

Beijing's Big Olympics

China aims to make the 2008 Games the most spectacular ever

By Li Li Leung



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Whoever said that things are bigger in Texas has probably never been to Beijing. In practically every way, the 2008 Beijing Games will go down in history as the biggest and most spectacular Olympics ever held. Revenue, spectator attendance, infrastructure investment and television viewership will all surpass historical records. These Games will dwarf those of the past by virtually every measure, meaning that they will be a sight to behold.

We all know that China is home to 1.3 billion people, but did you know that, according to surveys, over 90% of the population is fully supportive of the Olympic Games? While polls can sometimes be unreliable in China, the overwhelming excitement in the country seems to back this figure. China's positive reaction far surpasses the 60% approvals registered in survey for recent Olympics.

There seems to be a sense that these Games will unite the entire nation in an unparalleled way. China has, in one way or another, been celebrating ever since Beijing was awarded the prestigious rights back in 2001. If you count previous attempts to get the Olympics, the country has been preparing for about two decades, which explains the unprecedented level of anticipation.

The Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) has set record numbers in securing sponsorship revenue for these Games and low ticket prices have been set to accommodate the budgets of average Chinese families. When all is said and done, the Olympics will have generated ap-

Past Olympics like Sydney (above) have been great, but Beijing looks to top them all

proximately US\$2 billion in sponsorship revenue alone. Compare that figure to the US\$302 million that Athens sold in sponsorship for the 2004 Olympic Games, and the US\$492 million that Sydney sold for the 2000 Olympic Games.

BOCOG's success is partly due to China being one of the world's largest untapped consumer markets, thereby attracting the attention of global corporations. Combine this with the fact that many companies are trying to make a big impression with China's newly rich consumers, and you have a combination for success. With this attention, BOCOG has been able to bring in over 50 sponsors from a wide range of industries that have been willing to pay top dollar to have official association with these Games.

Another first for these Games is the extent to which the Torch Relay has travelled the globe. While the international leg of the Olympic Torch Relay was fraught with trouble, and the domestic leg has also seen some issues, the relay will still be celebrated as the longest ever, with the highest number of torch bearers in history. By the time it is completed, 21,880 flame bearers will have carried the torch a total of 137,000km. Let us not forget that the torch also made a not-so insignificant trip to the peak of Mt. Everest, another first-ever for the Olympic Relay. Meanwhile, Athens invited 11,400 torch bearers and the torch travelled a total of 93,000 km. Similarly, Sydney hosted 13,300 bearers and saw the torch travel 27,000 km.

Of course, another very important distinguishing feature of these upcoming Olympics is that they will be a coming-out party, not just for Beijing, but for the nation of China as a whole. Most Olympic Games are hosted by a city, as opposed to an entire country. One can recall that neither the 1996 Atlanta Games, nor the 1984 Los Angeles Games, were considered the "American Olympics." Those Games were about Atlanta and Los Angeles, specifically. Yet this summer, events will be held in seven separate cities: Tianjin, Shenyang, Qinghuangdao, Shanghai, Qingdao, Hong Kong, and, of course, Beijing. Soccer (football) preliminaries will be held in Tianjin, Shenyang, Qinghuangdao and Shanghai. Qingdao will be

the host site for sailing and Hong Kong will play host to the equestrian events. These Games mark the first time that events will be held in so many different cities spread so far apart within one nation.

The Chinese Government has also invested at least US\$40 billion into the infrastructure surrounding these Games, with some estimates far exceeding that figure. This investment has gone into the building of roads, venues, hotels, subway lines, airports, train stations and almost anything else a city or country would need to have millions of visitors arriving in the same month. In contrast, Sydney invested US\$6 billion in its infrastructure, a truly vast disparity in scale, even in light of the fact that at the start of the lead up to the Games Sydney's infrastructure was more developed than China's.

The legacy these Games leave behind will certainly be incredibly long lasting. After the Olympics are gone, this country, and especially Beijing, will be left with many remnants of the historic events. One of the most important will surely be the infrastructure that will allow China to host additional world class international sporting events in the future. The arrival of these events will further stimulate an already vibrant sports economy.

These Olympic Games will also serve as a springboard for the future of the sports industry in Beijing and the rest of China. Once the world sees that China has the ability to host an Olympics, it will be even more interested in further investing in this economy. This comes on the heels of the NBA, NFL, Major League Baseball, top-flight soccer and world class boxing all making a push into the Chinese market. Clearly 2008 is just the beginning for sports in China.

So watch out Texas! Beijing is looking to make this summer's Games as big as it gets! 🇨🇳

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Beijing Olympics by the Numbers

Participating Countries



Licensed Products Sales



Global TV Viewers



Television Revenue



% of Tickets Sold



Tickets Sold



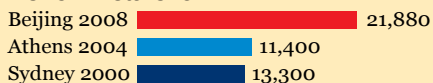
Venues



Sporting Events



Torch Bearers



Length of Torch Relay



- All dollar figures are actual and have not been adjusted for inflation.
- All 2008 Beijing Olympic Games figures are anticipated.

Sources: IOC, BOCOG, Xinhua