

# World-Class Breakers Eye the Paris 2024 Olympic Games

Breakdancing has been announced as an official Olympic sport, to debut at the Paris 2024. Strong Japanese medal favorites are Ami and Shigekix.



Ami said that "There's no right or wrong. Just like Picasso and Van Gogh have different styles, I love that I can express my own style." Photo: Jason Halayko/Red Bull Content Pool

Street-born competitions skateboarding and BMX became official sports at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. Skateboarding in particular was a huge success, with Japanese athletes winning gold medals. This increased awareness of the sport, which is expected to see even more athletes taking part in the future. The Ariake Urban Sports Park is expected to be the symbolic place, continuing the legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Games. The next street-born competition attracting attention is breaking, which is an official sport at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Breaking is a competition in which competitors face off one-on-one in an improvised dance battle displaying creativity and skills along with music played by a DJ. The winner is decided by a panel of judges. Two men and two women will be able to compete from each country at the Games. Japan is a powerhouse in the sport, having won gold medals for both men and women at the 2018 Summer



Ami and Shigekix, "We're rivals!"

Youth Olympics, as well as at many other international competitions. Among Japan's top medal hopefuls in the sport will be Nakarai Shigeyuki, known as "Shigekix," and Yuasa Ami, known simply as "Ami."

## Leading to the Big Stage, Paris

Both described the "lack of restrictions on dance styles and ability to freely express themselves" as the main attractions of breaking, but they differed in what was most important to their style.

"For me, it comes down to one word, 'musicality,' which is about the expression of dance to music. It's about melding motion, polished like a sword, with music in a way that doesn't feel discordant. It makes me happy when I surprise the audience and make them wonder, 'How can you move like that to music!'" Shigekix said with a smile. Ami, on the other hand, asserted, "What I always try to do is to be 'beautiful and cool.' It doesn't matter how advanced a technique is—if it isn't perfect, I won't perform it. I have



Shigekix said, "Because it's an improvisational dance form, the ever-changing development of the battle from instant to instant really makes breaking fun." Photo: Little Shao/Red Bull Content Pool

to practice it until the movement becomes totally natural before I use it in a competition."

While both have strong feelings about breaking, they are clear-headed in looking ahead to the Paris 2024. Shigekix said coolly, "I don't set out to do a certain thing or to do something using cheap tricks. I just want to take on each battle heading into Paris and put some wins on the board." Meanwhile, Ami noted, "Rather than thinking too much about the future and feeling anxious, I like to just do my best to practice every day and focus on the battle in front of me. I think this is what leads to success with future steps."

## Urban Sports Popular in Tokyo

Skateboarding, BMX, and breaking are known as "urban sports" that can easily be enjoyed by individuals because they do not require a large space. The popularity of urban sports is growing in Tokyo, especially among the younger generations, for the opportunity they present to compete on individual expression, not just ranking. There are plenty of breaking events taking place, including the world's premier one-on-one breaking battle, Red Bull BC One Japan tournament and Shibuya Street Dance Week, the largest street dance festival in Japan, which is supported by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

The popularity of breaking and other urban sports is sure to grow even more with the performances of Shigekix and Ami in Paris.