

Universiade Spectators Frustrated Over Tickets

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KAZAN — Oleg Paramonov swung by Kazan's Aquatics Center on a whim Thursday, hoping to score a pair of tickets to the Universiade swimming finals for him and his 4-year-old son Ilya.

But at the box office, he was rebuffed. Tickets at the 4,500-seat venue, an enormous wood-beamed facility next to the Kazan Arena football stadium, had sold out.

So Paramonov, 35, did what many a frustrated customer has done: He found a scalper lingering on the sidewalk.

"Another woman had tickets for quite a few competitions so we bought tickets from her," he said as he settled into his seat, pacified by the 100 ruble discount he scored on the tickets, face value 600 rubles (\$18).

With five medal events on Thursday, the Aquatics Center appeared nearly full, but Paramonov's case has become a source of consternation for Universiade organizers, who have complained publicly about people buying tickets but not bothering to show up.

The problem not only means people are turned away at the gate but that crowds inside are often sparse, casting a pall over a \$4.5 billion event that has been feted nationally as a precursor to the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics next February.

"In the first [four] days, we saw free seats at the stands, while people couldn't get inside the venues," organizing committee deputy general manager Igor Sivov said this week.

The regional government has claimed that 500,000 tickets have been sold to the biennial World University Games, which opened in Kazan on July 6 and runs until July 17.

FISU, the officiating body for the Games, expects about 100,000 fans, according to its website.

Elena Shtukova, who works at Kazanorgsintez, a major chemical producer, told R-Sport she has "many friends" who bought Universiade tickets — though she took advantage of two free family passes from her employer.

"I would have bought them if I didn't get them for free," said Shtukova, awaiting the start of the swimming events with her mother.

For those fortunate enough to make it inside the venues, the atmosphere has been boisterous, regardless of the countries competing or, at times, the sincerity of those cheering.

At the downtown Basket Hall — home to the UNICS Kazan professional basketball team — a section of the stand has been reserved for Russian volunteers assigned to root for one of the two teams. Clappers are handed out at most events and public address announcers are constantly on the microphone trying to rouse the spectators.

"The Chinese were not as excited," said Canadian spectator Jean-Pierre Martel, referring to the 2011 Games in Shenzhen. "Here it's more entertaining."

Attendance figures for previous Games were not immediately attainable.

Martel, who traveled from Ottawa with his wife Danielle Massie to watch their son, Dominique Massie-Martel, a swimmer from Laval University near Montreal, noted basketball games and swimming competitions have been jammed, while volleyball was only "so-so."

In places, low attendances have proven to be beyond the control of the organizers, with events hamstrung by severe wind and rain in Kazan and several athletics events and tennis matches postponed for hours or until the following day.

Still, for those enthusiasts who have made the trip, other comforts have made it bearable.

Martel praised the Kazan Universiade's speedy transportation — it takes about 10 minutes by car from his hotel in the center to the Aquatics Center.

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