

Team PNG set for inaugural Olympic Training Camp

Team PNG's preparations for the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021 presses on with the hosting of its inaugural Olympic Training Camp that will be held at the National Sports Institute (NSI) in Goroka from 25th October to 2nd November 2020.

With a year of disruptive preparations and the postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games to 2021, Team PNG's targeted athletes faced many challenges and difficulties to continue to stay motivated and focused for the Olympic Games.

In unprecedented times of a global pandemic, the sporting calendar has been severely impacted both internationally and domestically following the closure of international borders, restrictions to international travel and the closure of sporting facilities. This forced many of Team PNG's targeted athletes to resort to training at home in flexible and unfamiliar circumstances.

This Olympic Training Camp is that opportunity to bridge that gap of a lack of sporting activities for the elite athletes and coaches based in PNG.

The Olympic Training Camp will be the first of its kind in the country where it will target a multitude of sports congregating in one place with the intention of providing elite performance programs for elite coaches and athletes.

The PNG Olympic Committee hosted Training Camp will bring together over 30 targeted athletes and coaches based in PNG from Athletics, Boxing, Rugby 7s, Sailing, Shooting, Table Tennis, Tennis and Weightlifting that are still vying to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games. Sailing is the only sport to have secured two spots for Team PNG in the Men's Laser and Women's Laser Radial events. Teariki Numa and Rose-Lee Numa are the athletes to have secured the spots after claiming the second Oceania quota at the Oceania Sailing Championships held earlier this year.

Athletes and coaches based outside of PNG will not be able to be part of the camp due to the travel restrictions in place and the high costs for international participants to complete necessary COVID-19 requirements. These sports included Athletics, Swimming and Triathlon.

The weeklong camp will cover sports specific trainings, several educational programs being run including topics such as anti-doping, competition manipulation, athlete safeguarding and mental skills to name a few, and medical and physio. The medical team led by Dr Kapua Kapua and Dr Ivan Ravu along with High Performance Sport PNG physios, masseurs and strength & conditioning coaches will conduct medical tests and physio screenings and will have the opportunity to work with the athletes during the week.

Chef de Mission of Team PNG to the Tokyo Olympic Games, Tamzin Wardley is excited about the training camp and is looking forward to being with the team in Goroka.

"This Olympic Training Camp is a great opportunity to get the targeted athlete and officials for Team PNG together after the last couple of months of uncertainty and disruptions due to COVID-19 which has had a negative impact globally."

"It is important that we keep our athletes engaged and focused on Tokyo for Team PNG and this is one way in providing that support for the athletes and coaches with limited sporting activities available domestically," added Wardley.

The athletes had undergone initial fitness testing in September and had begun their resumption of preparations after the completion of the fitness testings and the relocation of the HP Sport centre from Taurama Aquatic Indoor Centre to Sir John Guise Indoor Stadium.

National Sports Institute Director, Janet Gimots is equally excited "We are privileged and humbled to have Team PNG Olympic Team camp and use the facilities at NSI. It is the first of its kind to have an Olympic team of various sports use the facility. We have hosted other teams and athletes for various competitions such as the Pacific Games, Athletics, Rugby League, Soccer to name a few, but this is a very special group of athletes participating in the highest level of competition. We have always encouraged Sports to use the facility, so to have the Olympic team here is a big bonus for us; therefore, we are excited to host the team for the weeklong camp. We thank the PNGOC and Team PNG management for choosing NSI to host this camp and we hope the team will enjoy their stay here".

PNGOC Secretary General, Auvita Rapilla was quick to thank the partners in this initiative "A lot of work has gone into making this training camp happen and none of it would be possible without our partners"

"The Australian Government provided funding to prepare Team PNG to Tokyo and this support has assisted us with putting together this program to help prepare our athletes and coaches for the Tokyo Olympic Games"

"We're also grateful to partner with NSI and HP Sport PNG in this initiative and we look forward to working with them and the National Federations in achieving the Games targets," concluded Rapilla.

Following the training camp, these athletes will complete their second round of fitness testing in December this year.

The Olympic Games will be hosted by Tokyo, Japan from July 23rd to August 8th 2021.

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