

A CATCH-22 FOR LA 2024 AND THE IOC

With the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) vote to award the 2024 Summer Olympic Games a mere 200 or so days away, Los Angeles' (LA) bid for these Games is a proverbial catch-22.

In mid-September, about 95 Members of the IOC will gather in Lima, Peru to select between two cities vying to host the 2024 Games: Paris and LA. This was a three-city race until recently when Budapest dropped out due to a public referendum opposing the bid which led to the Budapest City Assembly formally withdrawing. With this news, the IOC may be forced to do something it has never done in its history: award two Summer Games at the same time, one to 2024 and one to 2028.

Given the events surrounding 2024, the IOC should adapt to these circumstances much the way it adjusted in 1994 of no longer holding the Winter and Summer Games in the same calendar year due to the magnitude of presiding over such large-scale events. In order to preserve the Olympic Movement long-term, the IOC should once again make an important decision and award 2024 and 2028 simultaneously in September. Both Paris and LA have their government's support, (although the French will have a change in government come May), and seem to have public support as well. By September, both cities will have been fully vetted on their abilities to hold the Games by the IOC's Evaluation Committee, and in all likelihood, the IOC will simply have to determine which Games it awards to Paris and LA.

And while, for reasons to follow, it seems like LA would be the best choice for 2024, the IOC is faced with a difficult decision: In light of the Trump administration's immigration policy objectives, which contradict the IOC's commitments to inclusivity, can and should the IOC award these Games to a US city at this time?

Let's look at the options. Paris, ah oui, Paris! What is not to love about Paris? Imagine the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and the Champs-Elysees! It would be the City of Light's third time hosting the Games, including the Summer Games of 1900 and 1924, signifying 100 years since the last bid, and the Olympic Movement likes anniversaries. The guy who started it all, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, established the modern Olympic Movement in France in 1894. This was after a hiatus of more than 1,500 years since the Olympic Games were last staged by the ancient Greeks. There is significant sentiment that honoring that legacy is long overdue, as this will be Paris' third bid since 2008, including 2012 and 2024, and doing so at the 100th anniversary would be the right time.

Now for Los Angeles. LA 2024 will be America's third attempt at the Games since 2012 and on paper, this bid should win it all. It will be 40 years since the Golden State hosted the 1984 Games, which were transformational for having embraced corporate sponsorship while turning a huge profit with no taxpayer funds required. Like the Games of 1984, the LA plan is to use existing facilities for the Athletes Village (UCLA) and sporting venues (The Coliseum, Staples Center, etc.) as well as new facilities already planned, such as the MLS' Los Angeles Football Club and NFL's LA Rams stadiums set to open in 2018 and 2019, respectively. This bid satisfies the IOC's Agenda 2020 stipulating that host cities should rely heavily on existing or planned infrastructure and not undertake excessive spending and taxation to cover hosting costs, something that the Paris bid is struggling to overcome.

Moreover, on January 25, 2017, the LA City Council UNANIMOUSLY approved the Host City agreement including the municipality's guarantee to cover any funding shortfall, the single biggest factor that doomed Boston's 2024 bid, Chicago 2016 and contributed to the downfall of New York City 2012.

Despite these advantages, LA's perfect bid sets itself up for potential demise in 2024. What's the rush? Why not 2028? The spectacular weather and sunsets will still be there. Hollywood and its glamorous trappings will not suddenly leave for parts unknown. The Coliseum, the Staples Center, the MLS and NFL stadiums, the Pacific Ocean, the highways won't have disappeared. UCLA dorms can still be used for athlete housing. Odds are there will be even more hotels, a larger subway/rail system and better airport to support lodging and transport. NBC will be made whole with a US Games during their current television broadcast contract which ends in 2032. The LA bid committee itself is a youth movement and its Chairman, Casey Wasserman, will only be four years older when he addresses the world at the Opening Ceremony in 2028. So again, what's the rush? A 2028 Games in LA would provide the USOC and the LA Organizing Committee additional time to prepare and use the 2028 Games as a huge carrot for marketing and revenue generation.

With this in mind, the USOC and LA 2024 could leverage the IOC's desire to mark 100 years in Paris in 2024 and negotiate a very favorable LA 2028 host city contract. In concert with the USOC, they could negotiate to include either the 2026 or 2030 Olympic Winter Games. 2026 will mark the 250th Anniversary of America which could add new energy and exposure to these Games. The IOC knows that with the commitments necessary to host the Summer Games and Winter Games. The end may be near for credible global cities to pursue a host bid, as evidenced by Budapest's decision, leaving a "B" list of cities, at best. There is also the thought that LA 2028 would outlive the current Trump administration by either eight or four years, lessening the political fallout, fears of potential travel conflicts or other unforeseen issues that could dampen

enthusiasm and plague athletes and spectators alike. Ah, the perfect solution, Paris in 2024 and LA in 2028. So what's the catch?

Agenda 2020, with its direction that hosting the Games should not be an exercise of excessive spending and taxation, is a major point of emphasis for the IOC. If the IOC does not award LA the Games in 2024, the integrity and credibility of Agenda 2020 would not only be jeopardized but also would be seen as a global embarrassment to its drafters.

The new US administration's international agenda, including the recently proposed immigration plan, create complications and could negatively impact LA 2024's chances. On Super Bowl Sunday, February 5th, President Donald J. Trump publically endorsed the LA bid, having previously phoned the IOC in late November to offer his support. Although Trump supports the LA bid, his stance on immigration presents the IOC with a moral dilemma, as it flies in the face of the Olympic Movement's values of inclusion and fair competition, with the entire world peacefully competing for the betterment of humanity. The Refugee Olympic Team that competed in Rio 2016 was emblematic of the IOC's purpose: building a better world through sport.

While the decision to award the 2024 Games will be just one challenge for the IOC, also having to consider the 2028 Games, I would hope it will award 2024 to LA to demonstrate the power of inclusion and the world that sport has no bias and can be the catalyst for changing perspectives and attitudes about other cultures, ideologies and philosophies. The IOC should stand by Agenda 2020 and show the world through this award that it is an organization committed to catalyzing change. It is important to remember that the Games are awarded to cities and regions/countries, not governments. And as the IOC looks to the future of the bidding process and the Olympic Movement as a whole, Paris would make a terrific 2028 host. More than ever the people of the United States need the Games, and the Games need the United States sooner versus later.



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