

How Fake News spreads and how to stop it

I was doomscrolling on twitter.com – everything was just as bad as usual. Then this tweet came up.



For those of you out of the loop, Imane Khelif (born intersex, assigned female at birth) won a boxing match and is now being accused of a trans woman because she looks slightly too masculine and hits hard in a competition with the world's hardest hitters. This is obviously nonsense, and a lotta people are rightfully calling it out as nonsense.

People are also bringing up that there aren't any trans people at the olympics *except* for a trans man from the Philippines. Hergie Bacyadan. The subject of this tweet.

This article headline seemed odd to me – there are trans people who turn against other trans people because of internalized transphobia and societal pressure, but it isn't that common for us to throw each other under the bus. So I looked at the Dailymail article itself. And this line was interesting to me.

Bacyadan said athletes with the male chromosome and elevated levels of testosterone should not be permitted to fight biological females.

This strikes me as odd because they didn't cite the part where he says that athletes with XY chromosomes shouldn't fight "biological females". They cited literally everything else, including the part where he says that he doesn't want to go on Testosterone (his Instagram), but not the line the entire article

hinges on. Normally, you'd say "in an interview from CNN" or "in this video (hyperlink)" or "in an interview from our own reporters at Daily Mail", but there's just some interview that exists in the ether.

While Bacyadan identifies as a man, he has never formally transitioned and has not undergone hormone therapy.

'Will never take 'T' [testosterone] and will never be on 'T' but I still consider myself as a Transman because my heart says so,' he posted on Instagram.

This seemed strange, so I checked through several articles, and every single time it was the same thing. It's some variant of "He said that people with XY chromosomes can't fight 'biological females', based on something that some reporters/translators said", but they don't cite the reporters or link a video and when they do cite it, it's a link to Daily Mail which we've already established didn't cite its source. But they do cite *everything* else including the fact that he isn't on Testosterone by linking to his Instagram!

replacement therapy.

He agreed with Parker, telling reporters through a translator "in sparring it's OK, but if they have XY chromosomes in competition, they should abide by the rules".

"In sparring it's OK, but if they have XY chromosomes in competition, they should abide by the rules," Bacyadan said, as quoted by the **Daily Mail**.

Asked if XY athletes should be allowed to compete against women, Bacyadan said: 'In sparring it's OK, but if they have XY chromosomes in competition, they should abide by the rules.'

In one of these articles, they even cited the damn Olympics as an event instead of linking an interview.

In sparring it's OK, but if they have XY chromosomes in competition, they should abide by the rules.

- Filipino boxer Hergie Bacyadan said this to reporters at the Olympics

Eventually, I found an article on sportskeeda that cited someone new – Nine. An Australian news site.

Bacyadan, who competes in the women's 75kg division but identifies as male outside the ring, has opined (using the help of translators) that athletes born with XY chromosomes should not be allowed to compete in women's competitions, according to a report by *nine.com.au*.

But this didn't help either – they didn't link an interview, say “our reporters”, or anything. There's just some interview out in lala land where Hergie Bacyadan said this.

While Bacyadan agrees with men and women sparring, the fighter, speaking with the assistance of a translator, said athletes born with XY chromosomes should not be allowed to compete in the women's competition.

Bacyadan also declared that fighters who have previously failed testosterone and gender-eligibility tests should be banned from competing in the women's events.

I checked his Instagram and found nothing. I checked his TikTok and found nothing. I downloaded a VPN and watched Philippines-exclusive videos and interviews with him from One Sports, but there nothing even remotely close to the claims came up. This line was pretty funny though.

the LGBTQIA+ community, in a recent interview, Hergie stated no preference regarding his pronouns, but explained that he has always felt that he was a man. He's also said that he was attracted to women—he's married to Lady Denily Digo (sorry to disappoint all the people online thirsting over him!).

I was going nuts – this had eaten up almost my entire weekend, and I just needed answers. The misinformation was starting to circulate in online LGBT circles, which is the worst place for it to circle. It's absolutely devastating to "learn" that the only trans man at the Olympics wasn't supportive of the rest of us.

<https://x.com/forcedmasc/status/1819535224751140983>

Lydia (@lydiaposting) on X

Imao ofc the trans man competing in the olympics is not only competing in the women's category, but also called for Imane Khelif to be banned.

Twitter • 08/03/2024 1:48 PM



lime-equine-2 • 20d ago

Hergie has said athletes born with XY chromosomes should not be allowed to compete in the women's competition. Including him kind of defeats the point of this post

607 Reply Award Share ...



Bagel42 • 20d ago

wait

the guy who transitioned thinks that the other side of the coin should have less rights?

213 Reply Award Share ...



Smooth_Bass9681 OP • 20d ago • Edited 20d ago

Thanks for making me aware of that, I didn't know and it's disappointing given how likely he's also prone to having attacks to his identity based on the category he's playing in. And even expressed these struggles in his interview with Preview.

Though the point of this post was to give some recognition to actual trans athletes at the Olympics, other than the athletes being hurled trans accusations at them.

308 Reply Award Share ...



itsmyanonacc • 20d ago

that's unfortunate, you would hope we could look out for our own.

163 Reply Award Share ...

Then my mom suggested that I just ask Bacyadan himself. I don't know why this didn't occur to me – it should've been the first thing I did. So I emailed him, and got immediate confirmation that it was fake. Then a few hours later, I see a post on his Instagram denying the allegations and throwing his full support behind Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting.



hergiebacyadan I want to clarify and address the recent claims circulating on the internet regarding my involvement in the controversy about my two co-boxers. To set the record straight, I have never made any statements suggesting that they should be banned from the Olympics. I hold them in the highest regard and would never wish any harm or misfortune upon them.

