

‘New Australian sport guidelines set the stage barrier for trans athletes’

News Feature Article

Malaya Rodezno

There are many barriers and issues that come to mind on transgender athletes.

A key issue is whether or not they should be allowed to play sport.

Around the topic of transgender people is a vague history, especially here in Australia, but recently more people have been coming out with their stories.

It all started in 1968, when the IOC (The International Olympic Committee), introduced required sex testing for all women athletes as some were seen as masculine.

Following in 1977, Rene Richards a transexual women tennis player won her lawsuit against the United States Tennis Association because she was barred from competing as a woman in the 1976 US open.

By 1999, the IOC required sex testing finally stopped allowing women athletes to participate and play in their sport no matter what or how they looked like.

In 2004, The International Olympic Committee opened the door for transgender athletes allowing them to be recognised and participate in their respected sports or events.

In 2010, another transgender opened male athlete was cleared to play in a women's college basketball team.

His teammates and coach from George Washington University, embraced his decision to play and his public announcement. But he was not allowed to take hormones if he wanted to play.

His name was Kye Allums.

In 2010, Caster Semenya was one of the first transgender cleared by the IAAF (World Athletics) to compete in the women's competition.

Many others followed on and started to come out and were allowed to play for their respected sports.

Numerous professional athletes united together in 2011 to speak out for LGBTQ rights.

Athletes such as, pro Ice Hockey player Sean Avery and professional basketball players Charles Barkley and Steve Nash were involved in speaking out and promoting LGBTQ rights.

Estelle Maria Croot was Australia's first legally recognised transgender registered person. She transitioned into a woman in 1985 and is currently 56 years of age.

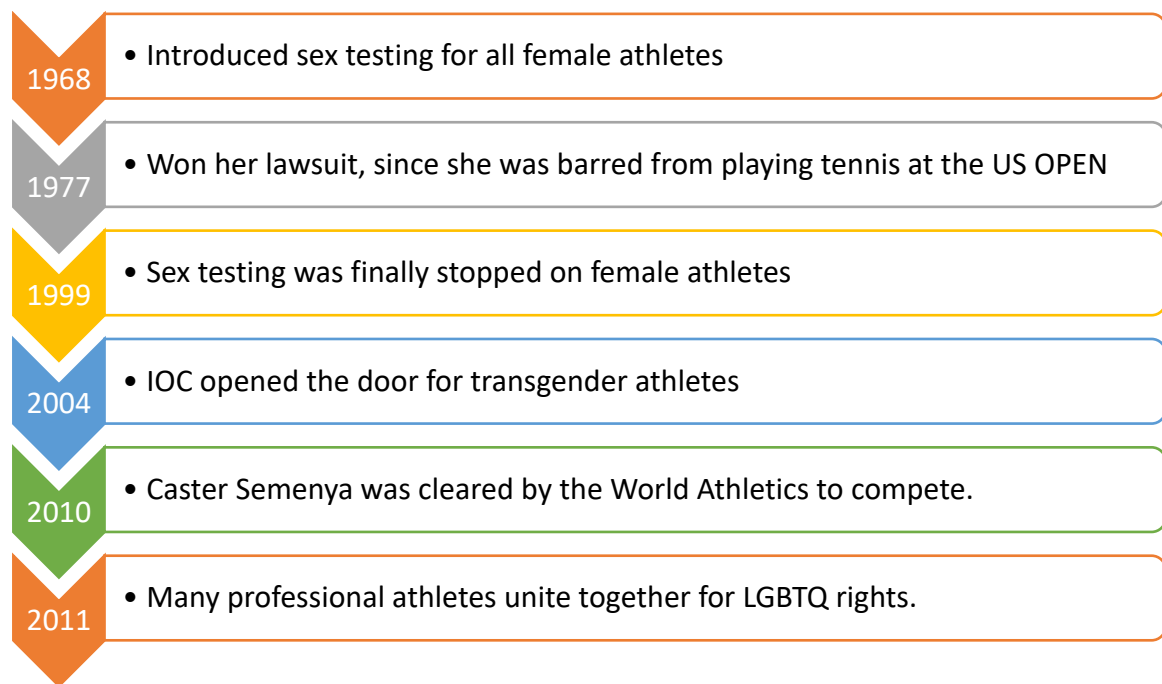


Table 1. Timeline of the history of transgender athletes



Image of Roxy Wilson, courtesy of Roxy Wilson.

Roxy Wilson who has dealt with her identity for many years, is an Australian transgender woman who started transitioning into a woman four years ago.

She is an influential woman who realised “how little people knew about people being trans,” so she decided that she needed to help as many people as she could.

Roxy Wilson may have shed a tear when explaining her transition, as things became uncomfortable for her, although she said “the hard questions need to be answered because that is what I am hear for, but also to help people develop a better understanding of what it is like.

On the 1st October, eight sporting bodies introduced a new set of guidelines for transgender athletes in Australia.

The guidelines were launched at the SCG, in front of a few hundred people. Roxy was invited to be part of the day at the SCG, as she helped Hockey Australia with the new guidelines.

The AFL, Hockey Australia, Netball Australia, Rugby Australia, Tennis Australia, Touch Football Australia, UniSport Australia and Water Polo Australia have all dedicated new rules for transgender inclusion measures.

Roxy Wilson was invited to be a part of the Hockey Australia new guidelines that had been underway for over a year.

The guidelines are based for trans people allowing them to play and participate in sport.

She was asked by Hockey Australia to, fine tune some of the guidelines for hockey, as she said, “they were written from a really sympathy and empathetic way but, they didn’t have any trans experience, so my job was to work with them to finetune some language.”

She said she, “wanted to make it known publicly, they were a thing,” that these new guidelines were not just here for athletes but for all transgender people and are going to stay.

The topic of male and female changerooms, continues to grow when transgender people come up in discussion.

All Australians need to have an understanding of both female and male transgender peoples’ can go into their respective changerooms or bathrooms.

Roxy Wilson discussed, her decision to stop playing male sport at the age of 25. She was a hockey player and has always loved the sport, until the day she knew she felt very uncomfortable in a male change room environment.

She said, “looking back now it was the simple things, I hated going into the male change rooms, I hated hanging out with male teammates and teams and it was just such a different environment.”

It is only now she has begun playing sport in her 50’s, playing hockey in a master’s competition against women.

Another barrier of transgender athletes are the uneven playing fields.

A transgender women Hannah Mouncey has been declined by the AFL to play in the women’s competition as many say it’s unfair due to her masculinity and strength compared to other female players.

Transwomen Roxy Wilson, understands how people argue about the uneven playing fields, although she says “I don’t know if I am stronger than 30 and 40 year old’s, since I have been on female hormones for 3 years”, stating that she hasn’t lost any weight and her physical abilities have dropped as she cannot run fast or for long periods at a time, but she might be stronger than 13-16 year old girls.

Leaving with this statement;

“I think it’s really unfair for the rest of us to use one or two athletes to justify why 99% of trans athletes shouldn’t be able to compete”.

Roxy just wants more people to understand the hardships that many transgender people face and hopes that soon more sporting teams open up for transgender athletes and people.

