

Tsunami disaster area Fukushima to host Olympic baseball, softball games

By Justin McCurry, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.21.17

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A woman prays for victims on the sixth anniversary of the 2011 quake-tsunami disaster in Namie, a no-entry zone in Fukushima prefecture. Photo by: Kazuhiro Nogi/AFP/Getty Images

In March of 2011, the city of Fukushima, Japan suffered a nuclear disaster. A tsunami hit the coast and damaged the plant. Thousands of people were killed by the disaster. Many more people were forced to leave their homes.

Now, the city has been given a chance to show it is healing. Fukushima was just chosen to host baseball and softball matches at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Organizers of the Olympics say they hope the move will help the region's recovery.

Tsunami From Earthquake Damaged Nuclear Plant

Fukushima is on the northeast coast of Japan, on the Pacific Ocean. Six years ago, the area was hit by a tsunami caused by an earlier earthquake.

The tsunami also caused damage at a nearby nuclear power plant. This damage then caused chemical explosions and dangerous radiation to be released. Today, the area where the earthquake and tsunami happened is still trying to recover.

Azuma Baseball Stadium Chosen For Events

Azuma Baseball Stadium is about 44 miles northwest of the ruined Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Azuma will host at least one baseball game. It will also host one or more softball games, according to Yoshiro Mori. Mori is president of the 2020 Olympics organizing committee.

Mori says hosting Olympic baseball and softball events will give Fukushima a way to show the world how it has recovered.

He says it will also be a wonderful chance for them to show they are thankful to those who have helped them recover.

Baseball Stadium Located In Unaffected Part Of Fukushima

People never had to move away from the Fukushima neighborhood where the baseball stadium is located. It was designated as safe. In fact, the Azuma Sports Park complex was used as an evacuation center. People went there when they were running from the radiation during the disaster.

Mori said it was a “fantastic idea” to hold baseball and softball matches in Azuma. The president of the International Olympic Committee, or IOC, is Thomas Bach. He and Japan’s prime minister, Shinzo Abe, talked about it last October.

Then two months later the IOC changed their minds. They decided not to include Azuma in the games.

Riccardo Fraccari is the president of the World Baseball Softball Confederation. He is glad the IOC changed their minds back again. Fraccari says these games will “inspire hope and highlight the regeneration in Fukushima.”

Bringing Things Back Up To Standards

The local Fukushima government has offered to help pay for the games. Olympic games are very expensive. The local government will help pay for the costs of the fixing up the 30,000 seat stadium. They need to bring it up to Olympic standards.

Almost 11,000 people died in the Miyagi district during the March 2011 disaster. Miyagi will host the first rounds of matches in the 2020 football Olympic games.

Nuclear power officials in Japan have a 40-year plan to safely close the Fukushima plant. They say they are sure this work will not affect the Olympics.

Quiz

- 1 Based on information in the article, which of the following statements is TRUE?
- (A) The Olympics organizing committee decided not to host the Olympics in Fukushima.
 - (B) Azuma Sports Park is not up to Olympic standards and will need improvements before hosting any events.
 - (C) Fukushima is a good choice for the Olympics because the area has fully recovered from the damage of the disaster it experienced.
 - (D) Many people were forced to evacuate the Azuma Sports Park complex during the disaster of 2011, but it is safe now.
- 2 Which section of the article suggests that Fukushima will benefit from hosting the Olympics?
- (A) "Tsunami From Earthquake Damaged Nuclear Plant"
 - (B) "Azuma Baseball Stadium Chosen For Events"
 - (C) "Baseball Stadium Located In Unaffected Part Of Fukushima"
 - (D) "Bringing Things Back Up To Standards"
- 3 What is MOST likely the reason why the author included the information about Riccardo Fraccari in the article?
- (A) He is a member of the IOC and helped them change their minds back.
 - (B) He was a part of the meeting that decided to hold baseball and softball matches at Azuma.
 - (C) He emphasizes the positive outcome that hosting the Olympics will have for Fukushima.
 - (D) He helped determine that the Azuma Sports Park complex was safe.
- 4 Based on the section "Azuma Baseball Stadium Chosen For Events," which of the following statements would Yoshiro Mori AGREE with?
- (A) Azuma Baseball Stadium needs to be improved before hosting the Olympics.
 - (B) The Olympics organizing committee must be certain Fukushima is safe before hosting any events.
 - (C) Fukushima will need many volunteers to help them recover and prepare for Olympic events.
 - (D) Fukushima will be able to demonstrate its strength if it holds Olympic events.