

UW-Madison: Experts ready to talk Olympics

Posted on Thursday, Jul 22, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

MADISON – After being delayed a year by the pandemic, the world's best athletes, including many with ties to UW-Madison, will compete in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games July 23 through Aug. 8. Experts from UW-Madison can speak on a wide range of subjects relating to the competition.

More experts can be found on the Experts page here: <https://experts.news.wisc.edu/>

Mental health of athletes

All that training doesn't make elite athletes any more immune to mental illness than the rest of us. Dr. Claudia Reardon is reminded of this every day as she meets with athlete-patients in her sports psychiatry practice.

"I think the general perception of their physical prowess does a disservice to athletes – they may not be asked during routine medical checkups about problems they have with mood and anxiety, Reardon says. "And the pandemic, with so many changes in athlete competition and training schedules and teammate support networks, has really created additional challenges for mental health."

Reardon serves as co-chair of the International Olympic Committee's Workgroup on Mental Illness in Elite and Olympic Athletes and co-directs the International Olympic Committee's Diploma Program on Mental Health in Elite Sport. A professor of psychiatry and UW consulting sports psychiatrist to Badger Athletics, she is available to address any topics of mental illness in elite athletes. This includes depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use disorders, suicide, and others. Reardon can be reached at creardon@wisc.edu, 608-265-5481.

Athletes testing positive for COVID-19

As more athletes test positive for COVID-19, what is the potential for an outbreak? Laura Albert, an expert in mathematical modeling and a professor in industrial and systems engineering at the College of Engineering, can discuss.

“With 11,000 athletes participating in the Olympics, there are bound to be a few positive tests. However, this is not reason for concern,” Albert says. “There are many precautions in place that will likely prevent large COVID-19 outbreaks, including daily COVID-19 testing for the athletes, high levels of vaccination among the athletes and coaches (>80%), and a ‘bubble’ that limits athletes’ travel outside of the Olympic village.

“We know a lot more than we did a year ago, and that knowledge is helping shape precautions and risk management practices in the Olympic village and in the competitions. With more than 80% of athletes being immunized, any COVID-19 cases are unlikely to propagate throughout the population of competing athletes.”

Albert can be reached at laura@engr.wisc.edu or on Twitter @lauraalbertphd.

Going for the gold – and endorsement deals

Kevin Chung, an assistant professor in marketing at the Wisconsin School of Business, has written about the value of celebrity endorsements on sales in sports and can discuss the value of an Olympic gold medal for an athlete’s brand and endorsement opportunities.

“The value of the gold vs silver medal is significant in regards to signing a new sponsorship,” Chung says. “With this being said, gold medal is now becoming more of a ‘necessary but not a sufficient condition’ for athletes as brands want to make sure medal winners are engaging AND their personalities/values align well with the brand. This is especially amplified today as athletes have their own platform to reach people where good/bad behaviors are often exhibited live.”

Chung can be reached at kychung@bus.wisc.edu, 608-265-4431.

‘Cool’ uniforms, wearable technology

Athletes will be able to beat Tokyo’s heat with the help of Team USA Olympic outfitter Ralph Lauren. The opening ceremony uniform will mark the debut of its RL COOLING jacket, which includes a device that allows wearers to self-regulate the temperature. The battery-powered device, located on the back of the neck, creates

a cooling sensation that lasts, even in the most oppressive heat.

Marianne Fairbanks, an associate professor in Design Studies at the School of Human Ecology, can speak about advances in uniforms. She may be reached at 608-890-3327 or mfairbanks@wisc.edu.

Augmented Reality and wearable technology will also play big parts in this year's games, allowing viewers to feel closer to the action and athletes to monitor performance.

Kevin Ponto, an associate professor in the Design Studies Department at UW-Madison whose work spans the disciplines of art, science, engineering and design, can discuss. His area of research centers on virtual and augmented reality and in the integration of emerging technologies.

"I will be excited to see how emerging technologies reshape the way athletes train and compete as well as the way fans can enjoy the games remotely," Ponto says.

He can be reached at 608-265-3958 or kevin.ponto@wisc.edu.

The Olympian mindset and what we can learn from it

The Olympic Games generate excitement around the world because it highlights, in part, what humans can accomplish. Athletes get far on physical ability, but what separates the truly elite from the rest is how they use their minds. Having a strong mindset can be one of the most powerful tools for succeeding in the face of competition.

Shilagh Mirgain, psychologist at UW Health, can discuss what we can all learn from how Olympic athletes mentally prepare for their sport to improve our own performance in challenging situations, whether it's competing as an amateur athlete, giving a presentation at work, playing an instrument, taking a test, or doing a project at home. Read more here: <https://www.uwhealth.org/news/-olympian-mindset-what-we-can-learn-from-it>

Contact: Gian Galassi, 608-235-2926, ggalassi@uwhealth.org

Toyota pulls ads from Olympics

Just days before the Games begin, Toyota announced that it had decided against

running Olympics-themed television advertisements in Japan, a symbolic vote of no confidence from one of the country's most influential companies.

Tom O'Guinn, a professor of marketing at the Wisconsin School of Business and an expert on branding and consumer behavior, can discuss the reasons behind the company's decision. With images of an empty arena and other concerns, O'Guinn says that based on a simple risk calculation, it didn't seem worth the cost given the potential downside.

O'Guinn can be reached at toguinn@bus.wisc.edu.

Olympic spirit

Jane Piliavin, a professor emerita, is an expert on the sociology of sports and can talk about how the collective national mood is lifted when U.S. teams perform well in the Olympics.

Piliavin can be reached at jpiliavi@ssc.wisc.edu.

Get to know some of the Badgers competing in Tokyo here: <https://uwbadgers.com/sports/2021/7/1/2020-tokyo-olympics.aspx>

Media contacts are:

- Basketball: Diane Nordstrom, DKN@athletics.wisc.edu
- Rowing: Paul Capobianco, PHC@athletics.wisc.edu
- Rugby: Jessica Burda Leslie, JDB@athletics.wisc.edu
- Soccer: A.J. Harrison, AH3@athletics.wisc.edu
- Swimming: Kelli Steffes, KG3@athletics.wisc.edu
- Track & Field: Diane Nordstrom, DKN@athletics.wisc.edu