

Trans women in rugby - inclusion or exclusion?

Dear Mr Hees,
Dear Mr Wilhelm,

As you have probably already learned from the international press, World Rugby is currently planning to shape its "rugby specific transgender guidelines" in a way that would exclude transgender women from playing Rugby Union in both the 7 and the 15 versions. The exclusion is justified by the fact that, due to their muscle mass and strength, transgender women would clearly present a risk of injury to other female players.

To put it bluntly, we are ashamed to think that World Rugby is the first sports federation in the world that seriously discuss such a transphobic policy and is obviously already preparing its implementation. The planned new "rugby specific transgender guidelines" are a clear violation of the values of inclusion and diversity that are so important in rugby. We find particularly outrageous that even this discussion was held without the participation of rugby trans women.

We demand inclusion!

Trans women are women. To define Cis women as the "more correct" version of women opposed to trans women is discriminatory and transphobic. It is also particularly hypocritical when we consider that rugby has for many years boasted the motto that "all shapes and sizes" are welcome. Women's bodies are different - and that's also a good thing: tall or small, large or wide, trans or cis. If any of this would represent a problem or safety concern for female players, we want to encourage women to think about how they can play Rugby Union together, not if.

We are strongly opposed to the exclusion of trans women!

Risk of injury? We question the given justification that trans women players are on principle a risk to cis women players on the field. The competition between people with clear physical differences is part of the fascination of Rugby Union, and the fact that female players compete against each other even when they are half or twice as heavy as their opponents is an integral part of this sport. Every Rugby Union team and all spectators appreciate this diversity. To exclude an entire group of players on the basis of their presumed greater muscle mass is not compatible with the values of rugby. If above a certain size or difference in mass the risk of injury increases so significantly, the exclusion of players should be considered on the specific case.

Unfair advantage? Another argument often used for the exclusion of trans women is their alleged advantage due to their higher testosterone levels during puberty. We think it is possible that puberty with male hormones can be an advantage in terms of bone development and size - but who becomes a competitive athlete without good physical condition? In trans women, however, the physical stress caused by hormone adjustment and, if necessary, surgery is added to the problem, which definitely puts them at a disadvantage in their sporting development.

Real inclusion through real cooperation!

Trans women are exposed to an extremely high degree of violence, discrimination and harassment in their daily lives. Their bodies and identity are hypersexualised, degraded or ridiculed. For rugby, that particularly values inclusion and has lived a culture that welcomes everyone in this sport, the exclusion of trans women would be a particularly outrageous continuation of discrimination against trans women. Especially if it were to explicitly declare their bodies a danger to others.

On the contrary, we should think about what knowledge coaches need to promote to support the development of trans female players (and trans male players as well), to accompany them as much as possible during the transition, and to minimise any risk of injury during the training for all players. We should promote information and education so that rugby clubs become places of safety and promotion for trans women, where they no longer have to fight to be tolerated but where they are truly welcome.

We are shocked by both the threat of the de facto exclusion of a group of people from rugby and by its perverse justification. This is a clear discrimination, which is contrary to the values of rugby. **We demand that the DRV take a clear stand against the exclusion of trans women from Rugby Union Sport, directly to World Rugby and also through the media.**

The representatives of LGBTIQ* sports clubs and in particular trans women must be heard and have a say in this process. If there are safety concerns for female players, these must be considered - but not without considering those to whom these concerns are ascribed.

Groups whose declared political goal is the exclusion of trans women from sport should not participate, as it would be impossible for them to constructively contribute to a solution

Names of the 32 signatory clubs, teams & associations:

Bataillon D'Amour Rugby

Berlin Bruisers

Berlin Irish RFC

Berliner Rugby Club

Berliner Rugby Verband

Berliner Sport Club

Frauenteam des Berliner SV

Eintracht Rugby Frankfurt

Freie Turnerschaft Adler Kiel

Hamburger Rugby Club

Ladyrucks Marburg

Munich Monks RFC

1.Rugby Club Bielefeld

Rugby-Club Berlin Grizzlies

Rugby Club Oranien Raptors

RFC Dortmund

Rugby Ruckoons vom RFC

Rugby Fortuna Neuenkirchen

Rugby Sport Verein Köln

RSV Cologne Crushers

Rugby Club Regensburg 2000

Frauenteam „Pin Ups“ des RC

Regensburg 2000

RFC Augsburg

Rugby Klub 03 Berlin

Royal RFC Schaumburg

Rugby Union Hohen Neuendorf

Schiedsrichtervereinigung NRW

Sport Club Siemensstadt Rugby

TSV 1846 Nürnberg e.V. Rugby

USV Halle Rugby Rovers

Willich Wasps RFC

WMTV Solingen Zebras Rugby