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# Los Angeles 2028 – Olympics under new gender rule



The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made a decision that will change the rules of the game in the long term, as well as the relationship between science, law and politics in global sports.

From the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, every athlete wishing to compete in the women's category will have to undergo **genetic testing** for the presence of the SRY gene. No negative result – no participation.

At first glance, the decision appears to be an attempt to close a dispute that has persisted for years. In reality, it is only opening it further.

In January 2021, the IOC adopted a framework that left international federations to regulate the participation of transgender athletes themselves, with an emphasis on inclusion and non-discrimination.

Five years later, the same institution introduces a universal rule based on a single genetic marker.

The turnaround is complete. The reasoning is equally simple: to protect fair competition and the integrity of the women's category.

The problem is that reality is not simple.

## The flawed science behind the IOC's decision

The SRY gene is associated with the development of male sexual characteristics. However, its presence does not automatically mean functional male biological development.

There are documented medical cases where individuals with XY chromosomes and the SRY gene have a completely female phenotype, with no functioning testicles and no biological ability to use testosterone.

Complete androgen insensitivity syndrome (CAIS) is not a theoretical category but a clinical fact.

It is precisely because of these cases that the IOC foresees "rare exceptions". But there are no clear criteria, no defined procedure, and no decision deadlines.

In practice, this means that the most sensitive cases will be dealt with ad hoc, under public pressure and with inevitable legal uncertainty.

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More importantly, the very scientific basis of the decision has been challenged internally.

**Andrew Sinclair**, the geneticist who identified the SRY gene in 1990, has publicly warned that it cannot be used as a simple criterion for determining biological sex in sport.

The test shows the presence of the **gene**, but not its functionality. It says nothing about the hormonal profile, tissue response to testosterone, or actual physiological advantage.

This is not an academic discussion. That is the difference between enforceable rules and rules that generate disputes.

The IOC claims it has chosen "the most accurate and least intrusive method". The **scientific community** has not confirmed this claim. There is no consensus. An institution has decided to introduce a standard in a field where science has not yet reached a single answer.

## The political context surrounding the IOC's rule

Politics is not absent from this process.

The reaction from **Washington** was almost immediate. Donald Trump's administration hailed the decision as a "common sense move" and openly linked it to **domestic measures** limiting the participation of transgender

athletes in women's categories.

Timing is also important. The 2028 Olympics will be held in the United States. The host controls the infrastructure, security framework, logistics, and much of the regulatory environment in which the Games operate.

Formally, the IOC is independent. Operationally, it depends on the host country to an extent that cannot be ignored.

### The IOC's decision aligns with the political framework of the host country at every key point

The history of the Olympic movement shows how politically significant this dependence can be. The boycotts of 1980 and 1984 were not exceptions but reminders that geopolitics regularly spill over into sport.

The difference today is that pressure does not have to be overt to be effective. It is enough to assess the risk and adjust in advance.

The IOC's decision aligns with the political framework of the host country at every key point. This could be a coincidence. It could also be a rational institutional calculation.

In both cases, the consequence is the same: a rule that will be interpreted as politically motivated.

## A direct conflict

The most tangible problems arise during implementation.

Testing costs are low for wealthy federations but significant for poorer ones. A one-off genetic test costs about \$250.

In a system where National Olympic Committees are already operating on tight budgets, the extra cost means an additional selection barrier.

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The legal framework further complicates matters. In some European countries, genetic testing is permitted exclusively for medical purposes. Female athletes from those countries will have to seek testing abroad to meet Olympic requirements.

This creates a direct conflict between international sports rules and national legislation.

## A systemic risk in IOC policy

The biggest problem remains the absence of a clear appeal procedure. An athlete who receives a positive test and believes she meets the criteria for an exception does not have a defined path for legal protection.

It is not clear who decides, on what evidence, or within what time frame. In a system intended to regulate global competition, such a gap is not a technical flaw. It is a systemic risk.

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Therefore, it is almost certain that the first serious test of this policy will come before the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

There is already a precedent in the **Caster Semenya** case. Although she lost her case against World Athletics before the CAS, the **European Court of Human Rights** later found

that her rights were not adequately protected.

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## The sustainability of the IOC's decision

At the same time, the political dimension will not remain limited to the West. Previous gender testing controversies have disproportionately affected female athletes from Africa and Asia.

National federations in those regions may respond in a coordinated manner if they perceive the new policy as a continuation of that practice.

Such pressure does not need to take the form of a formal boycott to be effective; a blockade through political channels or a joint stance in international sports bodies would suffice.

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A third source of pressure comes from science itself. If, in the next two years, a greater number of professional publications and public statements appear disputing the validity of the SRY test as the sole criterion, the IOC will find itself defending a rule that lacks firm support in medical consensus.

Combined with legal disputes and political pressures, such a position is not sustainable in the long term.

In this context, the IOC's decision appears more like an attempt to close the issue before the Games begin than a viable solution.

## The wider implications of the IOC's choice

The most realistic scenario is that the rule comes into force but triggers legal disputes from the outset, forcing the IOC to make partial changes.

At the same time, political pressure will grow from parts of the world that view this measure as discriminatory. Scientific debate will further erode the legitimacy of a single parameter attempting to replace complex biological reality.



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In other words, the decision will not stabilise the system. It will expose it to a new cycle of disputes, only with higher stakes.

The wider implication of this decision extends beyond the question of who can compete in women's sports. That question remains open and legitimate.

The essential issue is different: how do global institutions make decisions when the science is unclear, the law is undeveloped, and political pressure is real?

The IOC has chosen a clear criterion in a situation that is not clear. It has chosen a standard that can be easily applied but is difficult to defend.

It has selected a moment at which the political context favours such a decision.

It is not a neutral position. It is a choice.

Precisely because of this, this decision will not be remembered as a technical rule about a

sports competition but as an example of how an institution reacts when it must decide between scientific complexity and political certainty.