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TOKYO OLYMPICS

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Fireworks illuminated over National Stadium during Sunday's Closing Ceremony of the Olympics in Tokyo.

KIICHIRO SATO • Associated Press

One last celebration

Profoundly human stories lift Olympics

JIM SOUHAN



TOKYO — Erriyon Knighton, America's 17-year-old sprinting phenom, ran through the finish line, then

bounded to the bottle.

In a moment that epitomized the so-called 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Knighton, in a matter of seconds, qualified for the 200-meter final, bounced with joy, ran a finger under the USA logo on the front of his jersey,

then swerved left to sanitize his hands.

There you have the in-actuality 2021 Games: ambition, achievement, precociousness, unleashed emotion, national pride and constant COVID awareness.

The Tokyo Games were postponed, embattled, questionable and constantly at risk. On the last Thursday of the Games, Tokyo set a record with more than 5,000 positive COVID-19 cases. Athletes and workers tested positive, and at least one ugly American, swimmer Michael

See **SOUHAN** on C10 ►



U.S. athletes celebrated during the Closing Ceremony. Americans took home 113 medals, including 39 golds.

LEE JIN-MAN • Associated Press

Closing Ceremony strives to show the Tokyo the athletes didn't see

By RACHEL BLOUNT
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Related: St. Paul gives gymnast Suni Lee a parade after triumphant return. **A1**

TOKYO — Thanks to COVID-19 prevention protocols, athletes at the Tokyo Olympics were forced to remain sequestered from the public, unable to roam around the city or experience the culture. As the Games ended Sunday, Tokyo tried to give them a little glimpse of what they missed.

On the floor of Olympic Stadium, organizers of the Closing Ceremony set up a faux park, complete with actual grass. The idea was to bring a slice of everyday Tokyo life to athletes who had seen it only through the windows of their buses.

It was a noble effort, but it only underscored how strange the past 17 days had been.

The Closing Ceremony usually is a self-congratulatory affair, with flowery speeches declaring the just-concluded Games as the best ever. Sunday's subdued event felt more like a sigh of relief. The pandemic clung to the Tokyo Games like the city's muggy summer air, but Japan soldiered through, keeping the postponed Olympics on course all the way to the end.

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MORE COVERAGE

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MEDALS RACE

Final results after 572 events of Olympic competition:

1 USA: 113 (39 gold, 41 silver, 33 bronze) | **2 China:** 88 (38 gold, 32 silver, 18 bronze) | **3 ROC:** 71 (20 gold, 28 silver, 23 bronze) | **Minnesota:** 12 (6 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze)

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NEXT GAMES? 6 MONTHS

Didn't get enough of the Olympics? Not to worry, the wait is only **179 days**. The Winter Games in Beijing are set to begin Feb. 4.