

IOC Faces 2026 Winter Games Conundrum as Cities Flee



to understand what has gone wrong after reforms in recent years under the 'Agenda 2020' and 'The New Norm' banners. Those programs were aimed at making bidding and staging the Games cheaper and easier but have failed to attract new cities.

Instead, the exodus has increased, piling pressure on the IOC and its President Thomas Bach to stem the flow.

"There is no Plan B," Bach said last month when asked what would happen if Calgary dropped out and if the IOC would consider other cities stepping in. Salt Lake City, hosts in 2002, is often mentioned as a potential quick solution for 2026.

While the IOC has played down the exits, blaming the political climate in some countries or "outdated information" about the cost of the Games given to voters at referendums, there is concern among some of the international winter sports federations.

This is not the first bid process marred by cities pulling out. Just two out of the six original bidders were left for the 2022 Winter Games vote back in 2015, with Beijing eventually winning the prize.

Some have pointed the finger at Russia's Sochi 2014 Games and its staggering \$51 billion price tag as the reason for the cities' lack of interest in the Games.

The IOC directly awarded the 2024 and the 2028 Summer Games to Paris and Los Angeles respectively at the same time after several other cities, including Rome, Boston, Hamburg and Budapest withdrew.

LONDON (Reuters) - The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is facing its most serious bidding crisis in decades as cities drop out of the 2026 Winter Games bid race en masse, leaving a field of just two candidates.

The Canadian city of Calgary on Tuesday became the latest to pull the plug on its 2026 Games candidacy after more than 56 percent of citizens voted against the project in a plebiscite, unconvinced the benefits of the Olympics were worth the multi-billion dollar investment.

Of an original list of seven cities, only Stockholm and an Italian bid remain and both of those are struggling for local and governmental support.

Calgary, which hosted the 1988 Winter Games, became the fourth city to drop out of bidding in mid-race, after Austria's Graz,

Japan's Sapporo and Switzerland's Sion. Turkey's Erzurum was cut by the IOC last month.

The two remaining bidders are Stockholm, which pulled out of the 2022 bidding process after baulking at the Games' cost, and the fragile-combined Italian candidacy of Milan and Cortina D'Ampezzo.

The Italian bid, which at one point included Torino before the city pulled out after a disagreement with the other two, is far from guaranteed the necessary political support amid the country's financial woes.

Stockholm is facing opposition from a new city government which said last month it will be against any bid that includes taxpayer funding.

The whole situation leaves the IOC, which will elect the winner in 2019, struggling

Iran Beat Trinidad in Friendly Match



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran defeated Trinidad and Tobago national football team 1-0 in a warm-up match in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Thursday night.

Karim Ansarifard found the back of the net from outside the area five minutes into the second half.

The Nottingham Forest striker had missed a penalty in the first half.

The match was held as part of

preparation for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, where Team Melli has been drawn along with Yemen, Iraq and Vietnam.

Iran, who is ranked the No 1 team in Asia in FIFA world rankings, is scheduled to open its AFC Asian Cup campaign against Yemen at Abu Dhabi on January 7.

Carlos Queiroz's men will also play a friendly match with Venezuela on November 20 in Doha, Qatar.

Federer Cruises Past Anderson to Reach Last Four at ATP Finals



Switzerland's Roger Federer celebrates winning his ATP World Tour Finals men's singles tennis match against South Africa's Kevin Anderson at the O2 arena in London, Thursday, Nov. 15, 2018.

LONDON (AFP) - Roger Federer has gained sweet revenge over Kevin Anderson at the ATP Finals but is putting thoughts of his 100th title to the back of his mind after both players reached the last four.

The Swiss broke the giant South African's serve four times in a comprehensive 6-4, 6-3 victory at London's O2 Arena even though Anderson had not faced a single break point in his two earlier round-robin victories.

Second seed Federer suffered a painful loss at the hands of Anderson in the Wimbledon quarter-finals this year after leading by two sets, his only

defeat against him in five meetings before Thursday's clash.

The six-time champion started the week with an uncharacteristically ragged display in a straight-sets defeat by Kei Nishikori but has beaten Dominic Thiem and Anderson in straight sets and is looking more like his old self as the tournament progresses.

The victory over fourth-seed Anderson in the Lleyton Hewitt Group takes Federer through to the semi-finals for the 15th time in 16 attempts at the season-ending finale and means he will likely avoid a meeting in the last four against in-form Novak Djokovic.

