Young Athletes Gather as Youth Olympics Begin in Dakar

A stadium in Senegal filled with music, dancing, and parades to welcome teen athletes from around the world.



Young athletes and dancers gather in a stadium around a glowing Olympic-style flame.

According to BBC Newsround, the Youth Olympic Games have begun in Dakar, Senegal. The games opened with a large **ceremony** at Abdoulaye Wade **Stadium**. Tens of thousands of people came to watch. More than 1,100 performers helped start the event.

The Youth Olympic Games are like the Olympics, but for younger **athletes**. The athletes are ages 14 to 17. That means some competitors are not much older than fifth graders. They will spend two weeks taking part in sports contests.

The opening ceremony was not just a **parade**. It told a story with music, movement, and **costumes**. The story was called The Rise of Sitoé. It followed three characters: a mother, a son, and a young girl. They stood for Africa's past, present, and future.

Imagine sitting in the stadium as drums begin to sound. Dancers move across the field in bright groups. Athletes walk in behind flags. People cheer from the seats. The Olympic **cauldron**, a large bowl for a special flame, is lit. That flame is a sign that the games are starting.

The ceremony included lamb, a local wrestling dance. About 100 real wrestlers performed it. Hundreds of dancers also formed shapes on the stadium floor.

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They made a dancing map of Africa. They also spelled out Dakar, the city hosting the games.

Music was a big part of the night. Singer Baaba Maal performed at the ceremony. Some children may know his voice from the music in the movie Black Panther. Other Senegalese musicians also performed. Senegalese-born comedian Khaby Lame appeared too. He is known around the world for short videos online.

Two Senegalese athletes lit the cauldron. They were Abdourahmane Marieme Sy, a **fencing** athlete, and Aicha Diop, a judo athlete. Fencing is a sport with thin swords and safety gear. Judo is a sport where athletes use balance and throws.

The opening showed more than sports. It showed a host country sharing art, history, and pride. For the young athletes, it also marked the start of a huge challenge. They came to compete, but they also stepped into a celebration watched by thousands.

Written from reporting by BBC Newsround.

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THINK IT THROUGH

1. Should a sports opening ceremony spend more time on the host country's culture or more time on the athletes? Defend your view.

2. What might be exciting and difficult about competing in a world event at age 14 to 17?

3. Do famous performers and online stars help an event like this, or can they take attention away from the athletes?

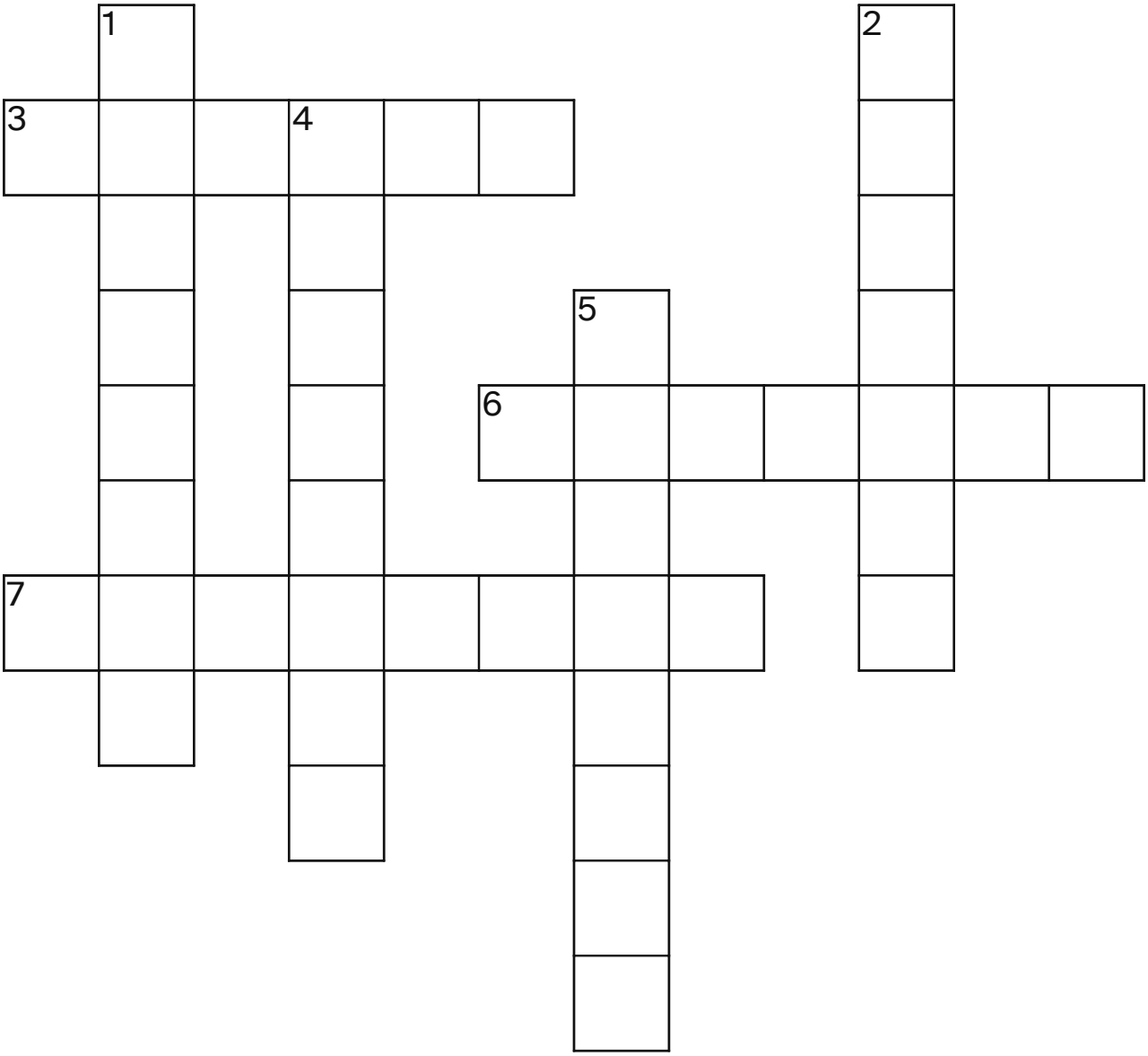
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ATHLETES CAULDRON CEREMONY COSTUMES FENCING
PARADE STADIUM

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ACROSS

3 Group moving together in public to celebrate

6 Sport using thin swords and protective gear

7 Special clothes performers wear to tell a story

DOWN

1 Large bowl that holds a special flame at the games

2 Large place with seats for watching games or shows

4 People who practice to play sports

5 Special event that marks an important occasion

Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

BBC Newsround

"Youth Olympics 2026 begins"

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/cqp9gl7043gvo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

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