

# Tokyo 2020 /// Table Tennis Tables

The table tennis tables at the Rio Olympics attracted great attention, and the same company will supply them for Tokyo 2020.

WITH ITS STREAMLINED WOODEN LEGS and surface called Lee Three

Blue ("blue open"), which appears blue or green according to the light, the Japanese-made table tennis table

The official table tennis table supplier for the Rio Olympics in 2016 was the Japanese company San-Ei Corporation.

Factory manager Kenji Takahashi, who has worked on the production of table tennis tables at San-Ei for over 20 years, explains, "We wanted to

create an attractive, distinctly Japanese table tennis table for the Rio Olympics. Today, table tennis tables are magnificent.

To improve the sport's worldwide look image, table tennis tables are now staged so as to provide a pleasing approach for the camera. For example, the legs of the tables feature dramatic illuminations, and the tables are gradually becoming more shiny and environmental.

We wanted to use wood-working techniques to express the unique qualities of Japan, so we chose to use wooden legs. Previously, steel legs had been the norm."

The company's business is wood, partly because of its history following the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. San-Ei wanted to support the regeneration of regions affected by the disaster. It used to be a wood town in the city of Miyagi, Japan.

For the design of the table, San-Ei turned to industrial designer Shiroshi Tsukamoto, who had previously worked on the Sony Walkman. The innovative shape of the legs was conceptually perfect. However, when the company first made the legs from wood, the legs acted as a kind of spring and produced vibrations. San-Ei undertook a process of trial and error, gradually increasing the size of the legs using thicker wood. Finally, it was able to control the vibrations.

Manufacturing legs from wood was also extremely difficult in terms of cost and technology. San-Ei concluded that the best way to avoid the typical distortions caused by aging was to use plywood. San-Ei approached Yoda, a company well known for its wood bonding technologies, to fabricate the legs from plywood, and it successfully produced the legs' beautiful curves.

San-Ei has been selected as the official table tennis table supplier for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. As to what sort of table tennis table it will create to encourage more thrilling matches, Takahashi says, "We will harness our past design process yet, but we would like to create a table tennis table that is more than Japanese and that represents a message promoting our diverse regeneration."

