

Yin and Yang of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics

- Legacy of the 1964 and 2020 Games -

Shinji Sakurai, Ph.D.

Chukyo University, Japan

President, Japanese Society of Biomechanics

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics was held in the summer of 2021 after being postponed for one year. This was the second Games to be held in the prefecture.

The first Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics of 1964 were held 19 years after Japan's defeat. It was around the time when Japan finally recovered from the great damage of World War II, and it was about to enter the period of high economic high-growth period. Moreover, in the same year, the expressway and the Shinkansen between Tokyo and Osaka were both completed, and the current foundation of Japan improved. Owing to these advances, people developed increasing interest toward sports and physical activity. The Ministry of Education started conducting physical fitness tests among children in Japan, which is being continued even today. These data are very valuable for policy making toward education. In addition, sports science research activities, which were started with the aim of improving competitiveness in international competitions, have become the basis for the current Japanese sports science research.

At the 2013 International Olympic Committee (IOC) General Assembly, it was decided that the 2020 Olympics/Paralympics will be held in Tokyo. The main theme of the Tokyo Games was to appeal to the world regarding the recovery from the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant accident that occurred in 2011. However, many scandals were reported afterwards, including the uncertainties in the design decisions and cost overruns of the new National Stadium, allegations of designer's plagiarism of the emblems, uncertain money flows during the period of invitation activity, and the replacement of the Governor of Tokyo because of a money scandal. The main theme of the Games, which was to appeal regarding the recovery from disasters that occurred in Japan, gradually became ambiguous.

Since January 2020, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was impossible to conduct the Olympics/Paralympics in 2020, when it was originally scheduled to be held. It was postponed

to the summer of 2021, just one year later. According to a public opinion survey in Japan conducted just before the Olympics, most of them had opinions against the hosting of the Olympics/Paralympics . However, Japanese and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the organizing committee, the IOC, and the International Paralympics Committee (IPC) had decided to hold the event as planned, but without spectators. For the first time in history, postponement of the Games and absence of spectators, which are extremely unusual, were observed in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics .

Amidst these obstacles, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics was conducted. Despite opposition and concerning issues before the starting the event, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics is often rated as successful. In this paper, I will discuss not only the history of development of sports science in Japan during 1964-2021 but also the “legacy” left by the 2020 Tokyo Olympics/Paralympics held in the summer of 2021 from various perspectives.