

Marathon

Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, I'm a Coordinator for International Relations in Toyohashi. Today I would like to introduce one of the original Olympic events, the marathon. I'll discuss the basics of the marathon, and introduce some of the strong contenders going into the Olympics in Tokyo.

The marathon is one of the road events at the Olympics. It is a 42.195km race held on public roads. From the starting line to the finish line, the change in altitude must be within 42m. Two false starts will result in disqualification from the race. Of course short cuts and any other sort of cheating will also result in disqualification.

The marathon has been an Olympic event since the first Olympics in Athens. At that time the marathon was held over a 40km distance. The 42.195km distance was determined in 1924. The first women's marathon was held in 1984. In that very first women's marathon, Joan Benoit set an amazing Olympic cord of 2 hours 24 minutes and 52 seconds, a record which has only been moved slightly since to a time of 2 hours 23 minutes and 7 seconds. The world record women's marathon time is 2 hours 15 minutes and 25 seconds, set by Paula Radcliffe.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic marathon course will pass by many of Tokyo's well known tourist spots. For example, the Imperial Palace, Tokyo Tower, Tokyo Station, Kabuki-za, as well as Asakusa and Sky Tree. The marathon will start and finish at the same point.



The highest point is 35m and the lowest is 5m. Due to the intense summer heat, the marathon will start early at 5:30am and will feature water stations every 5km.

Toyohashi-born Ayuko Suzuki is aiming to qualify for the Olympic marathon. Currently 27 years old, Suzuki has made Olympic appearances in the 5,000m and 10,000m events, but she is now putting her focus on the marathon. Suzuki won the Hokkaido Marathon in 2018, and secured her qualification for the Marathon Grand Championship in September. If she manages to capture 1st or 2nd place at MGC, she will qualify for the Olympics. If she fails to qualify at MGC, she will have one more chance with the MGC Final Challenge, which requires athletes to achieve a very difficult time to qualify. The top female and male runner who achieve better than the predetermined time will qualify for the Olympics. The women's time is set at 2 hours 22 minutes and 22 seconds.

Starting at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, qualifying for the Olympics has become much more difficult. The women's minimum qualifying standard was shortened by over 15 minutes from 2 hours and 45 minutes to 2 hours 29 minutes and 30 seconds. About half of the qualification spots will be awarded based on this minimum qualifying standard, and the other half will be determined by world rankings. The number of participating athletes has been reduced from 157 people to 80.

With new rules for qualifying and new competitors stepping into the field, the marathon at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will undoubtedly be intense.