Chinese Swimmers Star in World Cup

SINGAPORE (Xinhua) - Xu Jiayu, Li Zuhao and Yan Zibei have brought China three gold medals in three different strokes at the FINA Swimming World Cup in Singapore.

In the men's 200m backstroke, China's world champion Xu Jiayu, led from the beginning to the end (1:48.93), beating Mitchell Larkin of Australia (1:49.28).

"I had a rusty morning heat performance and was almost out of the final...I could not let the winning opportunity get away from me anymore in the final,"

said Xu, who smashed a new world record (48.88) in the 100m backstroke in Tokyo.

Li Zuhao won the 100m butterfly (49.64) and Matthew Temple of Australia took silver (50.60) in the same race. Singapore's Rio Olympic champion Joseph Schooling finished fourth (51.05).

In the absence of his strong rival Kirill Prigoda of Russia, Yan Zibei swam his personal best time (56.34) in the men's 100m breaststroke, beating Anton Chupkov of Russia (56.69) and Ilya Shymanovich of Belarus (56.81)

Williams Helps Clippers Edge Spurs for 3rd Straight Victory

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Lou Williams did it again.

He hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 40 seconds remaining and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the San Antonio Spurs 116-111 on Thursday night for their first three-game winning streak of the season.

"We feel like we're a good basketball team despite what people are talking about," Williams said.

The Clippers improved to 7-1 at home after blowing leads of 14 points in the second quarter and 10 in the fourth.

"This was a gritty win," Los Angeles coach Doc Rivers said.

The Spurs were the third high-powered team in a row beaten by the Clippers, who edged Milwaukee and defending NBA champion Golden State in a pair of overtime wins.

Williams proved the difference in those games, too.

He scored the final 10 points in overtime against the Warriors after the Clippers blew a 14-point lead in the fourth. His layup with 0.3 seconds left in overtime beat the Bucks.

Williams led Los Angeles with 23 points off the bench, hitting two free throws to seal the win.

Danilo Gallinari added 19 points, including four straight late free throws, and Tobias Harris 18.

DeRozan scored 34 points for the Spurs, who dropped their third in a row. Rudy Gay added 19 points off the bench.

The Spurs tied it up 107-all on a pair of free throws by LaMarcus Aldridge, who had 16 rebounds.

Williams tried to get Bryn Forbes in the air with a pump-fake and let fly a 3, having missed his two other attempts in the game.

DeRozan scored on a drive to get the Spurs to 110-109, but they got no closer.



Patrick Beverley #21 of the Los Angeles Clippers reacts to making a shot during the second half of a game against the San Antonio Spurs at Staples Center on November 15, 2018 in Los Angeles, California.

Montrezl Harrell scored the fourth to get them back to a double-digit lead, 96-86.

DeRozan missed two free throws before Patty Mills and Marco Belinelli hit back-to-back 3-pointers that closed the Spurs to 96-94.

San Antonio got within one early in the third on basket by DeRozan. He twice scored to put them within two. But every time the Clippers answered to stay ahead, with their second unit scoring 10 of their final 12 points for a 91-84 lead after three.

The Clippers opened the second quarter with a 15-2 run that produced their largest lead of 44-30. Harrell scored seven in a row.

The Spurs answered with a 23-8 spurt, including 10 by DeRozan, to erase their 14-point deficit and give them a 53-52 lead. The Clippers got a pair of free throws by Gallinari to lead 61-60 going into halftime.

Croatia Beat Spain 3-2 to Throw Open Nations League Group

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — Tin Jedvaj scored his second goal of the game in injury time to earn Croatia a 3-2 win over Spain, a result that left both teams and group rival England still in the running to reach the UEFA Nations League finals.

Croatia's win came two months after They were crushed 6-0 by Spain, their worst ever loss, in Seville.

Spain are top of League A, Group 4 with six points. England and Croatia have four points before they meet at Wembley Stadium on Sunday.

The group winner advances to the Final Four tournament in June. The team that finishes bottom of the group will be relegated to League B.

With Croatia needing a victory to



Spain's Alvaro Morata, right heads the ball as Croatia goalkeeper Lovre Kalinic grimaces during the UEFA Nations League soccer match between Croatia and Spain at the Maksimir stadium in Zagreb, Croatia, Nov 15, 2018. (DARKO BANDIC/AP)

keep their hopes alive, the World Cup runner-up pinned Spain in their area in the final moments and Jedvaj scored on the rebound after goalkeeper David de Gea had blocked a shot.