



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# A look at the 2028 Olympic Games—will Los Angeles be able to meet the challenges of today's sport?



As the Olympic Games in Paris enter their final stages, the eyes of athletes and the public are slowly turning to the next host, Los Angeles, and its ability to overcome one of the biggest organisational challenges there is.

Cassey Wasserman, the chairman of the LA 2028 Olympic Games, triumphantly **announced** (before the Games even began in Paris) that he already had signed contracts that would bring in more revenue than Paris would generate by the end of the Games.

From a business standpoint, there should be no major doubts about the success of the Games in Los Angeles because, as Mr Wasserman emphasised, the USA is the only country in the world that does not invest any public money in its Olympic movement, leaving everything to private funding.

However, the Games in Paris will already present the American organisers with major challenges that they could not solve with effective funding alone. Several trends have been testing the Olympic Movement's ability to keep pace with complicated processes without jeopardising its universal values.

Starting from the ceremonial opening and the first competitions in Paris, their LA successors are already in an awkward position to answer questions about how they will deal with some of the most complex issues facing the Olympic Movement today in four years' time.

## Politicisation

It will be extremely challenging—nearly impossible—for Los Angeles 2028 to be the first Olympic Games in which certain countries and individual athletes will not face participation bans.

In four years, there will likely be another refugee team on the field, even though the organisers and, most importantly, the members of that team would rather it did not exist.

In Paris, 37 refugee athletes compete in 12

disciplines. They come from one of the world's most numerous "nations": the "nation" of refugees. Today, they represent up to 100 million forcibly displaced people around the world.

However, no factor gives reason to hope that their numbers will decrease, especially in the next four years. The number of refugees and forcibly displaced persons has been **rising** steadily for 12 years and is now three times higher than a decade ago.

At the same time, no factors that decisively drive people to leave their homes and countries against their will have decreased: armed conflicts, climate change, and the difficult economic situation.



*In Paris, 37 refugee athletes compete in 12 disciplines. They represent up to 100 million forcibly displaced people around the world - Amir Arslan Ansari of Refugee Olympic Team*

Political circumstances prevented athletes from Russia or Belarus from participating in the Games in Paris. Due to Russian aggression against Ukraine, the International Olympic Committee has long sought a balance between a complete ban on the participation of athletes from these countries and regular participation, allowing a certain number to compete but not under national symbols.

Four years is a long time in which political circumstances can change. But will this change happen in time, and, more importantly, will it be convincing enough to lift the embargo on Russia and Belarus?

The Russian Olympic team faced punishment

for a state programme of systematic athlete doping even before the Russian aggression against Ukraine began. The interference of state institutions under an authoritarian regime in sports organisations has also long been a violation of Olympism principles.

The possibility that participants from other countries will experience the same fate as the Russian and Belarusian athletes at the next Games in Los Angeles cannot be ruled out. Calls for applying the same standards to Israeli athletes as to Russian and Belarusian athletes were insistent even before Paris, but the IOC did not allow this.

But why should we rule out the question of the participation of athletes from Iran, North Korea, or some sub-Saharan African countries ruled by military juntas before LA 2028?

## Gender issues

The boxing match between Italian Angela Carini and Algerian Imane Khelif was just the culmination of a long-standing problem in world sport surrounding the issue of gender.

The IOC assured that Imane Khelif was a regular participant in the women's competition, and her defeated opponent, Carini, subsequently **apologised** for refusing to shake the winner's hand at the end of the match.

But the global public was already divided over the participation of transgender people in sporting competitions. The boxing match in Paris has only raised the issue to one of the highest levels of attention and challenges that the Olympic movement has yet to address.

Liberal California, the host of the next Olympic Games, seems to be taking the most liberal approach to this challenge, as much as it will be within its jurisdiction.

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However, dozens of delegates from conservative circles sit on the IOC and influence the criteria under which some future competitions will take place.

Throughout history, these criteria have rarely remained fixed and uniform, particularly when it comes to gender issues. Until the late 1960s, gender was verified by a visual examination of the competitor's body; later, a chromosome test, a testosterone test, or a combination of other medical methods were introduced.

Cases of gender manipulation will not rock the Olympic Games in Los Angeles if the IOC succeeds in resolving the confusion among sports associations on this issue and at least brings the criteria closer to general acceptance.

## The dominance of technology

The Paris Olympics organisers are proud to have integrated innovation and AI into various areas of the Games more than anyone else has before. Most of these are for spectators, but there are also new services for cybersecurity teams and better competition organisation.

"We will see some pioneering concepts at Paris 2024. We are taking a measured approach for now, to test and evaluate how AI can be used to enhance the Olympic Games and have them future-ready," **said** Ilario Corna, IOC's Chief Technology Officer.

However, the rapid progress of technology and its application in sport is already making an almost decisive difference in the results between the richer and more technologically advanced countries and those that are technologically lagging behind.

## Not everyone has the same optimal conditions for using technology. This gap will widen rather than narrow by 2028

Today, the preparation of athletes, the huge databases used by AI to determine training algorithms, and the competition itself are prerequisites without which achieving top results would be unthinkable. However, not everyone has the same optimal conditions for using technology. This gap will widen rather than narrow by 2028.

In four years' time, the Olympic Games in Los Angeles will undoubtedly be an opportunity to celebrate technological progress and the use of high-tech in sport. However, it will also be a challenge not to neglect the people-centred idea of Olympism at the expense of technological progress.