

Debates on transgender individuals in sports



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Transgender in High School Sports

“ Transgender” is an umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth (“ Transgender”). They do not feel comfortable in a gender they were born into; their minds think otherwise, making them feel trapped inside a body of a sex they do not belong to. For this reason, they go through sex reassignment surgery where their physical and biological characteristics are changed into their desired gender through surgeries and steroids insertion. Our society call boys turned into girls a trans girl and vice versa for trans boys/males. The number of trans people are increasing day by day in America. A study conducted by the Williams Institute shows that 0. 7% i. e. 150, 000 youth ages 13-17 identify themselves as transgender nationwide (“ New Estimates”). The increased number has ignited a new problem, especially in sports. The question now is in what high school sports team should transgender athletes participate in, male or female? This dilemma has been burning for a while, but no middle ground has been reached.

One of the concerns erupted, especially against trans girls, is that they should not be allowed to compete in women’s sports team because they possess the strength of a man. This argument is justified with an example of Terry Millers and Andraya Yearwood. Millers and Yearwood are both trans girls who competed in a high school girl’s track team. While Millers secured first place in the 100 and 200-yard dash in the state championship, Yearwood came second in a 100-yard dash (Smith). When interviewed, one of the sprinters named Selina Soule said, “ I think it’s unfair to the girls who work really hard to do well and qualify for Opens and New England”. Soule,

<https://assignbuster.com/debates-on-transgender-individuals-in-sports/>

who finished sixth in the 100-yard in the State Open final further elaborated, “ These girls, they’re just coming in and beating everyone. I have no problem with them wanting to be a girl” (Smith). Soule felt like there was a significant difference in strength between Millers, Yearwood, and herself. Selena Soule is not the only one who believes that trans girls possess more strength than cis girls (girls who were born in this gender) and therefore, it would be unfair to let trans girls compete in a female sports team.

Although the concern is legitimate, it opposes the views of the transgender community. Not participating in a women’s team would mean they will have to compete against men who will not only crush the girls physically but also emotionally. A trans girl won’t ever be able to win against a man since their body has succumbed (at least partially) to the demands of a feminine body. Trans people already have enough on their plate; sport might provide the only outlet they have where they would be judged based on their abilities rather than their identity and people want to snatch that one thing from them too.

Feelings of the transgender community were explained by Olivia, a trans girl who played for the women’s tennis team in high school. Olivia started playing for women’s tennis team right after her transition but later was asked to play for boy’s when Indiana’s Sports Association enforced the gender-based sports rule built solely on biological sex. This devastated her and drove her to write a letter to the board saying, “ Imagine you are practicing your favorite sport one day when somebody comes and tells you that you are not able to participate on the team. So many emotions are swirling through your head: confusion, anger, embarrassment. Not only does

this take away your right to play, but it also takes away something that defines you” (Andrews).

Olivia represents the voice of all the transgender athletes who are facing any criticism and injustice due to their ideology. This is something cisgender (those whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth) people will never understand because they don't go through that kind of trouble every single day. Transgender athletes have every right to participate in a team they feel belonged to and no one should take it away from them. If a trans girl (like Olivia) trained to play for a girl's team, then she should be allowed to do so.

However, another ideology that many cisgender people harbor is that transgender should play sports in their assigned sex's team. They sustain a belief that surgeries these days are not advanced enough to completely change one's gender; the strength, flexibility, etc. is not something few surgeries can fix to transform a guy into a girl or vice versa. Consequently, it is widely believed that transgender should conform to the team of gender written on their birth certificates. Texas is one of the few states that abide by this rule and as a result, faced serious consequences.

Mack Beggs is a trans male wrestler who was forced by the University Interscholastic League, which governs the Texas high school athletics, to play for a female wrestling team. When Beggs asked to be placed in boy's wrestling, the League denied his wish just because his birth certificate reported a different gender. As a result, Beggs vanquished his opponent Kayla Fitts by 11-2 and so far have won Texas girls' Class 6A 110-pound

division twice (Schilken). In an after the match interview, Fitts said, “ The strength definitely was the difference, I didn’t anticipate how strong he was” (Schilken). Inevitably, Fitts’s parents filed a lawsuit, but the county judge quickly overruled it. Fitts is not the only one who thinks this was unjust; in 2017, many girls forfeited because they thought it was unfair and unsafe to wrestle against a boy (Schilken). Due to this reason, Beggs, instead of receiving appreciation, was booed by the crowd on winning a match. Beggs could not gain people’s respect which was one of the goals, hence proving it will be futile to place transgender into their birth gender teams.

