

Dear Rugby,

An Open Letter to USA Rugby
and Systematic Transphobia



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she/her

CW: Transphobia and Dysphoria

Dear USA Rugby,

I am sitting in class, but not present. My entire brain is a tumor, trying to kill me. I am dizzy, barely keeping my balance. Nausea fills my stomach. Dysphoria - overwhelming. I think I will collapse.

Thank you for playing an active role in perpetuating systematic transphobia and transmisogyny. A system already so strong which has been furthered emboldened.

A system that tells me I am abnormal, unwanted, disgusting, subhuman.
A system that makes me feel ashamed to be alive.

Thank you for treating me like shit when I reached out to you. Thank you for calling me male repeatedly. Thank you for erasing the existence of non-binary afab people on my team.

You are furthering a system that actively tries to hurt and even kill me. You are so petty. I want to play **fucking club rugby** with my friends. I am hurting no one.

The bioessentialism and extreme binary in sports needs to stop. Gender is a social construct. Sex is not binary. Excluding me on the basis of my testosterone level is as arbitrary as dividing sports based on height or hip structure. You are trying to divide sports based upon a singular characteristic that alone has next to zero reflection on athletic performance.

The assumption that I have a competitive advantage and am some sort of ?danger? because of my testosterone levels alone is rooted in sexism and misogyny. You are ASSUMING that ALL afab people are inherently physically inferior to amab people. You are painting cis women as helpless, weak, and needing protection.

Can cis white men stop making it their job to protect cis white women? Women aren't a dainty commodity needing your *petty* protection. Stop weaponizing cis women to attack trans women. We know you don't really care about cis women's rights.

Are you testing cis women's testosterone levels? How do you ensure that cis women in the league are not a threat to safety and "fair" competition.

Testing testosterone and chromosomes is nothing new. It has been used to exclude gay people from sports. It has been used to exclude POC, particularly black, women from sports.

Even if I DO have an advantage in rugby, fuck, so what? Sports are built around natural advantages. If my one "advantage" as a trans woman is to be better at sports, sweet.

No one, NO ONE, would go through the living hell living as a trans woman in this world simply to be better at a FUCKING CLUB SPORT.

I almost never wish bad things upon others. Hell, I do not even wish bad things upon someone who has given me death threats.

But I hope you go to bed tonight and really contemplate your life. I hope your uber masculine ~superior~ self sheds a few tears. MAYBE, you will realize that you are a piece of shit whose only contribution to society is HURTING others.

Listen to me you DAMN man.

Sincerely,

A Subhuman

Author's Note

I am a trans woman who plays on the Wellesley Rugby team. The league that we play in, USA Rugby, will not allow me to play on the basis of my status as a trans woman. They reason that I "have an unfair advantage and am a danger to other players" since I am assigned male at birth.

The testosterone levels USA Rugby wants me to reach (in order to play) are unhealthily low and lower than that of cis women (as according to my endocrinologist). They want me to get to levels that would kill my sex drive, cause my bones to become brittle and weak, and to have exponentially less energy.

USA Rugby barring me from playing with my friends has left me extremely upset, frustrated, and dysphoric due to the blatant othering. Initially, I felt somewhat understanding of USA Rugby's viewpoint. I only saw how egregious their policy was after unpacking and unlearning socially programmed transphobia, transmisogyny, and bioessentialism. Their views are wrong and solely rooted in transphobia.

This can be clearly seen when looking at their previous policy, from 2018 (which is still the one linked on their website), which requires genital surgery and legal gender marker change for trans

women to be able to play. I have yet to find a cis woman rugby player who said her genitals have affected her ability to play rugby.

I don't know what my next steps are. I want to be strong and fight them, but being a trans woman in this world is already so exhausting.

The best thing you can do as a reader is work to be a better ally in trans spaces. Recognize that (assuming you are cisgender) as a cis person your voice holds an immense amount of power when advocating for trans people. Use your privilege to uplift the voices of transgender people, not talk over, in all spaces you occupy.

Reach out to your local legislators with your support. Make sure every event you participate in is trans inclusive. Even contact USA Rugby and let them know your thoughts. When you start training your eye to look out for transphobia and cissexism, you will see it everywhere and can join the mission of tearing down these oppressive structures.