



- Home
- About Us
- Articles
- Gallery
- Date Book
- Subscribe

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NEWS

- ANOC/NOC
- IOC
- Bidding For The Games
- Rio 2016
- PyeongChang 2018
- Tokyo 2020
- Beijing 2022
- Past Olympic Games
- WOA
- Federations
- SportAccord Convention
- Op Ed
- Sponsor Spotlight
- Other Games
- More News

Op Ed: A Provocative Catch-22 for 2024

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With the International Olympic Committee vote to award the 2024 Summer Olympic Games just over five months away, the Los Angeles 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 Budapest dropped out in February instead of facing a referendum. 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 to the end of holding the Winter and Summer Games in the same calendar year. 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. Both 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 Evaluation Commission and in all likelihood, the IOC will simply have to determine which Games it awards to Paris and LA.



Los Angeles and Paris are the final two cities in the 2024 race. (IOC)

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Paris 2024 bid leaders pose in front of the Eiffel Tower. (Getty Images)

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 IOC commitments to inclusivity, can and should the IOC award these Games to a U.S. 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 the third Paris bid since 2008. 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, 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 U.S. Games during their current television broadcast contract which ends in 2032.



LA 2024 will utilize venues such as the L.A. Rams new stadium. (LA 2024)

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.



Rob Prazmark (21 Media)

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? It's called Catch-22.

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