

# Nagano: my home town

Nagano is my home town and is host to the third Olympic Games to be held in Japan. In some senses, it is still hard, even now, to believe the course that events have taken. I am sure that my teacher at Nagano High School, when he looked at his scruffy students Tasuku Tsukada and Makoto Kobayashi, hardly dreamt that in future years the two of us would be leaders of the team hosting the last Olympic Winter Games of the twentieth century, one as mayor of the host city, and the other as director general of the organizing committee.

Yet as I look around Nagano now I see plenty of evidence that the day of the opening ceremony is swiftly approaching. The beautiful, elegant competition venues which my childhood friend Mayor Tsukada has had constructed in our city are ready to welcome the athletes of the world. The citizens of Nagano have put up flags and banners to greet our international guests. These are just some of the most visible signs that the Olympic Games are in Nagano. In the background, we at the organizing committee have been working hard to prepare the infrastructure of the Games. The results system is already up and running and we can confidently say that the provision of information to the media and other members of the Olympic family will be perfectly reliable. The transportation network has been given a thorough overhaul, and athletes and media personnel will be given top priority. The Olympic Village, which has been praised as "perfect", opens on 24 January. Rights-holding broadcasters have been busy installing equipment at the International Broadcasting Centre since last September, and the Main Press Centre, fully equipped with all the necessary facilities, is ready

by Makoto Kobayashi\*



to open its doors to the world's press. The feeling of excitement is also building. One of the most enduring qualities of the Olympic Games is that they give countries around the world the chance to showcase their culture, the opportunity to shine on centre-stage and share the beauty of their artistic heritage. In Nagano, we want to make especially certain that visitors will experience the rich tapestry of our home region as well as of Japan; we want to ensure that fond memories of the Nagano Games will forever remain imprinted on peoples' hearts and minds. Anyone attending an event in our cultural programme, or watching either the opening or the closing ceremony, will recognize the flavour of Japan. Master craftsmen living in the south of Nagano Prefecture have

painstakingly made each competition medal by hand, incorporating traditional Japanese lacquerware techniques. The torch design, too, was modelled after traditional pine branch torches used in ancient Japan.

The theme we have adopted for the Nagano Games is "Games from the Heart - Together with Love", and we truly hope that all people will be moved by the eager participation of local people and volunteers. Our three goals are to encourage the participation of children, to respect the beauty and bounty of nature, and to stage a festival of peace and friendship.

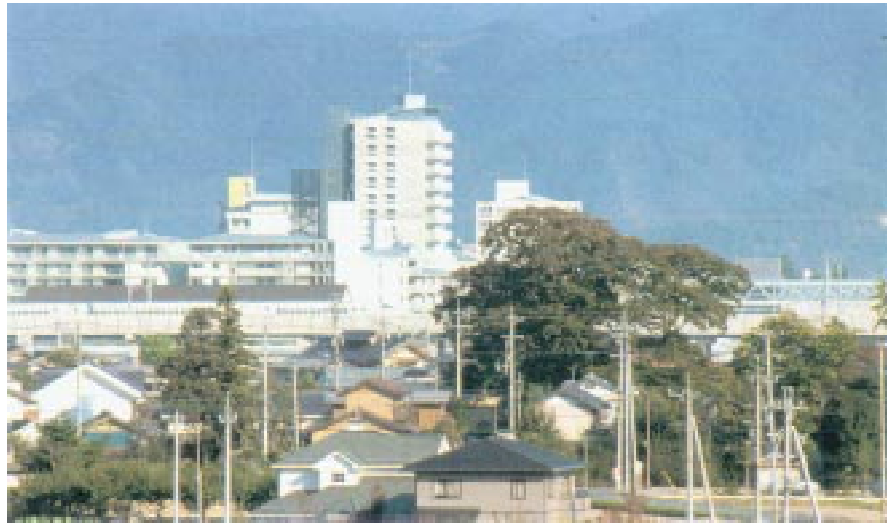
In conversation with the IOC President, he often reminds me the entire Olympic family is part of the same effort, working together as a united crew. Indeed, over the years the expert advice and helpful cooperation of the International Winter Sports Federations and the National Olympic Committees have been of vital importance and support to us. And while there have been rough seas and stormy weather as the Olympic ship has sailed toward the horizon of a successful Nagano Games, the illuminating beacon of the IOC has always been there to guide us safely to shore.

"What is necessary for the success of the Games?" I am asked this question frequently, so I have given the topic careful consideration. In my opinion, there are three sets of conditions which must be fulfilled. The first is that it is absolutely necessary for successful Games to be held peacefully. Since the Olympic Games are a festival of peace and friendship, it would be outrageous for any act of violence to be committed here. We at the Organizing Committee are working in close cooperation with

police and security forces to ensure the safety of everyone involved. We must also prepare the optimum competition environment for the athletes. and this. I believe, we have done. Next, people enjoying the Games, whether at the venues or on their television sets at home, should find the whole spectacle thoroughly thrilling and enjoyable.

Finally, if the weather is kind to us then the Games will undoubtedly be a success. Unfortunately, there is little we can do to ensure that this condition is met, but we have prepared for the worst by, for example. having snow making machines on standby in case there is not enough natural snow.

Our current century has witnessed unprecedented war and strife. It seems we have finally realized that we must all strive for peace. and therefore it is my personal hope that the Nagano Games will convey a message that will last well into the next century. As a step toward realizing this, we are launching



*Nagano City.*

a Peace Appeal centring on the Olympic Truce and a call for all landmines to be banned. If the people of the world are moved by the welcoming hospitality offered to them by my fellow citizens, and if we have in some way

contributed to world peace, then I can relax and allow myself to say that the Games from the Heart are an unqualified success.

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*The NAOC delegation.*