

# S01E07 Transgender Athletes

## SPEAKERS

Ray Abel, Jess Scott, Gretchen Hurd

### **Ray Abel** 00:00

Hello, and welcome to research the News. This week we're talking about transgender athletes with a gender studies professor from West Virginia Wesleyan College. And as always, we're live so there'll be no edits, if you're listening to the podcast the next day. And with that being said, I'm going to bring on my co host. Hey, Gretchen. Hey, how's it going? Well, going well. So this is actually your former professor, right?

### **Gretchen Hurd** 00:31

Actually, my former colleague,

### **Ray Abel** 00:33

oh, wait a second. I actually this whole time thought it was your professor.

### **Gretchen Hurd** 00:36

No, we, we taught at West Virginia Wesleyan College together, interest and she she was in while she was kind of floating in and out of gender studies and music. And she's an amazing musician. And so I got to know her because I was in the dance department.

### **Ray Abel** 00:54

Nice. Well, I might have to bring up the music with her because I did not know that. So this is good. Alright, and last week, we talked about disagreeing without hating each other. And you can view that in our web pages, I actually was hitting a little bit of a fever by the end of our conversation on Monday. So I didn't post up that night like we normally do. So if you're waiting for it, on Tuesday morning, it was a little bit delayed, but it's up there now. Research, the news.org research things.com They have all of our links. And as always, when you look at the show today, if you go to research things.org all of the articles that we're talking about are posted there. And if there's anything new that we talked about, we'll post that up after the show is over. So with that being said, let's bring on Jess Scott. Hey, Jess, how are you?

### **Jess Scott** 01:40

Hey, I'm good. How are you?

### **Ray Abel** 01:42

Doing? Well, now that I know you're a musician. This is new. Well, let's talk about that. We'll save it for afterwards. But I do want to find out more about that. So. So today, we're talking about transgender athletes, and we're going to start out with the game we always like to play what's your bias? So we'll

start out. Let's start with Gretch on this one. So what's your bias when we're talking about transgender athletes.

**Gretchen Hurd 02:05**

So I am a dancer primarily for my work. I better be specific about that. I am a teacher and an educator, and a professional dancer. I've danced professionally for the last who I'm gonna date myself since 2004, so that's a long time. And I am plugged in to the LGBTQ community through my dance friends. My teaching, for sure, at West Virginia Wesleyan College. And my liberal bias takes me to a place of empathy with struggles that LGBTQ people are dealing with.

**Ray Abel 03:00**

Cool, I'll go next. And then we'll wrap up with Jess here. So typically, when it comes to this conversation, I'm very open to hearing different opinions than what I have my my first thought it goes to fairness. And that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. And I do think there are biological differences between men and women. And I think those are minimized when there's testosterone reduction surgery, but there's some things that I don't think can be changed. And so my bias is towards trying to find a solution that I will be very clear about that I don't have that I would like to talk about tonight and hopefully find something where we could move forward where it's fair. For everyone involved. There's no one that gets left out. But also to that we don't take something away from athletes who were biologically female when they were when they were born. So I'm open to hearing different viewpoints and looking forward to hearing different viewpoints. And as far as sports go, this is something that Justin I talked about, I did play sports growing up. I was not a star athlete, I didn't get a college scholarship, I was actually pretty scrawny, that's a kind of a side note, but I was 16 years old and I was still six foot four like I am now. But I was about 165 pounds and I could not put on weight. So my testosterone apparently hadn't kicked in yet. So I was severely undersized. So luckily, when I played football was at a Class A school. So I played tight end and defensive end were anywhere else had been like a kicker, but I at least got to, you know, play on the field. So that's my bias. And Jess, you're up?

**Jess Scott 04:31**

Well, as Ray said, I'm a gender studies professor. So I suppose that has to be one of my biases. Right off the bat. I identify as queer so I'm a queer person myself, but I'm cisgender. And so coming to this conversation, I don't know what it feels like to be transgender. So I think that that that really matters in terms of not knowing exactly how damaging transphobia can be But I do have a lot of transgender friends and people that I love and care about. So I'm thinking of them and their their dignity as human beings. When I come to this conversation, and I have to confess that I care very little about competitive professional athletics. I do think that athleticism, and participating in sports is really, really wonderful part of being a human being. And it's great for your health, both physical and mental. But the competitive part, but I just don't really care for I do play tennis. I'm a tennis player. I don't really watch watch competitive sports. And I think that, yeah, in terms of y'all also named sort of your political positions, I guess I consider myself probably left of progressive. And I think that mostly has to do with wanting everybody to have their basic needs met, so that everybody can live with the same level of dignity, really. And so that's kind of what informs my politics, I do care a lot. Even if I don't care about

sports, I do care a lot about women's opportunities, and I'm a feminist. So all those things definitely inform how I think about this issue.

**Ray Abel** 06:17

Sounds good. And we're going to have two things. Number one, I just started playing tennis last year. So if you need a partner, I'm really enjoying it. So if it doesn't go completely off the rails, and you don't hate me afterwards, maybe we can play tennis. Also, just for viewers, so we like to make sure if we're talking about a term that may be familiar to us, but not other people. Cisgender is just a fear identify as the sexual born. So if I'm cisgender, because a male who identifies as I was born male, and I identify as a male, did I say that you're the gender studies professor? And I say that incorrectly? Was that accurate? But yeah, so any of those terms where it might seem normal to us, let's just make sure we are we're gonna define them. And I'll do the same thing when it comes to sports. So if I if there's something I say that you don't know what I'm talking about, feel free to stop and ask. So. Okay, and right, now we're going to start off, right, we're about to get into the topic. But before we do, we want to talk about a position that doesn't necessarily align with typical stereotypes of what you've heard from us so far. So I, for example, am a conservative, I think oftentimes, when you hear a conservative viewpoint about transgenders and sport, transgender people in sports, it's a very negative one, it's very angry, it's just niche never happened. And I think, to me, one of the things that really affected me when I was reading through, I think there are gonna be a lot of disagreements that you and I have just but there is a disagreement that I hope we no one has that's listening to this, I was reading a story about a net, Nagisa. She's an athlete from Uganda, who was born with internal gonads. I'm learning all kinds of scientific things this week. So that's, that's a real thing. She was intersex, and she was producing too much testosterone, which disqualified her from some sports. So they, her doctor suggested she had surgery to remove those, which is a big thing. And she still wasn't able to compete afterwards. But the big thing that hit me was that she said in the article, I was reading that she couldn't return back home to Uganda when that was released, because LGBT individuals were openly condemned. And she would have been in prison or killed when she went back to Uganda. So that was something I mean, she's, she's, she didn't change her sex. She was born intersex, and even that would lead to imprisonment or death in her country. And I feel like those are the kind of things that often get lost in these conversations, or we're talking about real people here. So whether whether we think a net should be or shouldn't be raising, that's a completely different topic from her, you know, existence, which is often threatened. So that's my, I think, non stereotypical viewpoint. And Gretchen, do you want to go next?

**Gretchen Hurd** 08:52

Um, I was trying to think of something and Ray kind of put me on the spot right before we started to go on air. Um, I think it's interesting. I think I have little libertarian things in the backs of my maybe more not more conservative, but more when I think it's maybe more just where I intersect with people in the center. So it's almost like I intersect more with a libertarian viewpoint of deregulation when it comes to people. So I want to live my life and I want people to live their lives without feeling like they're being litigated and their bodies being litigated. And I think that actually plays true for this conversation. And that's a very libertarian viewpoint, which I never thought I would ever venture into libertarian viewpoints. But maybe that just is where I intersect more into the moderate realm of politics.

**Ray Abel** 09:50

We've got you away from anti fun towards the moderate view. That's my goal for the show. So joke. I'm not sure I actually I don't know if we can joke about an Tifa now So I don't think you can just your turn something that doesn't necessarily align with progressive or liberal beliefs in general, that you might want to talk about.

