World Sailing

IOC Policy Athlete Information

Protection of the Female Category in Olympic Sport & SRY Gene Screening

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The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has introduced a new Policy on the Protection of the Female Category in Olympic Sport. The policy applies to IOC Events from the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games (LA28) onwards and is not retroactive. It applies to IOC Events and does not apply to grassroots or recreational sport. World Sailing are required to implement the IOC policy.

What does the policy say?

The IOC's new Policy ensures that participation in the Female Category at IOC Events is restricted to biological females. The IOC states that eligibility will be determined through SRY gene screening, which looks for the presence or absence of the SRY gene.

When does the policy take effect?

The policy will apply for the first time at the LA28 Olympic Games.
The policy will not apply to any of the qualifying events prior to LA28.
In order to compete at the LA28 Games, World Sailing will require all athletes eligible for the Female Category to undergo SRY gene screening prior to entries closing for the Games. World Sailing is working through a testing and verification plan which will be communicated in the near future.

What is the SRY gene?

SRY stands for Sex-determining Region of the Y chromosome. The SRY gene is a section of DNA that is typically located on the Y chromosome and plays an important role in initiating male sex development.

Without this gene, sex development proceeds along the female path. Hence, athletes who screen negative for the SRY gene will be eligibile for the female category. It is important to understand that an SRY test is a genetic screening test. It is not a test of an athlete's gender identity, appearance, sporting ability or personal identity.

How is SRY screening performed?

SRY screening may be carried out using:

- a cheek swab; or
- a blood sample.



What happens during a cheek-swab test?

Where a cheek swab is used, the process generally involves:
A trained person collects cells from the inside of the athlete's cheek using a sterile swab. The sample is labelled and handled according to the applicable testing and laboratory procedures. The sample is sent to an appropriate laboratory for genetic analysis. The laboratory analyses the sample for the presence or absence of the SRY gene. The result is reported through the appropriate authorised process.

The exact operational procedure, including who collects the sample, where and when testing takes place and how results are communicated, will be communicated by World Sailing.

What does a negative SRY result mean?

An athlete who screens negative for the SRY gene is eligible for the Female Category. It is a once-in-a-lifetime test.

What happens if the SRY gene is detected?

An SRY-positive result does not mean that an athlete has done anything wrong. Under the IOC policy, an athlete with an SRY-positive screening result is generally not eligible for the Female Category at an IOC Event.

There are only a few exceptions, based on rare specific conditions (Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS) or other rare differences/disorders of sex development that do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone), which would allow athletes with an SRY-positive screening to compete in the female category.

Where an athlete has an SRY-positive result, the relevant sporting organisation should provide information about the applicable process, including any further assessment or review that may be available under the governing rules.

Privacy and confidentiality

Sex and genetic information is highly sensitive personal information. World Sailing will ensure athlete privacy and well-being is protected and ensure that information is not shared beyond authorised channels. Athletes will not be asked to publicly disclose their test results.

What should athletes do if they have questions or concerns?

If you have questions about the policy or your individual circumstances, speak to:

- your National Olympic Committee (NOC);
- your International Federation (IF) or MNA;
- your designated team medical staff.



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