



A P R I L H A R T F O R D

T r a n s g e n d e r - O n e P e r s o n ' s J o u r n e y

Trans Athletes

Suspecting that several top women athletes from the Eastern Bloc were biologically male, the IAAF (which governs world track and field events) began gender testing for women in 1966 and continued until 1992.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) required gender verification for women athletes from 1968 to 1999. It still reserves the right to verify the gender of athletes thought to be intersex, and to dictate which gender category the athlete may participate in.

Trans tennis pro Renée Richards was denied entry into the 1976 U.S. Open by the United States Tennis Association, which cited an unprecedented women-born-women policy. She won her lawsuit and was allowed to compete in the 1977 Open in a landmark decision for trans rights.

Do trans women have a competitive advantage?

If being a trans woman athlete were a great competitive advantage, trans women might dominate sports. After some time on hormone therapy, a trans woman's muscle mass, bone density, and physical strength decrease. Trans women who have had their testicles removed actually have less testosterone (T) than biological females, whose ovaries produce T. Also, athletes who have transition-related surgery lose training time while they recover.

Medical experts who consulted on the NCAA policy for trans competitors concluded: "...Any strength and endurance advantages a transgender woman arguably may have as a result of her prior testosterone levels dissipate after about one year of estrogen or testosterone-suppression therapy."

Rules for eligibility

Over the past decade, several sports governing bodies have amended their policies such that trans athletes may compete according to their gender identity. However, some sports have not yet been challenged and may still require trans athletes to compete in their birth gender group.

In 2004, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) became the first international, multi-sport federation to establish qualifications for transgender athletes. As of 2016, the IOC no longer requires trans competitors to have surgery. Trans men may compete in the male category without restriction. To compete in the female category, a trans woman must:

- Declare that her gender identity is female and not change that declaration, for sporting purposes, for at least four years.
- Demonstrate that her total testosterone level in serum has been below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to her first competition.
- Maintain her total testosterone level in serum below 10 nmol/L during the period of eligibility.

In 2011, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)(track and field) introduced its policy:

- Trans women competitors must show documentation of sex reassignment surgery. They must also undergo an endocrine assessment and a consultation with a panel of medical experts.
- Trans men competitors need only show legal proof of male status.

Also in 2011, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) instituted its guidelines. Surgery is not required, and trans men may compete on men's teams without restriction. Trans women athletes must be on testosterone suppression therapy for one year before competing.

definition

cisgender - non-transgender