



Breakdancing will make its sporting debut at 2024 Olympic games in Paris.

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Olympics: why not all new sports will return at Paris 2024 – but breakdancing will make its debut

Following the appearance of several new sports at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, Senior Lecturer in Sport Management at Northumbria University, [Dr Mikhail Batuev](#), provides expert commentary on how the most recent additions fared in an [article written for The Conversation](#).

Never in the history of modern Olympics has so many new sports made their debut than in Tokyo 2020. Skateboarding, surfing, sport climbing and karate

have now got their maiden Olympic champions, while softball and baseball returned to the Games since they were last seen in 2008.

Five years ago, the decision to include these sports was made by the International Olympics Committee (IOC) to [appeal to the youth](#). For the host nation, Japan, these sports were also highly relevant to them. Baseball is Japan's biggest sport, karate is a traditional favourite and skateboarding is popular among young people.

Some of the new additions will return at Paris 2024. While most of them were hits with audiences watching as well as the athletes competing in them, others still have kinks that need to be sorted out before they return.

Skateboarding stood out

Having researched [skateboarding and its bumpy road to the Olympics](#) for many years, I am certainly a bit biased, but I thought it attracted the most attention out of the five new sports for several reasons. First of which was the participants' age.

No doubt many Olympic viewers were fascinated to see the [youngest ever Olympic podium](#) with the average age of 14 years. For a group of teenagers, there was amazing sportsmanship and maturity on display. Sky Brown, a 13-year-old sensation from the Team GB, was first to run over to her competitor, Sakura Yosoizumi, after she won skateboarding's park contest. This played out across the competition with competitors cheering each other on and congratulating winners from other teams.

Image: Brazilian skater Rayssa Leal. Credit: A.RICARDO / Shutterstock.com

Skateboarding also made its debut in style. From [90s-inspired multi-coloured uniforms](#) of the US skaters to [Brazilian Rayssa Leal's](#) tan-coloured cargo pants held up by a black skater belt to Japan's Aori Nishimura's all-white uniform and platinum blonde hair, [Olympic skateboarding outfits were unanimously praised](#).

Bryce Wettstein, a 16-year-old skater from California, even brought her ukulele to take the edge off the Women's Skateboard Park Finals a bit. Olympics are known to be the high-pressure environment, and it was very

refreshing to see at least skateboarding part of the Games feeling like a gathering of teenagers having fun and cheering for each other.



[Watch video on YouTube here](#)

Tough questions in sport climbing

While the novelty of skateboarding received all round praise, sport climbing left some fans split on whether Olympic climbing [made sense at all](#).

Sports climbing is a unique sport in the Olympic programme (there is nothing similar to it) and was a hit in Tokyo for those who had never seen it before.

The controversy originated when the IOC decided to allocate [only one medal set](#) for sport climbing instead of three. As a result, the governing body of sport came up with the “combined” format of three key types of climbing: bouldering, lead and speed climbing. The latter plays well on television, but in fact it has always been considered a fringe discipline among the core climbers and the most different from the other two.



[Watch video on YouTube here](#)

Climbers normally specialise in a single discipline and given the different skill sets needed for each, the combined Olympic format can be compared to asking swimmers to do a diving competition too, or asking [Novak Djokovic to compete in table tennis for the first set](#). It looks like the fears of climbing community were true, as Adam Ondra, who [many see](#) as the best climber in the world, had to [spend last year training specifically for the speed part](#) and still did not make the Olympic finals.

It feels unfair perhaps, looking at established Olympic sports like swimming or cycling where the same athletes are able to compete for numerous medals in separate disciplines or relays. There has been a lot of politics behind [the IOC relationships with action sports](#), but it does look like they should have listened to the sport community.

What Paris 2024 will have in store

With the 2020 Olympics delayed for a year by the pandemic, the next summer Games are now only three years away. The Paris 2024 preview video that played during Tokyo's closing ceremony had a very urban and artistic vibe to it, and we can expect [the "modernisation" of the Games to continue](#). Part of this modernisation comes with the addition of another new sport in 2024: breakdancing.

It might have been unthinkable to see it in the Olympics ten years ago (and yes, [it is a sport](#)), but that was true for skateboarding. Karate, baseball and softball worked great for Japanese viewers and athletes but will be dropped

as, presumably, they are not that relevant to France, where breakdancing is a huge part of youth culture.

Surfing, skateboarding and [sport climbing \(with more medals thankfully\)](#) are there to stay and strengthen the IOC standard for youth-centred and more [gender-balanced Games](#).

[Research](#) I took part in a few years ago showed that action sports tended to keep women and minorities to the margins of the sports. While commercially men's action sports are still miles ahead, it was heartening to see that Tokyo 2020 indicated a shift from that exclusivity – with female athletes like skater Sky Brown and surfer [Carissa Moore](#) becoming icons in sports traditionally dominated by men.

In coming years, expect to see more girls in [skateparks](#), surfing spots and climbing gyms. And hopefully, governing bodies will give them the same amount of support so the best of them might become the next generation of Olympians.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk

07971274253



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk