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# Transgender Athletes: History And Discrimination

## Abstract

Transgender athletes encounter discrimination in the world of sports. Beginning from summer of the 1936 Olympics, “was also known as the “Nazi Olympics”, in Berlin” (Budanovic, Nikola 2019). To our upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Even in High school sports, teenagers are followed by discrimination when parents or students find out about being transgender. There are concerns about transgender girls still having a physical advantage against biological girls. A main concern with transgender athletics is that they might put the biological sex in a disadvantage in any sport.

## Introduction

So how are transgender defined? They are defined as someone whose gender identity and sexual expression does not match the sex assigned at birth. Now more than ever, transgender athletes are participating in a lot of sports and breaking records. Starting from the year of 1936 to now in 2020, we have many transgender athletes competing with several rules as well as restrictions. Rules and regulations are established by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), State High School Association, and the IOC , (International Olympic Committee.) Some parents and or students are troubled about these athletes because they don't know if they've been on hormonal treatment long enough, if they will put the “biological” sex in an unfair advantage, and even concerns about sexual assaults. The NCAA has specific rules for high school athletes with hormone medications for both Trans Males (FTM) and Trans Female (MTF). This process and regulations have been tough on all transgender athletes.

## History

In the summer of 1938, the Olympics were going on in Berlin. It was known like “Nazi Olympics”. Dora Ratjen was an athlete for Germany that competed for them in the high jump. Dora disguised herself as a woman and was the winner of fourth place in the woman's high jump. Later on in September 1938, in Magdenburg, Germany she won the gold medal for Germany. There was never any questions or concerns her because of her masculine body. Then she was arrested in Magdenburg and that's she confessed all her story to the police. She had been threaten, stripped down and forced to be examined. She was forced by Nazis to be disguised as a woman to compete for them in order to win more medals for Germany. Evidence showed that when she was born, the mid wife was confused about her gender. When she was born at first she was pronounced a boy but then a girl right after. She admitted that she was a man although she was raised as a female growing up. She was never questioned by anyone about her body type because all her female competitors participating in the Olympics had stronger looking bodies. So she fit in with all the women competitors.

Renee Richards was the first female transgender athlete to play a professionally. She was born in 1934 as a male, her name was Richard Raskin. He was in constant battle between being male or female until he finally decided to have surgery in 1975 to reassign his gender. He

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changed his name to Renee because this name means “reborn” in French. She played professional tennis and won a tournament in California. US Open tried to conduct a chromosome screening due to controversy to try to keep her out. She refused to take this test so she sued US Open to be able to still play tennis. The judge allowed her to play in 1977 US Open which she lost to Virginia Wade but made the finals of the women’s doubles.

In the 1960s, women had to prove their sex to the panel for the Olympics. They were obligated to go through what was a “Naked Parade”. This was a naked inspection to make sure they were in fact female and the panel were usually male physicians. Protests done by the athletes led them to end these “naked parades” and start testing women differently. So they started conducting a chromosome test for women to ensure they had the XX sex chromosome. “Despite the fact that this test was widely discredited in the scientific community, it was not dropped until shortly before the Sydney 2000 Olympics.” (Donnelly, Peter, Donnelly, K., Michele).

## Regulations & Discrimination

The backlash isn’t only on transgender adults. Transgender high school athletes also deal with a lot of discrimination and controversy. Most coming from parents with cisgender children. Their statements are such as “transgender girls are not real girls and give an unfair competitive opportunity”. Or even saying that transgender people should compete only against each other. There was a study and survey done by Rasmussen in May 2019 from 1,000 American adults. The studies showed that most Americans opposed to letting transgender women play in women’s sports teams. “28% of American adults favor allowing transgender students to participate on the sports team of the gender they identify with. 54% opposed, while 18% are undecided.”(2019, Rasmussen) The NCAA has a policy for transgender student- athletes to participate. These next policies are for transgender student- athletes that are already undergoing their hormonal treatments for their gender transition. “A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who has received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for diagnosed Gender Identity Disorder or gender dysphoria or Transsexualism, for purposes of NCAA completion may compete on a men’s team, but no longer eligible to compete on a woman’s team.” (NCAA) The second policy is “A trans female (MTF) student athlete being treated with testosterone suppression medication for Gender Identity Disorder or Transsexualism, for purposes of NCAA competition may continue to compete on a men’s team but may not compete on a woman’s team without changing it to mixed team.” (NCAA) Any other transgender student athlete that is not undergoing hormonal treatment related to gender transitioning are allowed to participate in sex-separated sports according to their assigned birth gender. There are two transgender student- athletes by the name of Terry Miller and Andraya Yearwood. They participate in the girl’s Track and Field team in Connecticut. Most parents believe that they have the advantage against the other girls due to the fact that these transgender girls were born male. Parents of the other girl student-athletes started a petition to change the rules and have them sit out for a year to complete their hormonal treatment.

## The Olympics

Transgender athletes participating in the Olympics have to follow similar rules by the IOC. The IOC implemented in 2003, rules to allow these athletes to compete. Athletes that transitioned from female to male are allowed to compete in the male category with no restrictions. But those

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who transitioned from male to female were allowed to compete in the female category with conditions. The conditions include that the athlete has declared that their gender identity is female, must demonstrate the total of their testosterone levels below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months, and must comply with all these conditions and monitoring testing. If the athletes refuse, this will result in suspension from the competition for 12 months. The IOC didn't allow transgender to compete until the 2014 Olympics. Now under the new policies published in November 2015, the IOC removed the requirement of undergoing surgery and set new limits on the athletes' testosterone levels. There were still no changes to the restrictions on transgender men category, transgender women still had to provide their total testosterone level serum. Which has to be below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to their first competition and has to be kept at that level throughout the competition. There are numerous female transgender athletes, such as Laurel Hubbard. She is a 42-year-old New Zealand transgender weightlifter. She has dominated recent tournaments and is allowed to compete in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The controversy with Laurel began after her wins in the Games in Samoa July of 2019. She took home two gold and a silver in three of the women's category of heavyweights. She had competed in the men's weightlifting in her thirties before her transition and Women's rights groups claim that she has an "unfair" advantage and shouldn't be allowed to compete in women's categories. Another well-known athlete is Rachel McKinnon. She is a gold medal champion in the 2018 UCI Masters Track Cycling and also in Manchester. She is also allowed to compete in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. She faces the same concerns as a transgender woman participating in sports due to unfair disadvantages. Another athlete is runner Megan Youngren. She is announced to be the first openly transgender athlete to compete in the US Olympic marathon trails. "On December 8, 2019, 28-year-old Megan Youngren became one of the 63 women at the California International Marathon to officially qualify for the 2020 Olympic marathon trials, the race to determine the team for Tokyo." (Hahn D. Jason 2020) This is big in history for her becoming the first transgender athlete to compete in the marathon.

## Conclusion

Whether transgender people are athletes or not, controversy will always be around. All these athletes, especially female transgender, undergo a lot. As we saw, transgender women have to follow specific guidelines to be able to be allowed to play a sport under any women's categories. Declaration of what gender they identify as, testosterone suppressants, and being on medication for 12 months to almost two years until they are allowed to participate in any sports. Transgender people undergo a lot of body and hormonal changes during this period of time just to feel like their true selves. This year of 2020 will mark a lot of changed records by transgender people in the history of sports. Discrimination and controversy will still surround this topic by many.

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