

## **Transgender Athletes in Sports**

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Equality. In our society there is plenty of work that is needed to make things fair. People advocate for equality in certain situations, but why not all? Why is it okay for transgender women to compete with cisgender women? In the article “We need to be able to talk about trans athletes and women’s sports” from *The Washington Post*, Megan McArdle (2022) acknowledges the “shroud of delicacy” around the argument surrounding transgender athletes. McArdle does not take a side when looking into the relevant stories of transgender women, such as the swimmer Lia Thomas. However, she does point out that transgender women have a natural physical advantage over cisgender women. Overall, McArdle (2022) looks into the disagreement over transgender women competing with cisgender women. I agree with McArdle (2022) that transgender women have an unfair advantage over cisgender women; however, she is not assertive and seems uncertain on her view. McArdle (2022) provides a brief overview on the physical advantages, claims that puberty has a substantial impact, overlooks how the cisgender women are affected, and, in the end, lacks a conclusion from her own claim.

In the body of the article, McArdle (2022) reminds us, “Male puberty makes you taller, confers greater muscle and bone mass, larger heart and lung capacity [...], and more hemoglobin.” McArdle (2022) provides solid facts on how transgender women have advantages but could drive the point home by providing examples. Furthermore, in the article “Transwoman Elite Athletes: Their Extra Percentage Relative to Female Physiology” Alison Heather (2022), from *National Library of Medicine* proves how men are at a physical advantage over women. This is shown through results from the 100 meter freestyle in the 2016 RIO Olympics. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place times for the male were 47.58 s, 47.8 s, and 47.85 s; whereas the 1<sup>st</sup> place time for women was 52.70 seconds. The top time for the women would have placed 51 out of 57 in

the men's heat. The data shows that not even the best female swimmers in the world could compete with the men. Like McArdle (2022) states, these differences in time are because of the greater heart and lung capacity, and greater muscle and bone mass of people born biologically male. This conclusion proves that transgender women are at an unfair physical advantage when competing with cisgender women.

Towards the end of the article, McArdle (2022) brings up that “After puberty, biological women can’t compete with similarly gifted biological men.” Which is true, but what is the evidence behind this? In a study of adolescent boys and muscle growth, the article “Muscle strength and hormonal levels in adolescents: gender related differences” from *National Library of Medicine* (Ramos et al., 2022) states, “Our results suggest that increases in anabolic hormones precede muscle strength gains in adolescent males” and “Testosterone and growth hormone levels increased with age in boys but not in girls.” This research proves that after puberty, boys continue to produce testosterone and growth hormone which correlates to the physical benefit of men over women. When transitioning from a cisgender male to transgender woman, the biological aspect of physical capabilities does not transition as well; leaving transgender women with the unfair advantage.

Towards the beginning, McArdle (2022) gives an example of how transgender athletes have dominated after switching the gender they compete against. I’m in agreement that it’s important to bring this up, but it could be even more effective if McArdle elaborated on how the domination affected the cisgender women. McArdle (2022) writes that Lia Thomas dominated in record-breaking meet, but simply leaves it at that, rather than describing how it affected her competition. In the article “DeSantis: Runner-up to Lia Thomas is real winner” by Zachary Winiecki (2022), from *Newsnation*, DeSantis (Florida Governor) states ““The NCAA is basically

taking efforts to destroy women's athletics," DeSantis said, "They're trying to undermine the integrity of the competition. They're crowning somebody else the women's champion, and we think that's wrong." These words from DeSantis capture how many of the competing women may feel. Imagine spending your entire life training for this sport and then being robbed of first place. Transgender women like Lia Thomas are stealing the trophy from the women that deserve it.

McArdle (2022) concludes her essay by explaining why there should be some wiggle room when allowing trans athletes in opposite gender sports. McArdle (2022) spends most of the essay providing reasons for why trans athletes have an advantage and then suddenly switches point of view. McArdle (2022) leaves the essay on the note of "[...], we'll need to settle whether we still think it's important for cisgender women to have a place where at least a few of us can experience the thrill of victory. Maybe that isn't an important social goal. Or maybe it is, but just not as important a goal as trans inclusion." She questions what is more important – keeping cisgender sports or trans inclusion. Although it is important to make sure everyone is included, women's and men's sports were created to have equal playing fields for both genders. Rather than being wishy-washy, McArdle should stand on the ground that she had previously built surrounding this subject. Overall McArdle makes her claim that transgender woman should not have a place in women sports, but at times is worried of stepping on people's feet. McArdle talks about physical capabilities to an extent, briefly talks about the impact of puberty, overlooks the effects of the cisgender women, and is wishy-washy when wrapping it all up. I find this topic to hit home for me since I am an athlete. I can somewhat relate to this topic as I have had many times playing soccer with my brother in my backyard. Even though I have been playing the sport my whole life, the physical capabilities of my brother will leave me with no chance. When it

comes to biological men competing against biological women, it is clear as day that there will most likely always be an advantage. There is a time to draw the line, and that time should be now. I believe that everyone competing in sports should have similar opportunities, and that might mean having specific transgender sport organizations. Being transgender does not mean that you should be stripped away from enjoying sports. Creating transgender sport organizations would allow there to be a place where transgender women can compete with transgender men. I believe that everyone should have the same opportunities, but it might just look different. Equality should be accessible to everyone, including athletes.

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