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TICKETS

Demand varies dramatically

Demand for tickets in the World Cup 2002 host countries has varied dramatically.

The Japanese organizing committee (JAWOC) received more than 15 million ticket applications — more than 70 times the number of available seats — from Japanese fans.

Ticket requests in South Korea have picked up dramatically since the World Cup draw in Busan Dec. 1, but the Korean organizing committee (KOWOC) considered putting a portion of the 730,000 tickets reserved for Korean fans on sale in Japan and China because of lagging domestic interest, according to Korean reports.

KOWOC insists it has no plans to sell tickets earmarked for Korean fans in Japan or China, but it admitted 150,000 tickets were unsold as of late December.

Of the 32 World Cup games in Korea, only 12 games — including South Korea-USA and USA-Portugal — are sold out to Korean fans.

Before the draw, ticket sales were so poor in Cheju and Kwangju that only 10 percent of the available tickets had been sold.

Tickets for the Korea-hosted games could be easily sold in China, where 800,000 fans have reportedly applied for tickets to the 2002 World Cup.

FIFA's decision to place China in South Korea was in response to concerns about lagging sales.

World Cup interest is at fever pitch in Japan, where soccer is much more visible. Japan also has almost three times the population (125 million) than South Korea has (46 million).

Soccer was center stage at New Year celebrations in Seoul. South Korean organizers are banking on World Cup fever to build in the months ahead.

For Japanese fans without tickets, the only hope is that the international allotment of tickets to Japan-hosted games doesn't sell out. Returns will be placed on sale later in the year. Otherwise, fans will have to turn to scalpers, who may get more than \$ 1,000 a ticket for big games.