**Jess Scott 10:11**

Yeah, I'm thinking more about my experience of living as a really located person. So I live in rural West Virginia. And I think that rural America is often a very scary place in the imagination of liberals. And I think that actually, the, there's been a lot of harm in the way that the sort of liberal progressive narrative has become like a city based city focused narrative. So I think I care very deeply about rural people in places that are often kind of dismissed as Trump country. So I guess I would say that, but also along with what Gretchen said. And I think that this could also be an anarchistic position. But it's something that can be shared across the political spectrum, which is just the absolute failures of the state. In terms of sort of, yeah, in terms of the deregulation, I guess, of their, their constant interference with our bodies, and, and, you know, wanting to sort of dictate who we who we can be. Yeah, definitely don't like any, I think a lot of times the liberal approach is to advocate for more like non discrimination law or things like that. And I, honestly, I don't think those things work. And I think there's got to be a different way. So to stay, I think has failed in Yes. I agree.

**Ray Abel 11:49**

I love it. I I think that's I think that's great. I think I think actually a lot more people are libertarian sometimes get a bad rap. But I think when you actually look at what if you don't look at the the the stereotype of what a libertarian believes, I feel like most people kind of are like Ron Swanson, in a way for my Parks and Rec where it's just like, out here. I'm always the same person. Yeah, I just, I want to live my life. And I don't want to be interfered with by the government. I think a lot of people get behind that. So that's great. And as we move forward, if you hate any of what we just said, or what we what we are going to say just feel free to keep listening, because at least you'll understand hopefully, where we're coming from, even if you hate what we're saying. So, okay, so we're about to get into the conversation. And before we do the last definition, just do you just want to talk to us about your definition of transgender and just setting that boundary for this conversation.

**Jess Scott 12:39**

Sure, I was just going to explain it as all of us are assigned a sex at birth. And there's a an assumption about the gender that we'll grow into based on that assignment of sex. For, for a lot of people like Ray mentioned earlier, that assignment is pretty comfortable throughout their lives. And so those folks would be cisgender. Like you're assigned female at birth, you identify as a woman as an adult. That's a cisgender gender identity. And transgender is actually an umbrella term for lots of different ways of experiencing gender. And some of those are sort of called non binary, which means you may be between sort of masculine or feminine. But that transgender generally means that assignment that was given to you at birth, based purely on the appearance of your genitalia, because babies aren't tested for chromosomes or anything like that. That assignment is not comfortable for you. And so you grow into your gender in a different way than cisgender people do. And so the trans relationship means that, yeah, you've got a different relationship to your gender than what the doctor sort of predicted for you when they assigned your sex at birth.

**Ray Abel** 14:03

All right, I think that's I think it's a great overview. And I think that can lead right into this. So I think to start out, one of the things that we talked about, before we went on air was, uh, were just some of the specific issues you had. And one of the things you brought up because you seem pretty excited to talk about this, which we went through a few different topics we could talk about this one seemed to really stick out to you. And I think it has been in the news lately, President Biden signed an executive order to make sure that women transgender women were allowed to participate in sports. And currently, there's a lot of different laws and they seem to be changing all the time. But basically, what it typically comes down to and again, feel free to correct me if you have a different understanding, just but typically, any of these regulations come down to how much testosterone women are producing. It used to be so I read through the history of this in the 30s. It started out when women's sports were just kind of coming to the forefront. It was just a genital check. They actually just took off people was close to make sure that they were the right gender. And then it went and they started doing more different kinds of testing. And it's kind of evolved now to the point where they do testosterone levels. Is that in your mind the correct statement here for how transgender athletes are judged?

**Jess Scott** 15:19

I think so. And then, I mean, internationally, the athletes are not tested women. This only affects athletes competing in the women's category, but women are sort of universally tested. It's only when someone else questions their gender, because the ai, ai double A F decided to not do that testing. But in the case of, for instance, Caster Semenya, other runners said, like, are we sure she's a woman? And so I think that part of it is that it's like, based on the perception of the other person's gender. Yeah, but that's yeah, that's what it's about.

**Ray Abel** 16:02

I think that's a good way to start. So I think one of the things we don't want to do here are use extreme examples to make a case for everything. But I think talking about some specific examples, and Caster Semenya, I think is a good example, because it's a very publicized case. And again, all the links are up on research news.org. But if you want to talk a little bit about the Caster Semenya case, and I know you've done some research into her situation, and kind of talk to us about some of the issues you see with how either she was treated, or the whole system in general.

**Jess Scott** 16:31

Yeah, she's a runner from South Africa. She's very fast. She was always, she always understood herself as a girl. She identifies as a woman. And then in a competition that I think was in Germany in 2009. There was a question about her gender. And so she underwent some testing. They were supposed to keep that testing confidential. I think one of the ethical issues is that it leaked that she was being tested. And so already, there's this sort of controversy then surrounding her, you know, as she runs, and she won that race. She's also won at the Olympics. She's gone sort of in and out of competing in response to different international athletic bodies, trying to make decisions about what should happen to her. And by extension, what happens to other intersex women. But again, it's like only people who don't conform only women who don't conform to a sort of conventional definition of femininity. And although it's funny to say that in the case of athletes, I think, yeah, because they work

so hard on their bodies, that it's like, they're, they're likely to appear more masculine anyway, when they're competing at an elite Elite level, but that caster was singled out. We don't know what the testosterone levels were of all the other women who are in that race, that initial race or the later races. And it was people she, this is kind of similar, I think, to the case with the transgender girls in Connecticut, it was people she beat, who were saying, like, you know, oh, test her. Yeah, are we sure she's a woman. And obviously, being a black woman. And, you know, historically, we don't have time to go into all of this, but definitions of femininity, cohering, around whiteness, and what it means to be sort of like a lady. Those things really seem to have been weaponized against her. And so the I guess the issue for her is She's fast. She's a woman. But they decided against her in the most recent decision, I think, in 2018. And so she, she's not supposed to run anymore, compete anymore, internationally.

**Ray Abel 18:56**

And I think that's an important discussion that I think sometimes gets dismissed by people who are for transgender athletes and sports and I think so the testosterone level I tried to find that out in here's what I could find. And I did some research about these numbers in general. I also found out what nano moles per liter means, because that's apparently how these are all measured. So typical female. Typical female levels of testosterone are between point three and 2.4. Typically, though, they're on the much lower end of the scale, if it gets higher from what I've what I've read so far is that sometimes that could mean you have some kind of cyst or some kind of medical issue. A tip, one of the articles you posted that was from Scientific America that mentions trans girls belonging, girls sports teams, I think the author brought up a false equivalency. He said that there are women who have things like PCOS and I forget what that stands but Polycystic ovarian, yeah, yeah. And he said that, you know, well, that doesn't count. And that actually, even if you have that, that syndrome, it's still 1.2 to 2.5 nanomoles per liter. So the if that used to be at five nano moles per liter as the barrier, now they raised it recently, I think it might have been after that 2018 decision to 10 Nano moles per liter. So that was the she had to be at least 10, or above. And men typically are anywhere from 7.7 and 29.4. So that's a pretty wide range. So to basically summarize it, typically women are on the much lower end, under one man at 7.7, probably wouldn't have much, they would probably need to have some kind of testosterone booster that's very low. And that's typically if you're later in life, but I mean, men go up to 29. So we have a range from 29 to one. And it does work, especially when when people are forming their bodies, that's when it affects growth and some other things. And then once that's taken away, there are a lot of effects from the testosterone that are gotten. But there are some that are kind of lingering and stay on. So you can't for example, I'm six, four, that's partially because of the testosterone I had, you can't change the fact that I'm taller, and in general men are our larger people. So that being the baseline that comes down to kind of the issue, and that's where I think one of the things you said just when we were talking before, was that, you know, people say women's sports exists because women wouldn't be competitive. And correct me if I'm quoting incorrectly here. But you said that title nine actually gave women the opportunity to participate. It wasn't because of ability, it was more that they were just being excluded. But there would so I guess my question to you is, do you think that on a biological level, knowing there's differences there and testosterone muscle mass, there's a lot of biological differences, do you think that women would naturally be able to compete with men and its system that holds them back? Or do you think there are biological differences between men and women that actually do hold women back?

