

## Tokyo set to host 2020 Olympics, Spanish sentiment remains mixed

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MADRID — The selection between Istanbul, Madrid and Tokyo to host the 2020 Olympics was fraught with controversy this year, as each city currently faces economic, political or environmental troubles.

The dispute continued with the recent announcement that Japan, still recovering from nuclear disaster, won the International Olympic Committee's vote Sept. 7. In Spain, where an economic crisis has the unemployment rate above 25 percent, citizens have mixed feelings about Madrid losing the international sporting event.

Oscar Ceballos is a professor from the CIEE study abroad center in Seville, Spain. He said Spain needs to focus on the restoration of its economy, not hosting the Olympics.

"I think it is better that we don't have them because we need to concentrate on more important problems," Ceballos said. "The Olympics would be a distraction and they would allow the country to ignore the reality of the state of the economy. It is a bad idea to work for something temporary."

While preparation for the Olympics would create jobs, Spain would pay for it with a hefty price tag. In the midst of a dramatic economic crisis, many Spaniards are skeptical.

Sarah Bellido is a Spanish student at la Universidad de Sevilla, and while she recognizes the immediate benefit of hosting the games, she also recognizes the long-term effects.

"I believe that it only helps in the moment. Investing in the games is great before the games to create jobs, but once they end things will be the same," Bellido said.

Others residents believe Madrid could have been a great host city, as it already contains many of the necessary infrastructure and stadiums. Madrid also branded itself as the best city for a giant international party during the selection process.

Fran Pascual, a student at la Universidad de Sevilla, has mixed emotions regarding Madrid's loss as host city for the games.

"I feel happy and sad," Pascual said. "I'm sad because I would enjoy if the games were celebrated in Spain, but I am OK with it be-



The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building was lit in Olympic colors Sept. 20 in honor of the city being named host of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS

cause of the crisis. The Olympics cost a lot of money, which is bad for Spain overall."

While the games could be positive for Madrid, others recognize that with a population of more than 47 million, Spain is too large for the Olympics to solve all of its problems.

"The benefits would only be in Madrid," Pascual said. "I would like Seville to host the Olympics so that the benefits would be here."

Professor Jorge Rodriguez from the CIEE study abroad center in Seville said he wants Spain to focus on its economy, not the Olympic Games.

"The positive aspects for Spain would not be in the South," Rodriguez said. "I wouldn't notice a difference. The country should focus on more serious matters, like the crisis."

Regarding the possibility of Madrid hosting the 2024 Olympic Games, Bellido said it

all depends on Spain's economy at the time, but definitely not if the status quo remains.

This is Madrid's third bid and rejection to host the Olympic Games. The city's mayor told King Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy not to try again for 2024.

Though some citizens feel cynical about the timing of the 2020 Olympics, they still see the positives for Spain to host the games.

Rodriguez is content with the ruling, understanding the other side's argument.

"In general I think the Olympics are positive because they make our country more visible to international eyes and increase the number of tourists," he said.

Tourism is one of Spain's largest industries, and an increase in international visitors could aid the struggling economy.

Ceballos worries focusing solely on tourism could actually hurt the economy in the

long run.

"The Olympics are great for tourism and branding, but that's exactly it, they would only help the tourism industry," Ceballos said.

Despite lukewarm enthusiasm for the Olympics in Seville, not all of Spain has given up hope. The day after Madrid lost the 2020 host spot, the government of Barcelona announced its plans to bid for the Winter Olympics in 2022.

Barcelona hosted the Summer Olympics in 1992 and has most of the necessary infrastructure built. Plus, the Winter Olympics are historically less expensive than their summer counterpart.

When asked if Barcelona should bid for the games in 2022, Rodriguez's response was simple.

"Good luck," he said.