



So this event/extravaganza/mass exercise in infrastructure called Universiade '95 is finally upon us. So many hopes for Fukuoka's economic future have been attached to the Games, it's been easy to mistake non-stop construction, the appearance of multi-lingual signs, and nebulous statements about internationalization for the real event. Starting Aug. 23, 6,000 of the world's finest student athletes will begin the intense 12-day competition that is at the heart of Universiade. As athletes from at least 151 countries will be in attendance, the social interaction downtown and in the Athletes Village could be nearly as interesting as the Games themselves. Yet as the excitement of the opening ceremony nears, many of Fukuoka's citizens remain surprisingly apathetic about Universiade and the long-term economic effect it could have on the city.

The Universiade is the world's premier sports competition for university students, and has acted as a pre-Olympic testing ground for some of the world's finest athletes, including Japanese swimmer Daichi Suzuki, US swimmer Matt



Biondi, US long-jumper Mike Powell, and Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci. The Games are open to any amateur athlete between 17 and 27 years old who is currently a university student, or who has graduated from university within the past year.

Universiade '95 will run from Aug. 23-Sept. 3 at 21 venues in Fukuoka City, two in Kasuga City, and one in

Munakata City, with state-of-the-art opening and closing ceremonies to be held at Fukuoka Dome. 10 standard sports will be featured (track and field, basketball, fencing, gymnastics, swimming, diving, water polo, tennis, volleyball and soccer) along with two optional sports (in Fukuoka, judo and baseball).

Highlights should include the Cuban baseball team, the US basketball team, and Olympic gold medal swimmer Janet Evans and high jumper Javier Sotomayor. The



Universiade '95 Fukuoka's Big-Time Bid for the Future

by Eric M. Olson, Tracee Johnson & Erik Brandt

multi-purpose Marine Messe Fukuoka is the centerpiece of that effort, with 80,000m² of floor space and a maximum seating capacity of 15,000. Fukuoka Dome and the other newly-built, ultra-modern sporting venues have already put the city in the running to host the 2002 East Asian Games. With other

projects like the new Tenjin bus/train terminal and Canal-City Hakata nearing completion, Fukuoka has been on a run of incredible growth. Yet in the rush to take advantage of the economic moment,

Fukuoka's famed quality of life has begun to suffer. The population continues to rapidly increase, the second major water shortage in 16 years only recently ended, the city tax rate is one of the highest in Japan, and major arteries like Route 263 turn into

parking lots during rush hour and weekends. As a result, many residents have voiced concern that their tax dollars should have been spent addressing such needs before undertaking an expensive event like Universiade.

City officials have emphasized that Fukuoka will become more "internationalized" because of the Games. Yet what does that mean in these conservative parts? Does it mean, as some foreigners worry, having Thai restaurants, but not Thai residents? Does it mean embracing foreigners simply for image or fashion? Will Universiade mean a multitude of colors and languages filling the restaurants, bars and shops for a few short weeks, or can the people of Fukuoka reach out in a meaningful way and form lasting friendships? Popular events will undoubtedly sell out, athletes will win medals and go down in defeat, but the true test of Universiade's success will be the bonds formed between the young athletes and the people of this region.

It's very difficult to gauge how many citizens will turn out for Universiade, however. On the positive side, each elementary school district in the city has been given a country to cheer for, there are over 200,000 members of the Universiade '95 Fukuoka Citizens Association, and nearly 12,000 volunteers will donate time to the event. However, a worrisome, recent poll said that only 36% of Fukuoka residents were planning to attend Universiade. In addition, ticket prices seem just expensive enough to keep people who will attend from trying a wide

variety of events. Advance sales are said to be fairly slow, and Fukuoka companies have been asked to help out by selling tickets to their employees. Excitement for Universiade proba-



current and future Olympic. Unless organizers come to the excitement the athletes bring, crucial days of competition before people realize that something they want to see inside and outside the

Despite the concerns, Universiade '95 should be entertaining weeks in that we are able to see hundreds of performances in dozens of athletes from around the street with us, eager to sense of this culture. For remember Fukuoka's

economic past, the last few years of growth. Universiade '95 should put a final nail on those not-so-long ago days, and help position the city as a serious economic player in Asia.

Life for the Village People

By now you've heard all about this Universiade thing and you're probably asking yourself, "What about the athletes?" We were asking ourselves the same question to the new Athletes Village in Nishi-ku to The luckiest athletes will get rooms in the 2 a view one should pay millions for. Actually ¥25 million - ¥40 million to be exact, when on sale after the Universiade. The athletes private beach, park and training grounds. any self-respecting foreigner could ever great accommodations, Village organizers their sleeves to keep the village people not working up a sweat.

Village activity will revolve around the Vill This massive yet temporary structure will dining hall where the athletes will feast li a barber and beauty salon (free cuts for at and translator desks galore; a post office shops resplendent with Hakata dolls and a giant disco soon to echo with chants o The disco will be open every night till 11 the athletes will have to find their own organizers are especially excited about th (songs in seven languages, arimasu!) the to sign up to use. We asked if they had a planned and eyebrows shot up all around