**Jess Scott 21:47**

Um, I think I mean, definitely, Title Nine gave women the opportunity to compete because they just weren't able to. So like, those, that's the thing you can see. I mean, you can see that sort of like women weren't allowed to compete before. And now they can compete. Because there's Title Nine. I read this really interesting article, and this is the view I would love to hold. But I don't know enough about. I can't get myself to care enough about the level of competitive research this fully. And so I'm sure that like, there's there's a lot that's out there that I don't know about. But there's a I tried to find this article, and I couldn't I think I might be able to find it later and send it to you. Where the author talks about like, Okay, we had all of this time where women weren't participating in athletics, for cultural reasons, you know, it wasn't lady like to do like, right. We've had, how many like what's 72? So the 50 years of I mean, around 50 years of Title Nine, have we, as women continue to compete and compete more? Will they get faster, stronger? Will those I guess it's sort of an evolutionary argument, like, will you? Will you adapt and become sort of faster and stronger? I'd love to sort of aspirationally I hope that that view where it's like we have would have to wait and see, we have not seen a world where men and women have competed on level playing field, I guess that's I guess that's where the snag is for me. Like, I get the thing about the testosterone. And I do understand the I mean, there are differences, not only when we're focusing on gender, we see those differences as gender differences, but individually, our bodies are so varied. Yeah, there are huge differences individually between different bodies. And so what would it look like? What would it look like if Title Nine hadn't been necessary? What would it look like? I don't know. I really can't say definitively about that. But Title Nine definitely did give women the opportunity to participate. And I do think that that's, obviously that's the political terrain on which these debates are unfolding, because with transgender girls in athletics, it's obviously about sort of, like, protecting women's sports.

**Ray Abel 24:30**

Yeah, I think I totally agree that hopefully, eventually, I mean, that that is something that's brand new and recent, but eventually, I think women can get there. I wanted to look up some of the effects of testosterone in the body and some of the long term advantages so often, I mean, the average height of men and women in America five nine to five four, there is maximum oxygen consumption with which is different vo to max it's typically about 20% Difference bone mass is anywhere from 26 to 45. That's It actually was interesting to me I read a study from the NIH where the bone mass and identical are not identical twins, fraternal twins, I guess it is where they are when they're separate. Yeah, there you go. their bone mass density was between 26 to 45%, higher in the male. So this was pretty, pretty accurate testing. And then obviously more muscle mass. So in general men, this was from a British study, they had 33 to 21 kilograms of absolute muscle mass, but also relative body muscle mass was typically 38 to 30%. So there's a lot there that happens. And some of that goes away when you're off testosterone, but some of it doesn't. And I think that's the part where you talk about leveling the playing field. One of the things that's one of the exception to the rule I learned was that extreme distance running. That's one where the biological differences totally giveaway once you stop taking testosterone in men and women, typically, even without any kind of testosterone changes, they typically compete because women after a certain distance, are able to process body fat better, which gives them more endurance extreme, you know, 5060 mile races. So there's definitely a difference there. And I think it's pretty interesting to me, and this is, question my next question to you as I do that, I personally do think there's a difference between men and women's bodies. And I know right now that all of the professional sports

that are out there, men can't play and WNBA. But there is no sport that is not open to women. And every time I've seen a woman compete, I remember growing up with men on room for anyone who remembers her. I was one of my first crushes. I was like 12 years old, and she was a goalie for the Tampa Bay Lightning and their training camp. And they people were excited. And they were excited that women could potentially play at that level. And no one's played yet in the professional leagues, but they are not closed off. So it's something if you're listening to the show, and not familiar with sports, they're all open to women, there just hasn't been a woman who's taken place. So I think the debate often comes down to transgender athletes that are male to female, and it doesn't seem to be the opposite way. So if it's not about skill levels, and biological changes, what does that say to you? Just that why there's a problem for transgender women playing women's sports, and not I maybe I'm wrong, maybe I've missed but I haven't seen any issues with transgender women playing or transgender men playing men's sports.

**Jess Scott 27:26**

It's funny, because I just saw a story about I think this was a high schooler, a transgender man who was a wrestler, and who was winning all the wrestling matches, and it was interesting to me. Yeah, well, I'm not going to go into that. But anyway, you're right. You're right. But I think that that is also the case internationally, like, there's no no one's going around measuring men's testosterone levels. No one's going around policing men's gender into athletics. The assumption is that if you are a man, you are better, faster, stronger. And yeah. And I don't, I didn't actually know that, that the all the professional leagues were open to to women, but I cannot imagine wanting to be like the only woman on a team competing or the only woman. I just am thinking what the dynamics are at play. Yeah. And that's why I'm saying I don't know that we could know until like, until gender is less

**Gretchen Hurd 28:29**

stigmatized,

**Jess Scott 28:31**

important to Yeah, yeah. No, and I don't know. But yeah, you're definitely right. The the issue is around, always around women's sports. And there's a very long history of using this sort of saying that we want to protect women from different other individuals, whether this is if you think in the case of lynching of black men, using white women to say that black men are dangerous and that lynching is justified in an earlier time or if you think about the bathroom bill. Yeah. That especially the most publicized one I think was encounter is was in North Carolina in 2015. But if you think about the way those bathroom bills are talked about, it's always like, framed as we have to protect women in the bathrooms as private area from men, men and dresses, which is a deep misunderstanding of what it means to be transgender anyway. And so, to say that trans women can't be in the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity because they're a threat or to say that any transgender person who wants to come woman who wants to compete is automatically going to be better than the other women on the team. is, to me an extension of that same sort of like saying we're protecting women, we're protecting cisgender women from particular men that we want to stigmatize at this time or transgender women, there seems to be a very clear obsession with the binary maintaining the binary gender binary here. And I think one of those articles mentioned, I think it was the correct me if I'm remembering this wrong, but the International Olympic Committee, part of the rule was that you have to get the surgery, the gender gender



confirmation surgery to be able to compete, but that is a surgery that's only about the genitals. Yeah. And that does not affect athletic competition. So how can they say that this is only about an advantage in sports or an advantage in terms of athleticism? If they're also saying like, well, your genitals also have to look right. Yeah,

**Gretchen Hurd 30:56**

I tend to look at it almost like it's like a, like that strict father morality that kind of runs through our society, it's, it's making people live the way that one part of our society feels like they should live. And I think this goes along a lot of different issues that have come up in our history, whether it be abortion, or Oh, my gosh, like you go further back and interracial marriage or you know, so and even just blacks not being able to eat and white restaurants and things like that. It's legislating and putting into place, things that will control people and the way that the very small minority, which some of the things that I've read, there is overwhelming support for LGBTQ to live their lives the way that they need to live their lives. So I don't think this and even one study showed that it was dead last on conservatives thought process of things that mattered to them. So I think whenever we look at how this is moving through our society right now, it's coming through legislatively through Republicans, you know, in in very rural, you know, middle. So you know, even North Carolina has a little bit more population. But these areas where, I don't know it's it seems like they're they're just trying to force it on people rather than allowing, like time to pass like I think this is the big thing is there aren't enough people for us to make a decision about what's right and wrong right now. Because we don't, there aren't enough people going through the process and competing for us to even see what the real world implications are. And and the implications on student athletes is right now, because there are not very many people doing it.

**Ray Abel 32:50**

So I'm gonna play devil's advocate for both things, what each of you said, and then something that I think conservatives typically said, going back to the surgery you're talking about? Yes, I think that was with a net, who I mentioned earlier, and it seems questionable to me whether that was required from right now. There's no surgery required from the Olympics, but it seemed like it was a local doctor. So would want to look into a little bit more, but I don't think it was coming from the Olympics, but I could be wrong there. But with your comment, Gretchen about Republicans, I think often Republicans get blamed for this. But there are a lot of very liberal women and I learned some new terms over the past couple of years, including turf and swerve. And I know turf is trans exclusionary radical feminist and swarf is which was which was worth swarf justice worker sex worker excluded. Sex work, like Leslie Knope, for example. We brought up Parks and Rec, I actually watched that show now. And I think at the time, she was a feminist hero, and she talks a lot about how she's not in favor of sex work. So she would be a swerve. She would not even be a full feminist to some people. So there's a lot of women that come out and say they might be liberal in every aspect of their lives. But they say this is an issue that that matters to me. And I don't think transgender women should be playing sports and they are cast out as outsiders and they cast out with the crazy Republicans. Now Republicans going back to your point, yes, I agree that oftentimes, like the issue gets caught up, but what about the man in the dress in the bathroom? And what about someone who goes through and just play sports just because it is a low number right now? I think there's two parts that right now that's not an issue because it is about the levels of testosterone. And while I look back at myself at 18 years old, and if I had the opportunity to get a college scholarship, I was very poor growing up if I played women's sports, maybe it would have

gone through my mind for a second but number one, I don't think I would have been able to do it in general just because that's not my I don't know, I feel like for lack of a better term, I was too macho at 18 and to to actually go through and have testosterone reduction that's a whole nother level that's not dressing up. Yeah, as a woman or just saying, I think the the key though, is what we got to watch out for is that I often hear things like that's not an issue now. And I've no one wants to talk about a slippery slope. The concern is if you start making it about because there are some people, I listen to a great podcast today about this and the woman who was transgender. She had gone through the transition. She knew there are biological differences, and there should be balances. But some people are like no if you if you just identify your good, and I think that's the part where I kind of draw the line, if someone actually wants to go through surgery, and has the right hormone levels, I'm all for them playing. But I do think that that's the part to that comes back to competitive versus non competitive, because if we're talking about non competitive sports, I've played in a bunch of CO Ed teams, men and women, and I love it. And they and if it's about that kind of non competitive competition, there's a lot of those options out there. But that's where the competitive side of it comes in. Where I think it's difficult. And the last thing I'll say to wrap up on just kind of the differences here. This is again, you don't want to use the the the crazy far out example, but there's there haven't been that many transgender women in professional sports Fallon Fox was one of them. She is a MMA fighter. Have you guys seen the videos or

