

Logic Be Damned: MMA Fighter Fallon Fox and the PC Conspiracy

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Abstract

The MMA world has been a-buzz after learning that MMA fighter Fallon Fox is trans. A popular site for all things MMA recently posted an article that was quite good. The author sought out the informed opinion of experts and the resulting article was both insightful and balanced. However, the follow-up article failed in every way the first succeeded. Instead of using the [...]

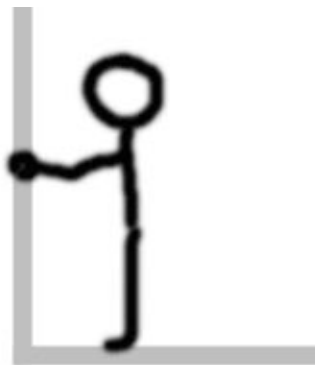
Article

The MMA world has been a-buzz after learning that MMA fighter Fallon Fox is trans. A popular site for all things MMA recently posted an article that was quite good. The author sought out the informed opinion of experts and the resulting article was both insightful and balanced. However, the follow-up article failed in every way the first succeeded. Instead of using the informed opinion of a professional who has first-hand knowledge of the physiology of post-transition trans folk, the site used the opinion of Dr. Johnny Benjamin.

Benjamin took great pains to inform readers that he doesn't have any issues with trans folk:

It always becomes a huge social issue. 'Oh, you don't like transgender people.' I don't even know if I actually know any transgender people, but I certainly don't have hangups with people. Who you love, who you date ... I couldn't care less. I don't pick who you love, you don't pick who I love. That's a rule I live my life by.

While he's never knowingly talked to a trans person, he does know that trans issues are about who you have sex with and who you love and this understanding proves that he's the non-bias voice of reason in the Fallon Fox controversy.



Brace yourself. It only gets worse.

The issue here is if it's safe or not. That's the only thing I care about... The problem with the transgender issue, specifically male to female, is that there is not enough scientific information out there to say if it's safe enough to allow this to go on. If you don't know if it's safe, we have to err on the side of safety, which says until we get more information, we cannot go forward with this.

Really? Exactly how does Benjamin know that? Has he worked with trans folk before? Oh, that's right. He just said that he's never met a trans person. Well, since he doesn't have any experience in this area, why not rely upon the expert opinion of say... the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since they spent some time looking at and forming policy around trans athletes? Let's look at what the Olympic Committee has to say because an appeal to ignorance isn't a substitute for rational debate.

One of the things that's very interesting, is everyone says, 'Well there's been a few studies that say after two years this, that and the other...' That's not true. There's no studies for this. I've done the literature search. Then they come back with, 'The IOC knows.' The IOC knows what? The IOC caved to political and social pressure. The IOC didn't say, 'Because of firm scientific and medical evidence, that if you've had this SRS and you've taken hormones for two years, that's the magic number that all this is going to become safe.' That's not true at all... There is no firm scientific basis to support that conclusion. They made an arbitrary determination in the face of social pressure.

Wait... WHAT? Did he just assert that the real reason that the IOC came up with a trans policy was because of... a political correctness conspiracy?!? Benjamin apparently believes that the freaking INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE constructed their trans policy based upon political correctness and not evidence.

I simply couldn't believe that he was serious about his assertion, so I contacted Benjamin:

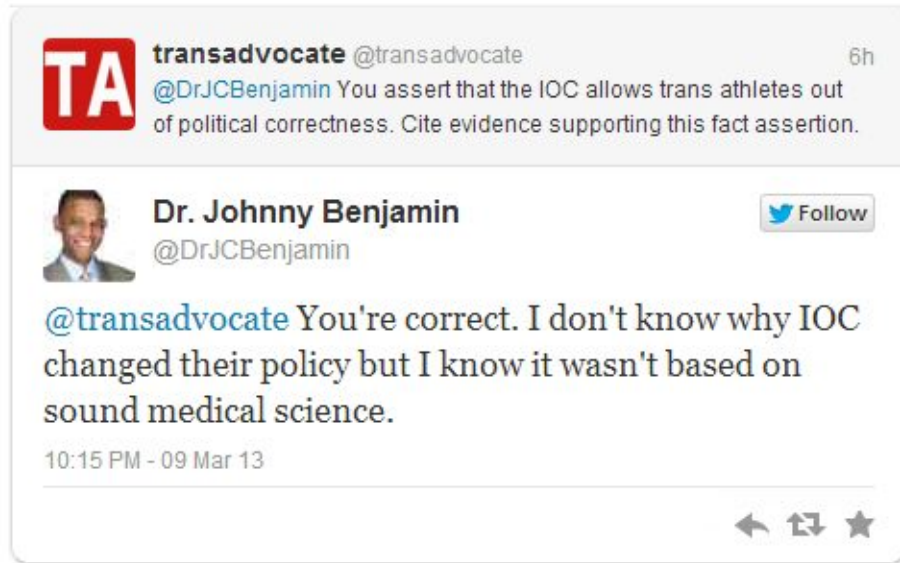


Figure 1. Sounds legit

Am I the only one who did a facepalm upon seeing his answer?

Admitting “I don’t know why IOC changed their policy” negates both the rest of his statement and his assertion of political correctness run amuck. Either he’s informed about the reasons for the IOC policy change and can therefore comment or he doesn’t know and is simply making things up. I asked him if he bothered to reach out to the IOC before making his fact assertions, but he’s not gotten back with me.

While Benjamin is forced to concede that bone density is probably comparable to Fox’s cisgender counterparts (though you can almost hear his teeth grind to admit it), he comes back asserting that trans folk have significantly longer bones than cis folk, and therefore trans folk are dangerous. Seriously. That’s his argument.

