

The Olympics is one of the few competitions that offers hope

Written By ROBERT BELARDI

Former 11-time Ironman champion and motivational speaker Lisa Bentley says, the 2021 Olympics will be an extraordinary celebration.

This past March, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe postponed the prestigious event, originally set to take place this summer, until 2021, preventing fans to coalesce into large audiences and athletes to gear up for their competitions.

"It will be such an incredible celebration and we will really appreciate the power of sport, the power of community, the power of networking. All of these countries, cities and athletes and communities coming together for one massive, massive event," the Caledon native explains.

Bentley, was set to join the CBC commentary panel this year for the Olympic games.

Historically, this is not the first time Japan has encountered difficulty hosting the Olympics. The country was forced to forfeit the Summer and Winter Olympics in Tokyo and Sapporo respectively in 1940 due to the Second World War.

Japan has reportedly invested \$12.6 billion into the upcoming Olympics and postponing the event until 2021, will inflict a 1.4 percent annual decrease to their GDP. Sponsors and television rights have to be delayed as well, further damaging large-market television conglomerates.

As the country of Japan continues further preparations for next year, Bentley says this was a necessary decision.

"This was necessary to happen for the health and wellness. At the end of the day, sports are there to enhance living and to enhance community, not, to be a detriment."

Bentley, is using this time at home to continue working, exercising and found a moment to release a digital copy of her book "An Unlikely Champion" on Amazon. She says, there is a silver lining in between the negativity that we all need to find.

She believes this is a great opportunity to work on yourself. To hone new skills in another area not previously considered.

That also means the athletes of course.

"Finding that one percent, that's all they can do. Find that one percent, make themselves better because what an incredible opportunity this is right now to work on your weaknesses."

It's also an opportunity for athletes on the brink of retirement to begin planning their lives after the Olympics. Some athletes, Bentley says, may be at a loss. Sport is all they have known.

And with another current implication recently announced, if passed, some athletes may be forced to age out without an opportunity to compete in the competition.

President of the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee Yoshiro Mori said earlier in April, it's all or nothing for 2021. It would be incredibly sad to cancel a competition that offers hope.

"I think we need to hold on to the hope. I am certainly hopeful the Olympics are happening next year," Bentley professed.

Hopeful there will be an audience in the stands, athletes to walk as a nation together in the opening ceremony.

Hopeful, there will be a Summer and Winter Olympic games back to back. Hopeful for 2021 to be completely doused in sport.