**Gretchen Hurd** 36:02

fighting him? No, I saw your link though.

**Ray Abel** 36:06

So this is where it gets a little tricky, because even if I think that Fallon Fox should be able to lay out to be able to be an MMA fighter, that's where I get really difficult to me. We're not talking about non contact sports. Here. We're talking about MMA, and she was a former Marine who transitioned to being a woman. And I watched the fight. This was actually a couple months ago, someone posted a copy of the fight and it was brutal. And she broke this woman's orbital bone. There's differences. There's a lot of different versions of what she actually broke. But she has a tweet that stated for the record, I knocked two women out because someone said I literally just read you've smashed two women skulls open. You think you have the right to say anything about anyone and she responded by saying for the record, I knocked two out one woman's skull was fractured the other not and just so you know, I enjoyed it. See, I love smacking up turfs in the cage who talk transphobic nonsense, it's bliss. Don't be mad. I feel very uncomfortable with that. And I think that's something it's a little bit tricky for me because typically, I tend to come from very logical perspective. And so if she was okay to fight and the woman was okay, fighting her, everything in me says, okay, like, she went in fought, they all agreed to it. And she won. But then when she says, I, someone who transitioned who's stronger, who has the benefit of a lot of testosterone throughout her life, more muscle mass, to say that she loved breaking open someone's skull. That's where it gets a little tricky. And I go, okay, even if I'm agreeing with this, as a man, I could never see myself hitting a woman. And so when I see this here, it gets tricky for me because even though she identifies as a woman, now, she still has that body mass advantage, that bone mass advantage, the height advantage that she had from being born and raised a man. So I feel like that's a tough one. And again, I don't want to get focused on the extreme cases. But does that make you feel uncomfortable? Just or do you think that again, it was just it was it was everyone agreed to it? And we're good.

**Jess Scott** 38:05

I'm gonna say again, as a person who cannot bring myself to care. I when I hear that tweet, like, I don't, I don't like that type of sort of aggressiveness. But that to me goes with the fighting. Yeah, like, to me that's culturally part. MMA is a culture that produces that attitude to me. And so I think it's a lot. The discomfort for me is in the sort of, like, wanting to beat people up in the first place, which if you're in that cage, you want to beat people up. Yeah. So like that, for me is the issue, not the issue of like, and I mean, never mind

**Gretchen Hurd** 38:45

feels like it's something maybe, well, well,

**Ray Abel** 38:49

you don't have to say the Never mind. But don't be I mean, if you're if you're worried about offending me or something. This is okay. Because I love hearing nevermind questions. So, but sorry, God, gotcha.

**Jess Scott** 39:00

I'd like to smack JK Rowling, but theoretical, you know, yes. She's been a very vocal turf. But I did find that IOC on the Olympic Committee, website, and it does say that they part of the, it's, among other things, the hormone therapy, but part of it is the genitalia changes, they are included. And to me, it's just sort of like if it's all about testosterone, and it's really about the competitive advantage. The X requiring the cosmetic alterations to the genitalia. It's it's not about that clear. Yeah, it's about making a clear distinction between what is a man and what is a woman and the other there was another piece oh, what you were saying about like if when you were in high school if you're imagining a scholarship I have had students this was a huge topic this year in class and they were talking about you know, like don't well don't you worry that like You know, men are gonna, like boys are going to infiltrate like girls sports, and they're and I said to them, I said, please find me the high school boy, that would like to be a girl for the benefit of winning a competition because when you bring me that child, I will be like, I will relax. I'm just trying to imagine I mean, what you described as macho, I think is like the extreme pressure on boys, to be masculine, to be tough, and in sports language, to do something like a girl is to do it badly. So like, you're not going to be proud of, you know, being like a girl. Or sorry, being on a girls team and like beating a bunch of girls, it's like, that means you can't run with the boys. Like there's a whole thing about and I think that's kind of what you were talking about with the distinction between between somebody who wants to transition and somebody who's just sort of like infiltrating the sport, but I also think that similar to what Gretchen was saying, the think that the the boy who wants to infiltrate girls sports is a as a, an a sort of Specter, you know, like a threat made? Yeah, potential. It's a What am I? What am I thinking? Like? It's a threat that doesn't really read Harris's right here. Yeah, maybe? Yeah,

**Gretchen Hurd** 41:24

it's like this made up thing doesn't really exist. Yeah, that's where

**Jess Scott** 41:27

in the 1930s I mean, and the also the sort of, like World War Two Cold War era, like, the whole fear of the infiltration of women's sports by men was because we didn't want communists to beat us. So it was like, well, we have to keep these mannish Eastern European women out of sports, because how do we know they're not men? And the assumption there to me, I guess what I really care about in this topic is that the assumption is that men are like, always faster, stronger. And that, that that comes from testosterone. And I honestly don't know if we know, enough. I read I love to read feminist scientists, and they always talk about the problems with the way that a lot of scientific research about the human body, but also about sort of animal organization, has been read through like a human social lens. And so a lot of the ways that people a lot of the science that we have inherited, has kind of focused on gender isn't like, is there a gender difference? Let's see. If there is let's publish it. If there's not, we'll just leave that part out. They do. They've studied that in neuroscience. And math is another area where the assumption was always sort of that, like, boys are better than girls. Is there a math gene that boys have, and time showed that those all those test scores that looked like there was a huge gap? Pre Title Nine, however you want to describe it, they closed over time. And so I understand that math, and athletic ability are very different. But yeah,

**Gretchen Hurd 43:16**

I think if you look oh, sorry, go ahead.

**Ray Abel 43:18**

Oh, I was just gonna say so I think there's I tried to do a lot of research into, is there actually a difference and one of the things that really stuck out to me, the IAFF because there's a lot of hypothetical things. And there's a lot of you'll see a lot of catchy headlines, the women's national soccer team lost to a Boys High School team once in Dallas eight years ago, and people use as an example of why women's sports aren't aren't as good. But when you look into it, they were they won some they lost some it was a scrimmage. It wasn't really hardcore playing. But when you look at the actual data from the IAF, I like how you set the I double AF, I don't know if that's true, or how it's pronounced. But it sounds cool to me. So I'm gonna use that. When you look at the best women's results in, say, the 100 meter race, the best women's result in 2019 was 10.71 seconds. The best boys result, under 18. That's all women of all ages was 10.15. Now, it's funny because when someone is I'm not an Olympic athlete, typically all of them and even someone like Hussein bolt, which he has an amazing time. He still well all the other competitors with him are well within a second. There's there's just microseconds of difference. There are 124 boys who beat the best women's record of all, anyone under 18, who weren't fully developed beat all of the women's records. When you go out into the general population, for example, the 100 meters, those numbers change pretty dramatically. So it goes from 10.71 was the best woman's result throughout the entire year. And there was the best men's result was 9.69 seconds. That was about 10% difference. And if you look at the 100 200 400 I did a little Excel spreadsheet, it's 10.5 10.1 and 13.4% better. And there were for example, 10,009 men outperformed the best woman. But no woman outperformed the best man. And so, to me, there's there are clearly differences there. And when you look at, and I think too, I think coming from someone who there is an eye test to some sports, and I really get excited for the women's soccer team, and I think the women's soccer team women's gymnastics, you look at it, and I don't see a big difference in the competitive levels. But when you watch something like women's hockey, and you watch the WNBA, those women would all destroy me at hockey, and basketball, like they would beat me badly. But when you compare it to the men's sports, it

