

Tokyo 2020: The Japanese superfan who spent \$40,000 on Olympics tickets

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Kazunori Takishima has been traveling the world to support Japan at every Olympic Games for the past 15 years, so it was a dream to see the event in his home city of Tokyo. But when a ban on spectators was announced last week due to Covid-19, that dream was over.

He had spent nearly \$40,000 on 197 tickets for him and his friends, to cram in as many events as possible during Tokyo 2020, which starts on July 23.

"It took an unbelievable amount of time, effort, and passion," Takishima told CNN. "But I was so passionate about the Olympics that even though it was very difficult and challenging, I enjoyed the process of buying the tickets."

The 45-year-old real estate businessman worked out that if he watched all the events he had booked, he would have broken the Guinness World Record for attendance at Olympic events. He'll now get a refund on the tickets he's purchased.

"All I have now is sadness, and every time I look at the tickets, I cry," Takishima said. "I'm just sad."

Takishima's love for the Olympics started in 2005 when he saw a figure skating competition for the first time and immediately bought tickets for the 2006 Torino Olympics in Italy. He was hooked.

"I went there with little expectations," he said. "But when I saw Shizuka Arakawa win the gold medal, it inspired me so much that I have been going to the Olympics ever since."

He said the drive and passion of all the athletes keeps him coming back.

"When I see their tears of joy when winning the medal, or their tears of frustration at losing, it makes me want to work harder," he said. "I get that kind of courage and emotion every time I go."

And it's the athletes which will suffer the most from the lack of support in the stands, he said.

"It's a great loss when your family can't come," Takishima said. "So I hope everyone will at least cheer for them in front of the TV."

Only members of the media and selected dignitaries will be allowed to watch the events at this year's Games, which was delayed from summer 2020 due to the pandemic.

The decision by Olympic officials to ban spectators was designed to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Japan just entered its fourth state of emergency as coronavirus cases rise, with more than 1,000 daily cases reported just in Tokyo this week.

But Takishima believes the risks are low, especially when millions of people per day are still using the subway in Tokyo.

"(The) decision for banning spectators was made based on emotion rather than numbers," Takishima said. "I think the European countries that held the soccer game made the right decision. I am really disappointed in the government and the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee."

"The biggest difference between the UK and the US and Japan is that Japan is slow to make political decisions and unable to take risks," he added.

Despite his disappointment, he says the experience won't put him off being an Olympic superfan.

"I will continue to visit and support the Olympics until the day I die," Takishima said. "While I'm still able to move, I plan to see all the Games from the opening to the closing (ceremonies). I can eventually beat the record."

