

□□ Karate bidding to be included in program at 2020 Olympics



□□□ **World Karate Federation President Antonio Espinos speaks during a press conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015. Karate is making a push to be part of the program for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. New reforms by the IOC have**

TOKYO (AP) Karate is making a push to be part of the program for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

New reforms by the IOC have given karate officials renewed hope that the martial art could be added to the Tokyo games and the head of the World Karate Federation is meeting with 2020 organizers to make his case for the sport's inclusion.

"Karate is a sport with Japanese roots," WKF President Antonio Espinos said at a news conference Thursday. "Together with the Japanese Karate Federation, we are doing everything we can to make sure karate is part of the program in the 2020 Olympics."

Under the new reforms, known as "Olympic Agenda 2020," the IOC will limit the games program by the number of events rather than number of sports, allowing new competitions to come in. Host cities will also be allowed to propose the inclusion of one or more additional events for their games.

The World Karate Federation says there are 100 million practitioners around the world. Karate is hoping to make it after bids for the 2012 and 2016 Olympics failed.

Espinos said that his sport doesn't require specially-built venues and the competition could be held over three days, making it an attractive addition to the Olympic program.

Because of their popularity in Japan, baseball and softball, which were dropped after the Beijing Olympics, are considered to have the best chance of being added.

Squash, roller sports, sports climbing, wakeboard and wushu are also hopeful of joining the Tokyo program.

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