is a lot slower paced game, and especially as someone who played hockey and enjoys hockey, I look at it, and I'm not as good as them, but they wouldn't be able to compare to a men's team. And I tried to find some instance where it was men versus women scrimmaging in an actual competitive setting. And I couldn't find any data on that specifically. But if you look at the overall numbers, they are much higher for men. And the last thing I'll say, just going back to something else, you said that, I think my point of being 100% agree that I don't think even if you just had to dress up like a woman and to play a sport, I don't think most boys would do that. I do think there are some that would for sure. I mean, we have a lot of a lot of different beliefs and people in this world, but the issue that I have with the rules, and you had talked about some of the title nine rules, but on a high school level, there's Connecticut, there's recently a lawsuit where two women were transgender women, we're raising app. But the problem with that is that there is no regulation in Connecticut. And that's one of 17 states that have no restrictions. And that again, gets back to me where if we're going to say that it gets very tricky there because these people, these these kids, they're under 18, I do think you should be over a team before you start making a gender transition. That's my personal belief. I'm sure you probably differ on me. But I think that's we're not fully formed yet in our development. And that's a huge change. So I think there's some ethical decisions there by saying, Well, if you're going to do that, you have to go and hormone suppression, suppression treatment, even if you're 14 years old. I don't agree with that. But I also don't like the fact that there's no restrictions, because that means that technically, in high school, I could I wouldn't have to do anything. I could just say, Okay, I'm going to race. And if I'm better, I may be able to get a scholarship and take that away from someone. And so that's where it gets tricky for me. And I think I'm gonna ask you in the scratching, because we talked a lot about dance. And I'm interested because dance is one of those sports and I would you call it a sport? Um, I mean, I didn't mean I just I.

**Gretchen Hurd 47:32**

Yeah, I mean, it's artistic in the professional world, but it definitely is a sport in high school because they compete.

**Ray Abel 47:39**

Yeah, because I think in general, when you look at one of the advantages that women's bodies have in on sports and dancing are that their pelvises are wider and lower, and it gives them better balance than men naturally. So I think a man may go into dance and be at a disadvantage there. But as someone who's a dancer, how would you feel in a situation where someone is transitioning and competing with you? Would you be 100%? Okay with that, do you have issues with it? How would you feel as an athlete?

**Gretchen Hurd 48:08**

Yeah, the way that dance competitions are set up, usually in group pieces. There are boys and girls within group works. There's no differentiation within group work. However, solos are set up by age group. So they're not girls are competing with boys. Boys are competing with girls. I've never known of anyone transgendered in my personal career to compete. However, I will say that dancers have a joke about guys, because men's bodies are predisposition to perform better, faster, their muscles are more athletic than a woman's musculature. I have a few guys that I know that started dancing when they were in college, and they were professionals when they got out of college, and they got jobs right away. So we have a joke about guys. It's like, oh, hey, there's Chad. Oh, hey, Chad. How long have you been

dancing? Three weeks and you're like crap, man, you know, it's like, you're already able to turn like a top. You can jump 18 feet in the air. Like I have nothing like I can't do that, you know. So let me

**Ray Abel 49:28**

just be clear. I've never been able to do any dance ever. So I am not one of those people. I'm the exception. Here's

**Gretchen Hurd 49:33**

what I'm gonna I'm gonna make a plug. Every guy should dance. Number one, you're surrounded by females constantly. Why would you not want to do that? Number two, you are the literal everyone looks to you, in a choreography project your front and center because you're the only guy there there are many reasons why men should dance. And one is because really and truthfully as an educator, we know that guys bodies are able to do things that women's bodies are not able to do. However, I will say this whenever you are going up against someone in a category, when it's just your age, it's a lot more than just how high can you jump? And how, how many turns can you do it's artistry, it's there's all these different categories. So a girl that might not be able to do as many tricks can get higher scores in artistry, and technique than a man could. Knowing all of that, though, I would even look at how sports in general when we're looking at scholar, scholar, scholar, college scholarships, and even looking at the way dancers apply for scholarship, there is no male to female. When you're going to college either for a dancer, you are going up for a scholarship. And they look at you they look at rehearsal footage of you they look at performance footage of you. If you go to competitions, that's great. But it's probably not something that a real college program is going oh, you won 18 trophies last year. Great. We want you. I'm not doubting that. That's just how it is. And I would look at that, in the way that college is look at student athletes. I don't think necessarily they're looking at if you're a track runner, how many trophies you won that year, it's looking at your stats, and it's not looking at your stats compared to the person that you competed with. It's looking at your stats comparable to the stats of the students that they already have. So they're looking at at how can you improve their team. So when I read about the girls, the lawsuit, it really confused me, it seemed more petty and and she beat them. So then they had this was some kind of retaliation. So and then she ended up beating them, or the one of the cisgendered girls beat her anyway. So it just it showed that even though you may think everyone is different, so you know, someone could have really big feats and long legs and be able to run a lot faster than you with your short little legs, and you're both cisgendered, and you're in the same category with your age. So I look at that very similarly. I mean, it is not the same when you're looking at the testosterone and the estrogen levels and all that these things do have a lot of a lot of weight on to how you consume oxygen and the blood flowing through your body. And these are all things that actually really do happen. So my my thought then goes to how does a student athlete going through a transition? Where do they lie? Where does that? Where does that kid Where do they live and we end like just said earlier? Sports just like art and music are really beneficial to one's mental health. You feeling like you belong somewhere, and that you are part of something bigger than yourself is good for your psyche? So I think when we're looking at like high school sports, especially in things like track and field, and I mean, even basketball and things like that, why why is someone that identifies as transgender and and feels that they you know, they are female, and they want to compete on a female team. If, if they are able to do so without issue. What is the issue? Like why why are someone on the other side of the country opposing something that is working for that group? And that it should maybe be up to that group? Are you okay

with her being here? Yeah. Okay, great. Let's move forward, instead of saying, No, nobody's allowed to do it. Everybody has to do XY and Z. And and I think that's where, like, we've come through this in a lot of our conversations, there's so much gray area. There's so much that we don't know. And to write a blanket statement about something that is so nuanced is is not responsible.

**Ray Abel 54:15**

And I think I want to hear your Oh, sorry. I want to hear your thoughts on this. Jess, I would just say quickly, I think the I agree with a lot of what you're saying. But I think that what you what you said about there there being differences and I think there it's tough for me because if I took steroids, I'm not going to be able to play at the NFL level. That doesn't help me. But if I was playing against someone in a rec league, and someone found out I was using steroids to be better, there would be fights. I so that's the thing. I think just that when you say you're not competitive, I am very competitive and most athletes that I know are very competitive. I remember being eight years old playing Little League, I was a catcher. I was a terrible catcher. I couldn't catch a ball but I wanted to wear the gear and I remember getting in a fight with another eight year old catcher, and literally because he said something and I'm a very committed of person. And so when you say Is everyone okay with it? Obviously they're not. And I think it's partially because you because they filed a lawsuit and to the bigger thing here is your people are losing out on potential scholarships. And that's the whole thing. And that's the debate and wondering,

**Gretchen Hurd 55:14**

like, I haven't seen any anything having to do with people losing scholarships.

**Ray Abel 55:19**

Well, for example, there's women, that's what the whole lawsuit was based off of. And I'm not saying they definitely lost scholarships, but when you don't win those kind of competitions that can affect your skill. And I think the one thing just to be clear about what I'm saying there is, that is a little bit of still the future to it. But I'll give you one example, this, this is a good example from a college level. There was a runner, and then I'm just going to I didn't mean to do this now. So I apologize for throwing something else in here. But there was a runner, CeCe Telfer. This is also posted on the website. But CeCe went through three years of playing Division Two men are running Division Two men's outdoor track and field, ranked 203 119th in 2016, and 2017, in the 400 meter hurdles. And then she transitioned and did the 400 meter hurdles for the women's and won the national title that year, she finished up at a 57.3 second pace, the number two person was at 59.21. And that's where again, even let's get rid of scholarships. That's something where if I can understand the woman being upset, there wasn't a big uproar, and everyone was kind of quiet about it. But if I was that second place, finisher, and I saw someone who had had run, and done poorly against men for two years of college athletics, and then transitioned to a woman, and just destroyed everything I've been working my whole life for, I hope that even if you don't agree with it, I think it's nice to be able to recognize that that could be frustrating for someone who is a commercial person who did wash your life. And so that's where, and I think the last thing I'll say here quickly on that is that there, there aren't a lot of examples, but there aren't also a lot of transgender women, but it seems to be in transgender women in sports. But when you look at their their records, they do pretty well. So it's a pretty high percentage of the transgender women who do well in the sports they play in. So just we just talked about a lot, and I'm sure you're probably I have a lot to push back on. So hit us. It made me especially I think you'd probably agree with Gretchen.

**Jess Scott 57:21**

But I guess the thing I would think that competitive people should understand really well is that there's probably always going to be someone faster, stronger, there's probably there's always an opportunity that you're going to lose. Yeah. And I guess that's what irritated me so much in the Caster situation. It's sort of like those women who sort of said, Well, is she really a woman? It's like, just because they happen to run against her. And then they get to throw fit about, like, what they've worked so hard for all their lives, like in all of our lives, we work so hard for things that sometimes happen, and sometimes don't. And I hate that we are so focused in on gender, that we sort of forget the context in which all this stuff happens. It could have been, I mean, I know it wasn't any other girl like it was Caster or in the other circumstance. It wasn't any girl. It was CeCe Did you say, but but it's just like, there's so much that's left to so much about competing is about chance. And I think that there are some some people talk in this context about like Michael Phelps having Oh, yeah, feet, that are shaped in a way that helps him move faster. Yeah. And a couple of other like, is it Simone Biles, who I think has like double double jointed pneys. And it's

**Gretchen Hurd 58:37**

actually told her she wasn't allowed to do certain moves because they were too hard. People couldn't do them. So they Yeah, and I that these are the things exactly that I was thinking there

**Jess Scott 58:48**

are individual variations in people's bodies that at that, especially at that elite level, make them so good at what they do. It just feels so reductive to be like testosterone is the definitive thing. And I do understand, like, the different levels, the ranges, the averages, I do understand all of that. But we don't tell Michael Phelps, that he has to swim with weights, because his feet are shaped differently,

**Gretchen Hurd 59:15**

I guess, surgery to change his feet. Yeah.

**Jess Scott 59:18**

Um, and so I guess, but I guess what I would ask you Ray is like, what is the the testosterone difference and the sort of speed difference and the performance difference like? Well, I wanted to ask you, what does that have to do with this, the conversation about transgender girls, especially at the high school level, but I guess you just answered it with the last example that you gave. I guess my sort of, it doesn't seem like there are so many transgender girls that it's going to like, but it's going to Yeah, that cisgender girls are going to be sort of cisgender girls sports are sort of going to be taken over by Transpart. And I guess I think that the cost of those bills that single people out who are already particularly vulnerable to bullying and to discrimination, trans individuals have experienced a lot of discrimination when it comes to employment. And the same is true and of bullying among kids in schools for all LGBT folks, but that they're so vulnerable to that already that sort of saying, the I think the laws go back to making a distinction, again, between sort of like what is a real woman, a real woman is a cisgender woman. And the exclusion of transgender girls from sport from girls, sports would just sort of exacerbate that. And I think it's kind of meant to exacerbate that. So yeah, I just I really worry about the cost. I mean, I think we all have to face kind of individual disappointments, the kind of



which are often a result of competition. But I think that transgender young people, especially girls, as a group face so much discrimination and bullying, that that inclusion that Gretchen was talking about, in terms of like, having a place to belong is really, really important. For for them. So that's really what I worry about, I guess,

**Gretchen Hurd** 1:01:37

I wonder to like, Where, where, what, like, what, what's, how do we fix that? Like, it's, how do we, because there's so little people actually, that it's affecting? What do we do with those kids like are they should we force them to, even if they're going through a transition to compete against people that there is that they don't identify with, and then that's a mental issue that they will have to then deal with. And like, that's where I kind of am falling in the whole thing. It's a mental, it's mental for me, because I can't even imagine what it's like already to go through. Realizing that you're, you know, you you want to or you're needing to transition and you're having this moment in your life where you're realizing this, and then on top of it, your your, your school is telling you that you're not even allowed to be a girl, like, I can't imagine like waking up tomorrow and somebody's going, you're a man. And I'd be like, No, I'm not. And, and, and having to change my entire course of my like, existence, because somebody is telling me of who I am when I'm not.

**Jess Scott** 1:02:42

I think cisgender people don't understand that.

**Gretchen Hurd** 1:02:44

Yeah, I can't I it's yeah, it's something that I just can't wrap my head around.

**Ray Abel** 1:02:49

Yeah, I mean, I think it's difficult. I mean, I had a really deep conversation with a friend of mine, who's, who's Black, who was affected by some of the recent things that have happened. And every time I talk with my friends who are black, I get a better understanding of what people who are black go through. And I still don't mean, obviously, I don't understand it. And so I'm not a transgender person. So I don't understand that either. But I think if you if you dumb down both of what we're talking about, it's for you, Jason, to correct me if I'm wrong, the fundamental issue is inclusion, which I I'm all for, and that's what we when we started out, I think there's I don't have a good solution. But I do think it's really tough, because what do you you said, Gretchen, what do you say just don't play? I don't think that's fair. But at the same time, I think on the other side of it the fundamental fundamental issue coming from someone who is unsure about this, it's fairness. And I think that's the part when you again, bring up like I heard I was reading or listening to a good podcast about this. And one of the women on there who was against transgender athletes brought up a good point because someone said, Well, you know, people are taller. I will say that again, I'm six four, and you could find a lot of five two basketball players that what may I'd say that I'm like a high school team would destroy me. So there's, there's a combination of a Michael Phelps by himself, he you know, I think it was at 6000 calories or 8000 calories a day and eight hours of training. There's so much that you have to do on top of if you really want to be a top athlete. So there's more than just feet size, but it is an advantage. But the difference is being tall. You can see someone if if you ever Google videos a minute bowl, he was one of the tallest NBA players of all time, and he was also so uncoordinated. It was just funny to watch him play because he was just not good. But a really

great person in general, but that doesn't necessarily equate to but the problem and this is where this was the example I heard was, if you look at like a NASCAR race, you you can have different bumpers and different tires and you can change those kinds of things. But you would never expect to see an f1 race car on the same course as a NASCAR race. You can't have different chase ease and that is for to understand where people are coming from from who are saying this is a fairness issue. Your body is going to be bigger, your body is going to have more muscle mass, there are all these things that are biological differences. And I think that's the part that gets tricky. And like I said, I am not somebody who says I don't play and stay out of it, I would like to find a solution where everyone can play. But I do understand. And I think that's the thing with guys, I like I said, every time I've seen a guy, a woman, whether she was a transgender woman, or a trend, a transgender man, or just a woman who wanted to play male sports, some of my most far right friends are posting, let's go, let's see this, there was the woman who was a kicker for Vanderbilt, I think it was this year, and my friends were posting and saying, let's see this, let's get up there. And of course, you always have the internet trolls, you always have them that put her down. But in general, people are really excited about that. And if there was a woman who could play in the NBA, she would be a superstar, like she would be even if she was playing at the very base level and a benchwarmer, she would be a hero, because that is a high threshold across. And so for guys, I mean, and even when you're playing on teams, if you're playing just pickup games, and a woman comes and can ball, you're going to be impressed with her, you're not going to kick her out and say, you know, get out of here, you're terrible. You're going to pick her for your team, because you want the best people on your team to play. And I think that's the part that gets tricky for me. Because when you go into the women's sports, again, forget about my example about the the scholarships, if that hasn't happened yet. I think to me, it's it's not that it's not happening a lot. It's if that one woman to me, who has worked her whole life, and is it's taken from her, I can understand why she's upset. And that that isn't, that doesn't lead to a solution, we still need to figure out what the solution is. But I think that goes back to I do think there's a giant advantage for testosterone. And I do think that that's, that's a bad, especially in the states that have no laws. And if you just want to identify, you can switch because the woman who switched in college, it wasn't like she had been raised her whole life, she decided in college, and it happened to lead to an NCAA championship. And I don't know, like I said, as a competitive person, I can 100% to see how that was frustrated. But my question to you, Jess, is, do you see some kind of middle ground because I don't like I mean, you don't want to use the separate but equal, you know, that role and say you can have your own league? First off, there's not enough transgender women to have their own sports. So that's not a real solution for me. Is there a solution you see or something you've thought about other than having transgender women who have higher testosterone levels? or have some kind of physical advantage compete against women or biological women? Or are you you think it's good the way it is?

