

# A RUGBY GUIDE TO TRANS INCLUSION



**IGR**  
INTERNATIONAL  
GAY RUGBY



## INTRODUCTION

International Gay Rugby (IGR) is committed to ensuring rugby is a sport for all and to improving tolerance and acceptance of LGBT athletes at all levels of the game. Since signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015, World Rugby and IGR have been working at the highest levels to reduce barriers to entry for transgender athletes. This booklet is intended to explain the current policy framework and provide guidance to clubs on how best to ensure transgender players are welcome in their teams.

## BACKGROUND

In 2019 World Rugby (WR) released their new Transgender Policy, that allows transgender players to play in World Rugby tournaments in the category consistent with their gender identity.

In addition to giving clarity to transgender players, while respecting and preserving their dignity and privacy, the policy was written to guarantee fairness and safety within the sport as long as certain eligibility conditions have been met:

### 1. Transgender male (female-to-male or f2m) Players:

a. A transgender male player must provide a written and signed declaration, in a form satisfactory to the Chief Medical Officer, that their identity is male. Based on this, the Chief Medical Officer will issue a written certification of the player's eligibility to compete in the male category in World Rugby Tournaments.

### 2. Transgender female (male-to-female or m2f) Players:

a. A transgender female player must provide a written and signed declaration that their identity is female to the Chief Medical Officer and must demonstrate that the concentration of testosterone is less than 5nmol/L continuously for a period of at least 12 months, based on the Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guidelines.

No player will be forced to undergo medical assessment and/or treatment, provide legal recognition of gender identity of sex or have performed any surgical anatomical changes, but once a player has participated in a World Rugby Tournament in the category of competition consistent with their gender identity, they may not switch back to other gender categories until at least four years have passed.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who are transgender people?

A transgender person is someone whose gender they were assigned at birth does not match their current self-identified gender. This includes:

- Those who were assigned male at birth and who now identify as female (trans women)
- Those who were assigned female at birth and now identify as male (trans men)
- Those who do not identify as either male or female (non-binary people)

Some transgender members of the community may make the decision to move away from the gender they were assigned at birth and transition to the gender they self-identify with now. This is referred to as transitioning.

The transition may include changing their name, title, pronoun and appearance. Others may opt to undergo medical interventions such as taking hormones and/or opting for surgery.

Everyone's transition is unique to them and we should support these members of our community to show our solidarity in whatever means possible to ensure they feel valued, safe and supported by their club and team mates.

### Is someone obliged to come out as transgender to their team?

**No.**

If a member of your club decides to tell you, your teammates and/or your administration team that they are either a trans-man or a trans-women, it is solely at their discretion. To disclose their status or history without their consent is an infringement on their right to privacy and is not acceptable behavior.

To provide a safe space for all members of the LGBT community, it is up to all of us in the sport of rugby to ensure that all our players or future players feel they have the support to come out, **if and when** they choose to.

## **Is someone obliged to come out as transgender to their union?**

There may be a requirement for transgender players to register themselves with their National Union. If a player does not register with the union and their gender is formally challenged, there could be disciplinary action taken against your club for fielding an ineligible player which could carry sanctions.

This is going to be a challenge to monitor, but we should remember this policy is intended for players affected to feel supported. This policy is in place to support them and others to play rugby safely, rather than penalise them.

## **What do I do if a MtF player or a FtM player wants to play in my club?**

Transgender players will need to sign an affidavit for the National Union, and in the case of MtF athletes, they will need to provide a doctor's note certifying hormone levels at certain points. The National Unions will determine how individual information is submitted to them for registration or insurance purposes. The privacy of the individual will be respected by the club, the union and the medical officer at all times.

## **Who can I go to for guidance if this happens?**

IGR clubs can speak to your IGR Regional Representative for guidance on this matter. For non-IGR clubs, IGR has an Inclusivity and Diversity Forum to handle sensitive matters like this in order to support players and clubs, please contact the IGR Trustees for assistance or guidance (see final page for contact information).

## **Do I have to tell the opposing team if I have a transgender athlete in my team?**

**No.** As long as the guidelines have been adhered to, there is no need to disclose the transgender status of players.

## **What should I do about bathrooms and changing rooms for transgender players?**

Transgender players should have access to the toilets, showers and changing room facilities consistent with their self-identified gender. Each player may have different options and preference about what makes them feel the most comfortable so the best practice is to ask what works best for them.

Some players may be happy to use communal facilities, while others may prefer individual facilities – depending on available space and the financial constraints of the club.

Where there are cubicles, it is important to make sure doors and locks are properly maintained and functional.

A toilet as a changing room is **NOT** an option.

## **What happens if someone is transphobic to a member of my team or supporter?**

Any kind of discrimination including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia should not be tolerated at any level in rugby. Banter is part of the rugby experience, but should never demean anyone on the grounds of their race, age and sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

If any kind of discriminatory language or behavior is observed, this should be reported to the referee during a game scenario or the coach and/or club manager during a training session or club social.

## **Can IGR support my club in helping making sure transgender athletes are welcomed?**

Absolutely. IGR clubs are asked to please contact your Regional Representative for support. For non-IGR clubs please contact the IGR Trustees directly for assistance or guidance.

## **What if my player identifies as non-binary?**

For non-binary players, they would need to play in the category consistent with the gender they were assigned at birth. If they want to play in another category, they would need to register an exception with their union and go through a similar process as the one detailed above.



*I first came across rugby while at university in the Netherlands. For me it was just a rough dumb version of American football. I didn't play much and was pushed to hook which I hated. Years later and after transitioning I saw a friend playing and jokingly asked who'd I'd play for as a transgender female. He grabbed me by the ear and took me to meet the women's team.*

*At first I was just looking for friendship after losing so many people in my life. Once I started playing and getting to understand the sport better, I learned what an amazing sport it is and at the same time found the family and acceptance I've always been looking for. To have the acceptance as a female and play with other females in a sport like this have given me the*

*courage to face many of life's challenges and personal obstacles. Every time I put on my jersey or step on the field I have to hold back tears. I know how lucky I am to have the support of other athletes out there and just how special this all is.*

**Isabella Macbeth Cain**  
**Outside Center**  
**Club Public Relations Rep.**  
**Charleston Hurricanes Women's RFC**

*After making the decision to medically transition from female to male back in 2008, I thought I would never play rugby again.*

*My previous female only team said that they couldn't accommodate me while I transitioned, the male teams all turned me down saying they couldn't because I was female. There was no guidance on if it was even possible for a transgendered person to play rugby, so I hung up my boots.*

*Fast-forward to 2018, the Hull Roundheads had formed and the advert said they were a gay and inclusive club. So I bit the bullet and sent a message. The club respected my trans history from the start and contacted IGR for advice and help submitting my registration with the RFU as a trans player.*

*As a result, the past year has been one of the best experiences of my life. I feel very much a part of a family. The support shown to me as the first openly trans male to captain a team has confirmed to me what a transformative power for good IGR clubs can be in promoting equal opportunities for all players regardless of sexuality or gender identity.*

*This guidance document from IGR is intended to help make everything less stressful, giving any club confidence that they can welcome, involve and support transgender and non-binary players just as the Roundheads have with me.*

**William James-Hirst**  
**Scrum Half**  
**Hull Roundheads RUFC**  
**Club Captain**



**If you have any questions or need advice please visit [igrugby.org](http://igrugby.org) to contact the IGR Regional Representative for your area or the IGR Trustees who would be happy to help!**



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