This debate could go on and on because so far in every solution, one or the other party was ignored. Up to this point, the associations and leagues have only considered the physical attributes and in some states, birth certificate, but maybe it is time they let biology decide transgender player’s placement. One-way a common ground can be reached is by testing Testosterone levels of an individual. Testosterone is a hormone that gives a person male characteristics like facial hair, bone mass, fat distribution, muscle mass, and strength and is found majorly in men with little traces in women (“ Understanding How Testosterone Affects Men”). When a girl decides to change her gender, she is given testosterone shots to give her manly features, and when a boy decides to turn into a girl, he is given estrogen shots to decrease the level and activity of testosterone. Thus, we can decide transgender team placement by comparing their testosterone levels to cis male and a female. Cis girls of ages 12-16 have a testosterone level in between 7 and 75 while ages 17 and up the testosterone level lies between 20 and 75. On the other hand, cis boys of ages 12-13, 14, 15-16, 17-18 and

19+ have T-levels (testosterone) ranging from 7-800, 7-1200, 100-1, 200, 300-1, 200 and 240-950 respectively ("Test ID"). The data illustrate a vast difference in T-levels between girls and boys; therefore, it will be easier to compare. In this way, sports can be played fairly and transgender athletes can receive the respect when they win a match fair and square instead of the hatred (like Mack Beggs received).

In conclusion, transgender athletes are people just like us: normal human beings with feelings, passions, and dreams. They have every right to do what a normal person does and be treated justly. If a trans boy or girl is good at sports, then they deserve a chance to prove their self to the world. A transgender athlete might be worthy of a college sports scholarship or play professionally later on in their lives, but it can all be jeopardized by one erroneous decision taken by the board of directors. Wrong placement of a transgender (in gender teams) can endanger their performance; therefore, the deciders must assign teams justly by examining the Testosterone level.

Work Cited

- Andrews, Malika. "How Should High Schools Define Sexes for Transgender Athletes?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Nov. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/11/08/sports/transgender-athletes.html.
- "New Estimates Show That 150,000 Youth Ages 13 to 17 Identify as Transgender in the US." *Williams Institute*, 26 July 2018, williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/transgenderissues/new-estimates-show-that-150000-youth-ages-13-to-17-identify-as-transgender-in-the-us/.

- Schilken, Chuck. “ Transgender Boy Wins Texas Girls Wrestling Championship for the Second Year in a Row.” *Los Angeles Times* , 26 Feb. 2018, [www. latimes. com/sports/sportsnow/la-sp-transgender-wrestler-texas-20180226-story. html](http://www.latimes.com/sports/sportsnow/la-sp-transgender-wrestler-texas-20180226-story.html).
- Smith, Cam. “ Connecticut Parents Petition to Ban Transgender Track Athletes.” *USA TODAY High School Sports* , 8 June 2018, [usatodayhss. com/2018/connecticut-parentsban-transgender-track-athletes](http://usatodayhss.com/2018/connecticut-parentsban-transgender-track-athletes).
- “ Test ID: TTFB Testosterone, Total, Bioavailable, and Free, Serum.” *TTFB – Clinical: Testosterone, Total, Bioavailable, and Free, Serum* , [www. mayomedicallaboratories. com/test-catalog/Clinical and Interpretive/83686](http://www.mayomedicallaboratories.com/test-catalog/Clinical%20and%20Interpretive/83686).
- “ Transgender.” *Merriam-Webster* , Merriam-Webster, [www. merriamwebster. com/dictionary/transgender](http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/transgender).
- “ Understanding How Testosterone Affects Men.” *National Institutes of Health* , U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 25 Apr. 2016, [www. nih. gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/understanding-how-testosterone-affects-men](http://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/understanding-how-testosterone-affects-men).