**Jess Scott** 1:07:47

I guess I just, I guess I just struggle with the it doesn't seem like that's even the conversation. The conversation doesn't even seem like it's about like finding that middle ground that you're proposing where there's some kind of balance, or there's some kind of flexibility, where where the needs of everyone involved are taken into account, it seems to me, I guess this is why I really see this as a kind of a political maneuver. It seems to me that the conversation is sort of like whatever it says on your birth certificate, like that's what you got to do. And that's just gonna be deeply uncomfortable for for transgender young people. And it's gonna lead to them not participating in sports. And so I guess,

yeah, I don't really know what the middle what the solution is, I was devastated by the decision that affected Castor. Because it also doesn't seem fair mean, as much as the women in Berlin had been training their whole lives, to lose that race to Caster Semenya has also trained her whole life, and it's all she's ever wanted to do is run. And so yeah, it really seems unfair to say that intersex and transgender athletes can't participate unless they sort of follow that birth certificate, because that's a it's just a real trigger for a lot of transgender people right now, in terms of, you know, wanting to be who you are. So I just, I guess, I wish I wish the conversation was more like what you're asking sort of like, how do you how do you maintain fairness? How do you sort of ensure that everybody gets equal opportunity? Because that's what you know, Title IX was supposed to be about anyway. Right? How do we do that? But I don't it doesn't seem like we have the political will. To do that. Yeah.

**Ray Abel** 1:09:54

It's one I think the, I think what you're saying is right on and I think these are the kinds of things questions, I think at the very baseline, I hope you understand a little more about where I'm coming from. And I'm, I just want to be clear, I'm not. I'm not an expert in women's sports. I'm doing a lot of this research as we go. But one of the things I think is even in what you just said there, when you talk about Caster Semenya, I think she has a unique example as well, because I think when you talk about transgender women in sports, people typically think about men who transition to women, whereas someone like Caster Semenya, she, she was born with, you know, she I, from what I understand it was still X Y chromosomes, but she has internal gonads that produce testosterone. That's pretty rare from there's all kinds of different studies, but I saw it as low as point 01 8%. So that's something where if her story was explained that way, I think there would be a lot more people that get behind the fact Okay, well, that's the way she was born. And she can't change that. And I, that's where the conversation stop. And I think that's where on both sides, I think. And some people get really upset that I just said, both sides. But I think that you're right on the right, it tends to be well, whatever's in your birth certificate. That's it. And there's no conversation, I don't want to have this conversation on the left. I think part of it is, and I think this is interesting, because you you haven't played I mean, you haven't played competitive sports and gone through that and you hate competitiveness. And I totally understand why, if you didn't have that kind of drive, it would be you'd kind of err towards the side of well, just let everyone play, because I think that's the core of it. I mean, I would love to see everyone play. But when you have that competitive side, I mean, I could go through a list of hundreds of times in my life that I should be extremely embarrassed by the way I reacted in sports or in life, or in general, just because I overreacted to losing. But people who have that competitive drive, I don't think that that is recognized sometimes on the other side where there is, and I think the other part of it is there are biological differences. And eventually, maybe those will go away. But when you look at how much testosterone actually does help, even there's one study, and this is something that just to bring up one more study, this was done by it, this is on the website, as well, it's linked. This was actually an NBC News they had on their NBC out page, they talked about trans women who after for the first two years after starting hormones, trans women were able to do 10% more push ups and 6% more situps and their cisgender female counterparts. And after two years, they were fairly equivalent to the cisgender. Women, they're running to times declined as well. But two years on trans women were still 12% faster and the 1.5 mile run, they're cisgender peers. And on the flip side of it, this was interesting to me, it was female to male transitions. Testosterone affected the fitness scores of the men they reviewed prior to starting hormones, they perform fewer push ups, not slower running times and cisgender men in the control

group, a year into the treatment, though the disappearance, the disc differences disappeared. And a lot of times they were actually faster. So not only did they get that advantage, and that's something where I know you'd mentioned that men don't get tested for testosterone, but they do get tested for steroids and like 8000 Different kinds of drugs, people have got national drug abuse for things in their cough medicine and things. It's you have to be very careful. So there are there are there are testing there testings that are done. But it does clearly affect it. And I think that's where two, we have to look at some of the science behind it. And I think it's still early. But the science as of now says that there is a difference. And there is an advantage. And that's where, you know, I think if we do have more conversations like this, I'd love to have a future conversation where you think about maybe what I said, even if you hate it all, and I think about what you said, and we come back and maybe have a solution sometime maybe we can have a follow up, that we come and we formed some kind of our own league and we can we can make this happen and we can solve the problems of humanity. As Michael Scott said in the office when he was made a very crude joke about Oscar being homosexual. He said the company has made it my job to make up for 2000 years of people being grossed out by homosexuality. And I feel like that was Michael Scott's charge in life. And you know, we're past that now. People are people are moving forward, we can have these kinds of conversations. And we now can maybe solve this problem and move forward. And I can't believe I just quoted Michael Scott as some kind of terrible.

**Jess Scott 1:14:31**

They still won't like Casta run, though. I mean, even though it's naturally Right, yeah, truly produced they still won't let her

**Gretchen Hurd 1:14:38**

which is so this is where I was kind of thinking to like so why can't there just be an asterix next to the names like you know, not that I'm saying that you're

**Ray Abel 1:14:51**

a competitive person. That's Muncaster side there. If I had an asterisk next to my name, it would mean nothing to me.

**Gretchen Hurd 1:14:56**

So an asterisk next to the lady that came in second. Yeah, either one. You know what I mean? Like, I understand I'm just saying like, there, there could be a solution where everybody's able to compete. There was one of the things that I read that they were talking about, like an asterix next to your name like you are this weight, this height, this whatever, whatever it has like your, your stats basically next to you. And so you won, knowing all this you want knowing all this, you want knowing all this or whatever. And you came first, second, third, whatever. The other ones were breaking up into open groups. So open groups would be anyone can compete at the same level, and then they're ranked, you know, first, second, third, whatever. And it's unchosen. Yeah. And so the open group actually made more sense to me. So especially when you're looking at track and field or something like that, where you could have an open level or even just saying, like, she's competing in an open level against all these other people. And here's her score. You know, it's and I think there's obviously I don't know, because I'm not whatever. But, you know, there has to be there. There's there has to be some way to make it so that everyone can still be involved, still compete and get their scholarships and have the trophy because

that's just what it feels like, to me. It's like, Oh, you didn't get your trophy, really. And the funny thing is, that's a liberal saying this, Oh, you didn't get your participation trophy today, which is usually not a thing that liberals say usually we're like, we want everyone to feel great.

**Ray Abel 1:16:31**

I will push back in that there's a big difference in participation trophies, I would throw away and this isn't a conservative, I hate participation trophies. I, if I, I will tell you guys, the first trophy I ever won wasn't a participation trophy. It was a trophy that I made up with rolls for a tennis based game that I made up played with neighbor kids. And one because I wanted a trophy. I look back and I'm embarrassed at my 12 year old self or 10 year old self who had my grandfather make me a trophy for winning this fake game that I made up. I hate that I did that. But I do think there's a big difference where you say saying that it's a participation trophy. It's not it for people who spend their I mean, sure people who people are elite athletes, again, there's so much preparation, and it's so much and so that's where it comes in. It's where it gets difficult, but I do think

**Gretchen Hurd 1:17:14**

I didn't win my first trophy until last year, which was last year, I won Best Choreography in one of those competitions. And I have never been involved in one of those competitions. And this was my first try. And I won the choreography award. And they won platinum, which is like high high in there. Which is great. But that's only partially me and I can't take full credit, good job altered productions Institute of Clarksburg, West Virginia. But no, I totally understand what you're saying, though. Yeah. I'm not trying to diminish anyone's time and effort that they spend. But I think that's the other part of it. Whenever people are saying, like, well, there's this person, and they're better than me, but I should be the winner. But they're better than you. But I should be the winner. But they're better than you.

