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LOOKING AHEAD TO LA28: GOING BACK IN TIME TO ENVISAGE THE FUTURE



Walking through the Italian limestone arches of the iconic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on a recent Monday morning, we were hit with something very unexpected — a misty, soaking rain.

Los Angeles is many things to many people. It is a place that can surprise you. Having so recently been hit with devastating wildfires, the city and its 18 million residents would have found the unseasonal damp weather very welcome.

Once it cleared, it was time to resume the search for names on walls. Sure enough, tucked either side of the arches at the east end of this grand 103-year-old stadium on the city's south side were two names etched, appropriately in gold: "Johan G. Oxenstierna — Sweden" and further down "Daniele Masala — Italy".

These are the champions of Modern Pentathlon at previous Los Angeles Olympic Games. Oxenstierna (SWE) won in 1932 and Masala (ITA) followed up in 1984, adding a team gold to the individual crown.

In a little over three years' time, two new names will be added to fresh plaques after LA28. A city which, even in the rain, pays a warm and glowing tribute to its glorious Olympic past, is very much gearing up for a blindingly bright future.

Joining London and Paris as the only cities to host three Summer Games, Los Angeles is already in preparation mode. But the marathon has not yet become a sprint, and so touring around the city this past week, it was possible to dip in and out of some of the locations which will be vibrating to the Olympic energy in July 2028.

This journey through the Olympic past, present and future of the City of Angels began at the Memorial Coliseum. In 2028 it will become the first stadium to ever host three Olympics. The 103-year-old venue which holds almost 80,000 people in its grand sweeping bowl will host all track and field events.

It sits in a district known as Exhibition Park and just across the street is the stunning campus of the University of Southern California. The red, gold and brown Romanesque Revival brickwork buildings which make up its core make for one of the more picturesque schools in North America. It is here where the Main Press Centre and Media Village will house thousands of journalists. With our visit coinciding with Spring Break, the calm-before-the-storm vibes spread across a quiet campus. The Athletes Village will be across town on the campus of UCLA, in the swanky surrounds of Beverly Hills.



Getting across the city is not the traffic-snarling conundrum it once was. LA is investing heavily in transport upgrades, something you notice as soon as you step off the plane at LAX, where a new

subway link line is close to completion. New fleets of electric city buses are on the way too.

Much like the hugely successful Paris 2024 Games, the first Summer Olympics on US soil for over 30 years has sustainability at its core. LA's bid was built on existing or already planned venues, organizers dividing them into clusters of "sports parks". Can Michelle Gulyas (HUN) or Ahmed Elgendy (EGY) pull off the improbable and defend their Olympic titles in one of these vibrant urban hubs? There will be so many questions answered and dreams fulfilled for the elite and a new generation of Pentathlon.

For now, our visit to the city coincided with the CONCACAF Nations League men's soccer finals with the Canadian team using the Coliseum as its training base but all semi-finals and finals taking place at the newest gem of Los Angeles sports, SoFi Stadium.

A hulking arena which creeps up out of the ground in the Inglewood neighbourhood, Sofi Stadium is a \$6bn architectural wonder, a million square-foot translucent canopy covering the entire stadium complex ensuring an indoor-outdoor feel. Its most famous feature, however, is a hovering infinity videoboard which hangs over the playing field and needs to be seen to be believed. The home of two NFL teams will host the Opening and Closing Ceremonies in 2028 as well as a temporary and record-breaking Swimming arena.



This, after all, is America, where the go-big-or-go-home attitude was born. For the 72 pentathletes who will arrive in Los Angeles in three years' time dreaming of putting their names on the wall as the next Olympic champions, the journey has already begun. Last month's first leg of the UIPM 2025 Pentathlon World Cup season in Cairo (EGY) was the first major step on the road.

By the time 2028 rolls around, parts of this place may well look different and the Olympic energy,

with its echoes of 1932 and 1984, will be coursing through the City of Angels.

By Joe Callaghan