winter Olympics, as Kasaya Yukio took first place in the 70-meter ski jump event.



**Asada Mao**

At the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, Asada Mao won the silver medal in women's figure skating. (Photo courtesy of Photo Kishimoto)

**Silver medal in the men's 4 x 100-meter sprint relay**

The men's 4 x 100-meter sprint relay team – Iizuka Shota, Kiryu Yoshihide, Yamagata Ryota, and Cambridge Aska – won a silver medal at the Rio de Janeiro Games. (Photo courtesy of Photo Kishimoto)



## The Nagano Games

The Nagano, in addition to the prefectural capital of Nagano city, included famous winter sports resorts, such as Shiga Highlands, Hakuba, Karuizawa, and Nozawa Onsen.

Coinciding with the Winter Games, Nagano also hosted the 107th meeting of the IOC General Assembly.

The Nagano Games were the last Winter Games held in the twentieth century. Seventy-two countries and districts participated, with 2,176 athletes contesting 68 events. The following new official events were included: slalom and half-pipe snowboarding events, women's ice hockey (teams from Canada, the United States, Finland, China, Sweden, and Japan participated), and curling.

One of the stated aims of the Nagano Games was "coexistence with the beauty of nature and its beautiful resources." Consistent Games were held from February 7 to 22, 1998. The venues with this goal, new land development was avoided where possible, and various measures were utilized for the recycling of resources.

In the Seventh Winter Paralympic Games held in Nagano from March 5 to 14, immediately following the Olympic Games, 34 events were contested and 580 athletes from 32 countries and districts participated.

## The Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games

In the 2016 Olympics, Japan won a record 41 medals (12 gold, 8 silver, and 21 bronze), with outstanding results particularly in team competitions. Japan won gold medals in the men's artistic gymnastics team event and women's badminton doubles, a silver medal in the men's table tennis team event, and bronze medals in the women's table tennis

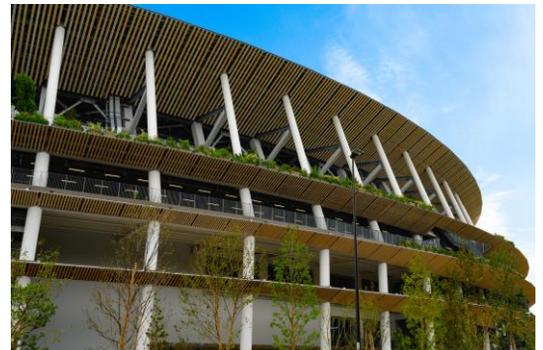
team event and synchronized swimming team event. In the men's 4 x 100-meter sprint relay event, the Japan team won its first medal since the Beijing Games in 2008 and was recognized as Japan's fastest team ever.

In other events, Nishikori Kei won a bronze medal in the men's tennis singles, which was Japan's first medal in the event in 96 years. In the men's all-around artistic gymnastics individual event, Uchimura Kohei became the fourth Japanese to win a gold medal and the second Japanese to win a second straight event title.

In the closing ceremony, the Olympic flag was passed to Japan which will host the games in Tokyo in 2020. At the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, we expect Japanese athletes to do well again in many events.



**M-Wave the Nagano City Olympic Memorial Arena**



**The New National Stadium**

The national stadium used during the 1964 Tokyo Games was rebuilt and renamed for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The New National Stadium has a capacity of 68,000 and was designed by the famous Japanese architect, Kengo Kuma & Associates.

## Major Japanese Athletes in Summer Olympic Games

Athlete Names	Medal Colors	Sports	Events
Japanese Team	Gold (Rome 1960) Gold (Tokyo 1964) Gold (Mexico 1968) Gold (Munich 1972) Gold (Montreal 1976) Bronze (Los Angeles 1984) Bronze (Seoul 1988) Bronze (Barcelona 1992) Gold (Athens 2004) Silver (Beijing 2008) Silver (London 2012) Gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Gymnastics Artistic	Team Competition Men
Japanese Team	Gold (Tokyo 1964) Gold (Montreal 1976)	Volleyball	Volleyball Women
Japanese Team	Bronze (Mexico 1968)	Football	Football Men
Japanese Team	Gold (Munich 1972)	Volleyball	Volleyball Men
Tamura (Tani) Ryoko	Silver (Barcelona 1992) Silver (Atlanta 1996) Gold (Sydney 2000) Gold (Athens 2004) Gold (Beijing 2008)	Judo	48kg Women
Iwasaki Kyoko	Gold (Barcelona 1992)	Swimming	200M Breaststroke Women
Nomura Tadahiro	Gold (Atlanta 1996) Gold (Sydney 2000) Gold (Athens 2004)	Judo	60kg Men
Takahashi Naoko	Gold (Sydney 2000)	Athletics	Marathon Women
Suzuki Keiji	Gold (Athens 2004)	Judo	100kg Men
Kitajima Kosuke	Gold (Athens 2004) Gold (Athens 2004) Gold (Beijing 2008) Gold (Beijing 2008)	Swimming	100M Breaststroke Men 200M Breaststroke Men 100M Breaststroke Men 200M Breaststroke Men
Noguchi Mizuki	Gold (Athens 2004)	Athletics	Marathon Women
Murofushi Koji	Gold (Athens 2004) Bronze (London 2012)	Athletics	Hammer Throw Men
Yoshida Saori	Gold (Athens 2004) Gold (Beijing 2008) Gold (London 2012) Silver (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Wrestling Freestyle Wrestling Freestyle Wrestling Wrestling	48-55kg Women 48-55kg Women Freestyle 55kg Women Freestyle 53kg Women
Icho Kaori	Gold (Athens 2004) Gold (Beijing 2008) Gold (London 2012) Gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Wrestling Freestyle Wrestling Freestyle Wrestling Wrestling	55-63kg Women 55-63kg Women Freestyle 63kg Women Freestyle 58kg Women
Ishii Satoshi	Gold (Beijing 2008)	Judo	+100kg (Heavyweight) Men
Uchimura Kohei	Silver (Beijing 2008) Gold (London 2012) Silver (London 2012) Gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Gymnastics Artistic	Individual All-Round Men Individual All-Round Men Floor Exercises Men Individual All-Round Men

Japanese Team	Bronze (Beijing 2008) Silver (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Athletics	4 × 100M Relay Men
Japanese Team	Gold (Beijing 2008)	Softball	Softball Women
Japanese Team (Nadeshiko)	Silver (London 2012)	Football	Football Women
Takahashi Ayaka Matsutomo Misaki	Gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Badminton	Doubles Women
Japanese Team	Silver (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Table Tennis	Team Men
Japanese Team	Bronze (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Table Tennis	Team Women
Japanese Team	Bronze (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Synchronized Swimming	Team Women
Nishikori Kei	Bronze (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Tennis	Singles Men
Hagino Kosuke	Gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016)  Silver (Rio de Janeiro 2016)	Swimming	400M Individual Medley Men 200M Individual Medley Men

## Major Japanese Athletes in Winter Olympic Games

Name of athlete	Medal colors (Games)	Sports	Events
Ito Midori	Silver (Albertville 1992)	Figure Skating	Individual Women
Japanese Team	Gold (Albertville 1992)	Nordic Combined	Team Men
Kono Takanori	Silver (Lillehammer 1994)	Nordic Combined	Individual Men
Japanese Team	Gold (Lillehammer 1994)	Nordic Combined	Team Men
Funaki Kazuyoshi	Gold (Nagano 1998) Silver (Nagano 1998)	Ski Jumping	Large Hill Individual Men Normal Hill Individual Men
Japanese Team	Gold (Nagano 1998)	Ski Jumping	Team Men
Shimizu Hiroyasu	Gold (Nagano 1998) Bronze (Nagano 1998) Silver (Salt Lake City 2002)	Speed Skating	500M Men 1000M Men 500M Men
Satoya Tae	Gold (Nagano 1998) Bronze (Salt Lake City 2002)	Freestyle Skiing	Moguls Women
Arakawa Shizuka	Gold (Torino 2006)	Figure Skating	Individual Women
Nagashima Keiichiro	Silver (Vancouver 2010)	Speed Skating	500M Men
Kato Joji	Bronze (Vancouver 2010)	Speed Skating	500M Men
Asada Mao	Silver (Vancouver 2010)	Figure Skating	Individual Women
Takahashi Daisuke	Bronze (Vancouver 2010)	Figure Skating	Individual Men
Hanyu Yuzuru	Gold (Sochi 2014) Gold (Pyeongchang 2018)	Figure Skating	Individual Men
Akito Watabe	Silver (Sochi 2014) Silver (Pyeongchang 2018)	Nordic Combined	Individual Men
Hirano Ayumu	Silver (Sochi 2014) Silver (Pyeongchang 2018)	Snowboard	Half Pipe Men
Kasai Noriaki	Silver (Sochi 2014)	Ski Jumping	Large Hill Individual Men
Kodaira Nao	Gold (Pyeongchang 2018)	Speed Skating	Ladies' 500M
Japanese Team	Gold (Pyeongchang 2018)	Speed Skating	Ladies' Team Pursuit
Japanese Team	Bronze ((Pyeongchang 2018))	Curling	Women