**Ray Abel 1:18:05**

And I think this is where the big disagreement comes in. And I think I see just nodding your head, and I'm shaking my head. And I think that's the big disagreement where, again, I am not saying that I think there should be and I think this is a good like a conversation conversations like this are good starts because like I said, I understand more now. And even Caster Semenya, I did not know that she was intersex. I would be if you asked me right now based on reading her story, that's one of those things when you talk about Michael Phelps feet, that is a body trait that she has. And I do think that that is, by nature, it's such a low percentage, I don't understand why she is. It's, it's it's more difficult for me to understand why she is being excluded. And so I think that's where you can find some middle ground and start having this conversation. So when we wrap up, we always talk about what we learned. And I think that number one is something that I definitely I feel like I understand more, the fundamental fundamental issue is inclusion. That's something that I think is often lost in the conversation. When people are talking about this. I feel like it all becomes these political battles, which everything in our life is at this point. But I do think the issue of inclusion tonight, I do have friends who are trans and I would never want to see them be excluded, because they're trans. And I think it comes down to again, we can talk about fairness separately, but I think the fundamental issue for me is inclusion and and I'm actually all for some kind of resolution of Caster Semenya case because she has a body like a female have a biological female, and she has the internal workings partially of a man. And she isn't going to be able to compete at the male level based on her scores. But I would if I had to make a decision right now if I

was the a double AF, I would vote that she could get it and so that would be my my choice for her specifically. So that's what I learned this week. Gretchen, do you want to go next?

**Gretchen Hurd** 1:19:54

Yeah, I mean, I think my eyes were open just a little bit by what you were saying about People being more competitive and because because of the way I think, and I want everybody to get the most out of every thing that they do, even just, I did kind of put that out of my head. So those people are actually being hurt by not winning, or not getting the highest score in their field. And that has a negative aspect for their mental health, and thinking the way that I think for inclusion of trans kids, and because I'm really more focused on high school kids, because when you get to the, that's a whole other elite level as a whole other thing, but my focus is more on children. And the way we navigate for them, understanding that there are definite hurt on both sides and not and understanding that there is so much gray area and and it is so hard to say, well, this should just happen either on one side or the other. Just because there is so much gray area, knowing that trans kids are going to be hurt by saying they can't compete, and then cisgendered kids are going to be hurt, because transgender kids are maybe better than them. And understanding there's a lot of nuances and every body is different. And it doesn't, you know, for a lot of times doesn't matter, especially when you're looking at children. So yeah, that's just kind of where I I really did have my eyes open to that part of it.

**Jess Scott** 1:21:30

Yeah, and for me, I I didn't know the piece about the professional sports being open to women, and they could participate in those that was really interesting to learn. And also the sort of what Gretchen was talking about the dance, the selection of how people move through a process of competition in different, different sports. I think it was interesting to learn to learn about that, because I think this conversation does sort of shift from sport to sport. Yeah. And I think that this isn't really a thing I learned. But it's the thing I appreciated most about the conversation. Is that the emphasis on fairness? I think that that is a if the conversation would happen in that context. It was it would be better, I think, yeah. For everybody. If we were thinking about like, what is what is the most fair for everybody involved? Yeah, so I really appreciate it that that emphasis on fairness that you put?

**Ray Abel** 1:22:40

Well, that's good. I was a little bit nervous coming into this, that you may hate me at the end of this. So I'm really glad that it's not our Ray, I know it's not but you never know, I've had, I have had some interactions where I say things even more mundane than that. And people get really mad at me for it. So I feel I, I really do appreciate just being open and talking about this issue. And I think that, again, moving forward, I think what's next, I think there's a lot of discussions to be had about the competitive versus non competitive sports, too. I think that's when you look at these issues. I think when you talk about non competitive sports, that's a completely different topic. And I do want to make sure people feel included, and I want to make sure people feel like it's fair. And I think when I see again, as a man, I'm kind of an outsider in both of the As a cisgender male amount, an outsider in both these, but I can understand both sides where it's fairness. And to me, that's what it looks like. It's fairness versus inclusion. And yeah, how do you balance those and I think that is an important thing for us to look at moving forward. So maybe we'll have you on the show again, when we talk for another couple weeks

and figure out the solution. All this so we'll see. But we're gonna wrap up with one good thing. And so Gretchen I want to go ahead and tell your one good thing from the week.

**Gretchen Hurd 1:23:58**

Um, I mowed my lawn yesterday which was made me so ecstatic and I guess that could maybe be our our sponsor for the week as well. Cobalt electric lawn mowers get yours.

**Ray Abel 1:24:14**

For those of you just tuning in, we always pick a sponsor of someone we like. So cobalt, I believe

**Gretchen Hurd 1:24:20**

it is a Lowe's one. Yeah. And I got it on sale a couple years ago and it was very exciting. But yeah, I was very um, my neighbor two houses down she keeps bees and so I have to be very careful to not put my mower too low to kill the dandelions. I actually allow dandelions to be in my yard. For the bees. Yeah. swarming everywhere and it's great.

**Ray Abel 1:24:41**

Nice. Jess, you have a you have a you have a cool one. I I've never heard of this before. But what's your one good thing for the week?

**Jess Scott 1:24:50**

Yeah, so we were talking with some of the LGBT students on campus and they expressed some feelings have discomfort or not feeling totally safe in their living spaces. And, you know, they live on campus, we want this to feel like their home. So the housing office worked really quickly to put together a floor on a residence hall that would be LGBTQ plus affinity housing, so that you could opt in to live there would be co Ed, mixed genders. And that you could live there, if you if you wanted to, to be part of that community. So

**Ray Abel 1:25:31**

that's why I think that's cool. But unfortunately, I have heard of that before I was talking about the other thing you talked about. Can you not saying that's not cool, but I'm saying the other thing to me I'd never heard of before and I think it's pretty cool. So you get two good things this week.

**Jess Scott 1:25:48**

Yes, she did. I went to a dog's birthday party. Well, those birthday party will have the Husky turned one years old, and Latrobe, Pennsylvania so I drove my dog, three hours to Pennsylvania to entertain her for four hours. I love that so much.

**Ray Abel 1:26:08**

What kind of dog do you have? Just

**Jess Scott 1:26:10**

last year at this time? I was not a dog person. No, she's a mix. She's a mix. But she she apparently resembles an Anatolian Shepherd. That's what I've been told. Like, so

**Ray Abel 1:26:21**

like, she's beautiful. I love dogs. If I would have known the two weeks to stop the spread would have lasted this long, I would have at least fostered because, you know, I I know you're married Jess, I live alone. And I would love to have a dog walking around this house. But I'm next next.

**Gretchen Hurd 1:26:37**

Borrow one of mine. At the time when the start of the pandemic I had three dogs. You can borrow one.

**Ray Abel 1:26:44**

I'm always for dog watching. So. Alright. Well, thank you again just for being on the show. I really appreciate it. Gretchen thanks. As always. I would love love to have you back again soon. So that's gonna be it for us this week. We are going to wrap up this week by talking about what's coming up in the future. Next week, we have a TBD episode coming. So we haven't picked the topic just yet. We're narrowing it down for a couple things. But in two weeks, if you heard the news about church membership dropping in the US below 50%. For the first time ever. We have Michael Gungor coming on Michael Gungor was part of a Christian band named Gungor. And at a certain point, he left the church and kind of caused an uproar because he was a Grammy nominated artist, very popular in the Christian arena. And now he's a spiritualist, and we're going to talk to him about leaving the church and Gretchen unfortunately won't be able to make that episode. She's doing some side projects that day. But Caitlyn, who was on the show with us for prison reform is going to come back on so Caitlyn is a pastor. She's a liberal person in general, but she's a Pastor Michael Gungor has grown up in the church and then left the church. I did not grow up in the church and started going so we have all these different backgrounds going into this episode, but I think it's going to be very interesting. So that's coming up in two weeks. So feel free to share this podcast. We have it on [researchnews.com](http://researchnews.com) [researchnews.org](http://researchnews.org) And also on Facebook Live. So thanks once again for being part of this and we will see you again soon.