

Tokyo 2020 U-turn allows social media teams to show athletes taking the knee

- *IOC and Tokyo 2020 organisers overturn opening-day ban*



The official Olympics Twitter account included a picture of Lucy Bronze taking the knee against Chile after the U-turn on Thursday.

Sean Ingle *in Tokyo*

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The International Olympic Committee and Tokyo 2020 organisers have performed a U-turn over their stance to stop their social media teams from posting pictures of athletes taking the knee at these Olympic Games.

The decision comes after the Guardian revealed they had issued a diktat against showing such images just hours before Team GB's women's first football match against Chile on Wednesday.

On the first day of competition there was not a single shot of an athlete taking a knee on the official Tokyo 2020 live blog, Facebook and Twitter pages or Instagram. That was despite USA and Sweden players, as well as those from New Zealand, all taking a knee in protest against racism.

An insider told the Guardian they found the IOC's stance odd given the organisation celebrates iconic pictures of protest – including Tommie

Smith and John Carlos raising their fists to protest against the unfair treatment of black people in the US at the 1968 Olympics.

However on Thursday morning Tokyo time on Twitter the @Olympics account tweeted a picture of Lucy Bronze taking a knee – the same photo the Guardian had used in its original story. Along with a message: “Sports started yesterday. Just some of the highlights: Japan starting strong in softball. Teams were kneeling before the competition.”

Athletes at these Games are allowed to protest after the IOC relaxed Rule 50, which had previously forbidden athletes to make any kind of “demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas”.

Peaceful protest is now allowed on the field of play, provided it is done without disruption and with respect for fellow competitors. However, sanctions are still threatened for any protests made on the medal podium.

Speaking after the match against Chile, Steph Houghton, one of Team GB’s three captains, said the decision to take a knee was supported by the entire squad. “We felt strongly as a group that we wanted to show support for those affected by discrimination and equality,” she said.