In addition to bone density, there is also the issue of longer bones in men. Longer bones lead to some mechanical advantages that shorter bones don’t have... People might think I’m against transgender people. I’m not against anybody. That’s a social issue. What I’m saying is that we don’t know enough, and if you don’t have that knowledge, if you don’t have that scientific information, you have to err on the side of safety. Until we know for sure, I can’t support it. We simply don’t know what the safety issues are.

Does Fallon Fox have a longer reach than all the other women she fights? Benjamin raises the issue and then fails to address it claiming that there’s just no way of knowing until new (unspecified) studies are conducted because nobody really knows how long (and dangerous) Fallon’s bones might be.



EPIC FACEPALM

You fail that much

Figure 2. Epic_Facepalm_by_RJTH25255B125255D5B15D

Here's what the IOC policy has to say about the two-year standard Benjamin decries:

In the opinion of the group, eligibility should begin no sooner than two years after gonadectomy. It is understood that a confidential case-by-case evaluation will occur. In the event that the gender of a competing athlete is questioned, the medical delegate (or equivalent) of the relevant sporting body shall have the authority to take all appropriate measures for the determination of the gender of a competitor.

While Benjamin might be happy to make wild assertions about why the IOC created their policy, I prefer to allow the IOC to speak for itself:

In the past there have been rare cases of athletes who have competed under one gender and later in life undergone sex reassignment. Occasionally, such an athlete has gone on competing under the new gender. Such cases seem to have been dealt with individually by the responsible sports federations without any clear rules.

With the arrival of improved methods for the identification of transsexual individuals, and improved possibilities to rectify any sexual ambiguity, the number of individuals undergoing sex reassignment has increased... Thus, the question has been raised whether specific requirements for their participation in

sport can be introduced, and what any such requirements should be.

The first international sports organization to address the issue was IAAF in 1990... The present recommendation is the result of an updating of the IAAF guidelines by a panel of experts and to which clear requirements have been added with respect to eligibility for competition under the new gender following sex reassignment after puberty. The most debated aspects have been: (A) For how long will the hormonal influence of the earlier puberty be of importance? (B) Will the testosterone influence on the muscular strength during male puberty ever disappear? (C) For how long should the treatment with female hormones last in order to be considered sufficient? (D) How can one make sure that the required treatment with female hormone does really take place? All those questions were addressed by the panel, which also sought advice from further outside experts, before the enclosed recommendations were agreed upon.

The IOC goes on to explain their policy further:

The group confirms the previous recommendation that any “individuals undergoing sex reassignment of male to female before puberty should be regarded as girls and women” (female). This applies as well for female to male reassignment, who should be regarded as boys and men (male).

The group recommends that individuals undergoing sex reassignment from male to female after puberty (and the converse) be eligible for participation in female or male competitions, respectively, under the following conditions:

- Surgical anatomical changes have been completed, including external genitalia changes and gonadectomy
- Legal recognition of their assigned sex has been conferred by the appropriate official authorities
- Hormonal therapy appropriate for the assigned sex has been administered in a verifiable manner and for a sufficient length of time to minimize gender-related advantages in sport competitions.

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Benjamin asserts that this policy isn't evidence-based. Moreover, he never mentions that the IOC policy deals with these issues on a case-by-case basis. I wonder why that is? From the way he tells it, it seems as if the IOC policy is just to spend 2 years on hormones and BAM! Anyone can compete. Let's revisit what Benjamin said:

The IOC caved to political and social pressure. The IOC didn't say, 'Because of firm scientific and medical evidence, that if you've had this SRS and you've taken hormones for two years, that's the magic number that all this is going to become safe.' That's not true at all.

Gee. It almost sounds like Benjamin lied about misrepresented the IOC policy because it seems as if that's exactly what they're saying. But hey... don't forget, Dr. Benjamin doesn't have any personal bias against trans folk. It's just that Fallon has some sort of unnamed advantage (I mean, it could be that she has really long arms, but hey... there's no way of knowing). Therefore, until extensive

unspecified studies are conducted, it's just way too dangerous for Fallon to be allowed to fight.

Just in case Dr. Benjamin takes the time to read this, I thought it might be helpful to direct him to some of the folks who wrote the IOC policy. Maybe he could contact them:

- Arne Ljungqvist
- Odile Cohen-Haguenauer
- Myron Genel
- Joe Leigh Simpson
- Martin Ritzen

I'm sure they'd be thrilled to hear Benjamin's thoughts on how they're pawns of a powerful political trans group who forced their hand and that they made their policy recommendations without considering any objective evidence.

As a historical parallel, consider how similar the arguments against trans folks sound to arguments made against black women who wanted to compete:

Imus's comments highlighted age-old, deep-rooted stereotypes that seem to surface whenever African-American women excel in sport.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, when African-American women began to excel in track and field, their success was seen through a mainstream prism of success in a "mannish" sport and reinforced disparaging stereotypes.

In the late 1940s, an Olympic official, Norman Cox, sarcastically proposed that in the case of black women, "The International Olympic Committee should create a special category of competition for them -- the unfairly advantaged 'hermaphrodites' who regularly defeated 'normal women,' those less skilled 'child bearing' types with 'largish breasts, wide hips and knocked knees.' "

Linda Greene, a law professor at the University of Wisconsin and a founding member of the Black Women in Sports Foundation, said that Imus's characterization of the Rutgers team were... "also are consistent with the historical rejection of black women as beneficiaries of the feminine ideal." Althea Gibson, the first African-American to win a major tennis championship, introduced an aggressive, take-no-prisoners style of tennis. Time magazine reported in 1957 that Gibson was forced to take a test to see if she had an extra chromosome.

- NY Times (TY Zoe!)

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