Furthermore, I am fully aware that these two athletes are cisgender women. I have met them personally, and they are unquestionably women, fully qualified and deserving of their place in the competition. The criticism they are receiving on social media is entirely unfounded and unjust. As a fellow athlete, I understand the pressures and judgments that come with the territory, but this level of unfounded scrutiny is unfair to them.

Regarding my own eligibility, I want to emphasize that I have adhered to all Olympic requirements and am biologically a woman. Despite any misconceptions about my appearance or identity, my qualifications as a female boxer remain intact. I hope this message helps clear up any misunderstandings and puts an end to the spread of false information.

Thank you for understanding and support.

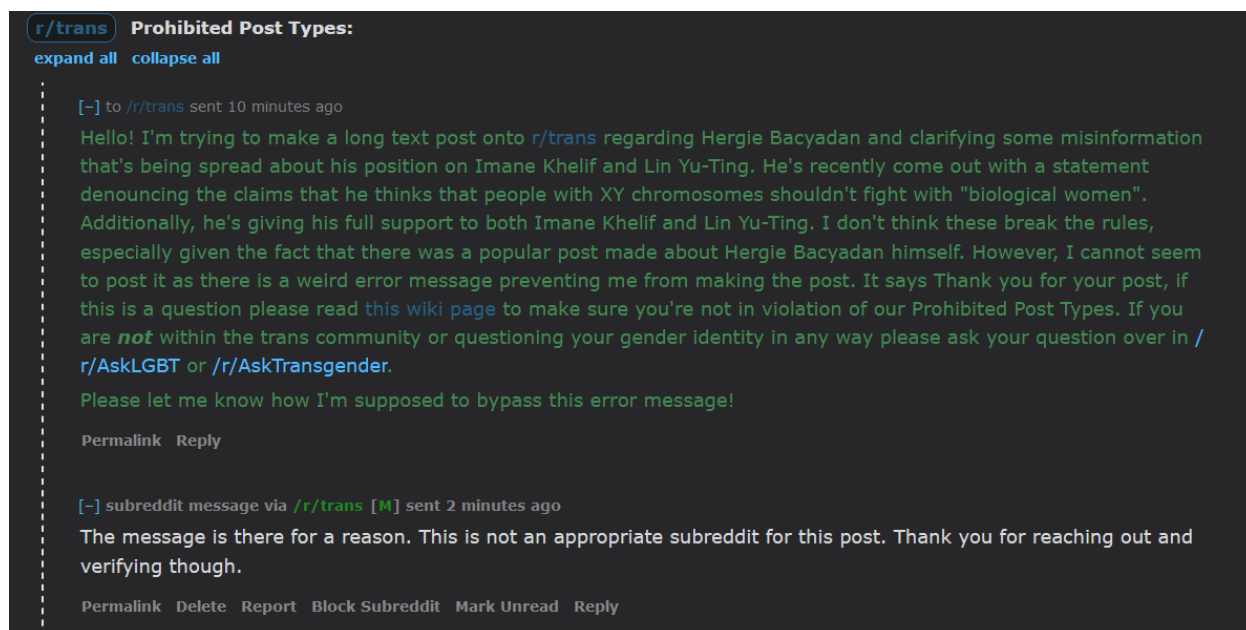
This would've been the end, but I knew that this wouldn't have nearly the same reach as the Daily Mail article, the Twitter posts, and the other news articles that I found quoting the same misinformation. I emailed each of the news sites and requested that they correct the misinformation. I was

pleasantly surprised when the Daily Mail was the first to correct it. I reached out to [Nine](#), [Express](#), [ABC](#), [firstsportz](#), [sportskeeda](#), [adelaideadnow](#), [heraldsun](#), [taipei times](#), and the [Daily Mail](#). So far, Express, the Daily Mail, and Sportskeeda were only ones to correct the misinformation. There's some fun meta-analysis to be done here – the earliest articles spreading this misinformation were also worded in more transphobic/problematic ways, and they still haven't corrected their articles yet.

Then I went after the social media posts spreading the misinformation. The Twitter posts were easy – you can request community notes on posts that're misleading and if your community note is approved, it'll notify everyone who'd previously interacted with the tweet. There's a huge issue where a tweet blows up but then tweets correcting the original don't get nearly as much traction, even if they're from the same user, and the community note notification thing solves that issue.

The only problem was that I couldn't write community notes – I could only request them. One user deleted their tweet, which was nice, but it still meant that nobody received the correct information. I'm still waiting on the community note for the first tweet I saw.

The Reddit comment was an entire other mess. Simple replying to the original commenter wasn't gonna do anything – the post was a few days old and after the first day, it's basically guaranteed that nobody sees it again. I tried making a new post in the same subreddit, but the auto bot prevented me from posting it.



This was, of course, hilarious. It's absolutely an appropriate subreddit for the post, especially because the misinformation was spread on that same subreddit. Eventually, I gave up on fighting the mods and settled for replying to the comment spreading the misinformation. And then my comment got deleted because I cited my sources!

At first, the takeaways seem pessimistic. It took hours of my life to verify this one thing and days attempting to try and correct it and get the right information to the people who had read the posts repeating the fake news. It's no wonder that fake news spreads so easily – all of this was for correcting one thing.

On top of that, the very people who you're trying to help sometimes undermine your ability to correct that misinformation. You literally cannot win.

However, it does show that correcting misinformation isn't just for professional investigative journalists. Any of us can do it with a search engine and some time. If you feel like an article isn't accurate or that there's something off about it, investigate it! You might just find something worthwhile. And finding the right information isn't rocket science either –

sometimes, it's as simple as a single email. We have the tools to combat fake news – we just need to use them.