

Dialogue, Data and Desire

Some questions regarding trans athlete masters weightlifters and the Open Category

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The controversy of trans athletes' inclusion in Masters Weightlifting is, in the opinion of WCHM President, best addressed within these three pathways. Dialogue is important between all stakeholders. In Canadian Masters Weightlifting this includes discussion between the President and WCHM trans athlete members, the WCHM Advisory Group, Provincial Presidents, WCH, and the IMWA. Data relative to trans weightlifters may be very limited, however the resources from WCH, IWF and the IMWA should be taken advantage of when available. Desire is most important because it includes the desire of the trans athlete to be treated fairly and to have an opportunity to participate in national and international masters weightlifting championships. In addition, cisgender athletes also wish to be treated fairly if trans athletes are allowed to compete in their cisgender category. The desire of trans WCHM members to compete may be fulfilled differently between the provincial weightlifting association, under WCH policies, and at the Canadian Masters Weightlifting Championships which operates under WCHM policies.

1. By competing in a cisgender category, will trans athletes' totals be compared cisgender athletes' totals?

Although the trans athlete competes in your session does not mean that your accomplishments are in danger of being lost to the trans athlete. The trans athlete only shares the field of play and their accomplishments are awarded as an Open Category competitor. This is no different than a para weightlifter in the same session being worried of losing their accomplishments to an able-bodied athlete. Each athlete is in their own Category and awarded separately.

2. Who would decide into which cisgender category the trans athlete would be competing?

The trans athlete in consultation with the WCHM President can choose which cisgender session is preferred.

3. Why is the WCHM President proposing an Open Category to trans athletes when no such category has yet been designated by Weightlifting Canada Haltérophilie?

When the WCH Gender Identity Policy is released, it may have specific rules and regulations about transgender athletes in cisgender categories. However, WCHM is not traversing that path. The Open Category pathway does not place a trans athlete into a cisgender category, only a cisgender session. With an Open Category, a WCHM athlete can then have an opportunity, like all WCHM athletes, to participate in National and International Masters Weightlifting Events. The Open Category provides a practical compromise for the complex issues surrounding gender and weightlifting performance. At international masters events, there are rules and regulations for trans athletes to compete in cisgender categories when they cannot do so at national masters weightlifting championships.

- 4. Although WCHM is advocating the Open Category as a means of athlete inclusion, wouldn't the trans athlete feel that having such a category undermines the principle of inclusion by creating a separate space instead of integrating them into existing male and female categories?**

This is an understandable and justifiable feeling from the WCHM trans athlete. However, considering that there are no current pathways for them to compete in WCH sanctioned competitions, the WCHM Open Category is the only present way for them to advance to national and international masters weightlifting championships.

- 5. Wouldn't the Open Category be composed of too few athletes to make it sustainable therefore diminishing the legitimacy of that category?**

Yes, the category will be composed of very few athletes and that is why having them compete in a cisgender category of their choice is the best use of technical official and volunteer resources, as well as a sense of inclusion. The same low numbers of athletes in a category are also why adaptive athletes competing as para weightlifters are organized in the sessions of able-bodied athletes.

- 6. If WCHM provides an Open Category, would trans athletes be required to register in that Category?**

The trans athlete cannot register in a cisgender category, however they may for personal reasons decline the opportunity to compete in the Open Category. At the discretion of the WCHM President, the trans athlete would then be allowed to qualify virtually for international masters weightlifting championships. The results of the virtual qualification would not be considered as part of the Canadian Masters Weightlifting Championships and so could take place at a time convenient to both the trans athlete and the WCHM President.

- 7. Why was the description of an Open Category not included in the WCHM Gender Diversity and Inclusion Policy?**

The WCHM Gender Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) Policy was created, some time ago, in anticipation of a WCH Gender Identity Policy. The WCHM GDI Policy has a provision that it will require an immediate review after a WCH Gender Identity Policy is established. The Open Category, however, was not addressed in the WCHM GDI Policy as it was believed to be forthcoming in the WCH Gender Identity Policy. With the inclusion of the Open Category at the IMWA World Masters Championships, WCHM should make every effort possible to provide an opportunity for some of our members to compete Nationally and Internationally as Canadian masters weightlifters. The Open Category pathway provides our trans members with that very opportunity to fulfill their desire to compete internationally.