

Education Review

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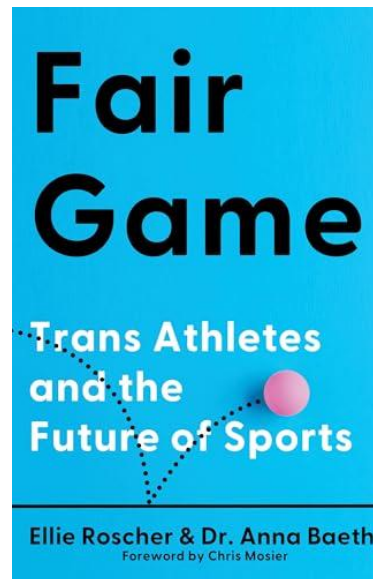
Roscher, E., & Baeth, A. (2026). *Fair game: Trans athletes and the future of sports*. The New Press.

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Fair Game: Trans Athletes and the Future of Sports by **Ellie Roscher** and **Anna Baeth** contains a foreword by Chris Mosier, the first openly trans athlete on a U.S. Olympic team. This team of researchers and advocates comes together to write about the increasingly relevant topic of transgender athletes in sports at all levels from Little League to the Olympics. The purpose of *Fair Game* is to address and dispel myths about transgender athletes and their inclusion to sports as a whole. The authors' primary argument is that trans athletes do not pose a significant risk to the world of sports and that they may indeed offer new perspectives on the gendered way we approach sports at the present. This text is a timely response to the increasing attempts across the United States to legislate trans athletes off the field and out of public sports.



Fair Game is organized into four chapters that focus on different myths perpetuated by anti-trans policymakers and conservative politicians. The chapters each reframe a myth into a good faith question that can actually be answered by research and speaks to a sympathetic mindset. “Trans athletes are coming in droves” becomes “Who are trans athletes?” “Trans athletes are stealing medals” becomes “Is it unfair for trans athletes to compete?” “Trans athletes are doing harm” becomes “Are trans athletes dangerous?” Undergoing the most radical transformation, “Trans athletes are ruining women’s sports” becomes “How do we better support all girls’ and women’s sports?” By intentionally framing their book around good-faith questions, the authors engage with the potential concerns and fears without entirely devolving into finger pointing at the legislation that has become such a hotbed as of late.

Each chapter’s question is answered with a mix of statistics, collected research, and interviews with actual transgender athletes telling their stories. The authors speak to the increasing number of pieces of legislation and policies

attempting to regulate or outright ban the participation of transgender athletes in sports. Roscher and Baeth state in the introduction that at the start of the project in 2023, all 20 interviewed athletes were able to play and compete in their sport of choice, and at the time of publication, only 5 were still legally able to do so.

Another important theme throughout the book is the value and benefits of sports for all athletes, including and especially transgender youth. According to Baeth and Roscher and the research they cite, athletes have access to important benefits such as community, mental and physical health support, and a place to exercise and express their capabilities separate from other concerns. The authors argue that these benefits are important contributing factors to the health and safety of transgender youth and athletes of all ages and genders.

Fair Game does several things quite well. It offers an introduction to the complex topic of transgender athletes at a level that will bring complete novices up to speed. It maintains a strong human element, including the voices of trans athletes who are typically excluded from the conversations about them. The authors are kind and compassionate when addressing the fears of people who may disagree with the aims of the book or who may be operating from a place of misinformation. This stance tends to be particularly difficult in topics such as this where all sides have strong feelings. The text's primary strength is that it arms a sympathetic reader with statistics and anecdotes that may help them in conversations with readers who are not yet on the same side of the arguments of the authors.

Roscher and Baeth offer important contributions to the increasingly relevant field of trans rights advocacy around athletics. Their book brings together information that has been scattered across many sources and interest groups. They examine trans athletes and their accomplishments, bringing the athletes into conversations about them instead of just talking about them. This book also has a specific focus on the impact of policies and legislation on transgender youth, the athletes who will have to live, work, and play under them moving forward. It fits well into the literature on the topic, including books like *Fair Play: How Sports Shape the Gender Debates* by Katie Barnes (2023) and *Sporting Gender: The History, Science, and Stories of Transgender and Intersex Athletes* (2019).

Fair Game is written clearly and without a lot of context-specific jargon. It gives clear definitions for relevant vocabulary in the notes at the end of the book without taking the reader out of the text along the way. The chapter level organization is strong, but the intermixing of interviewees' stories with research data within each chapter has a somewhat scattered effect. The book is suited for the general public because it makes the various research easy to parse and follow, and the human connection makes it feel less academic and invites empathy and identification with the subject. It is still detailed enough for data-driven readers.

The text, on the other hand, has a few weaknesses. It is, like many books of this sort, not likely to change the minds of anyone not already open to the prospect. It will not convert a staunch anti-trans advocate to the side of transgender rights. There is not much *new* information for people already aware of the issue. The work primarily focuses on sports and politics in a U.S. context,

which is sensible given the authors' backgrounds and the general scope of the book, but it does leave some international athletics questions unanswered.

Overall, my impression of *Fair Game: Trans Athletes and the Future of Sports* is that it is effective, interesting, and timely. It is likely to help people understand the issue of transgender athletes with more clarity and will effectively draw in readers who need a human component to really connect to any political issue outside their normal scope. The stories of trans athletes woven throughout the text bring the issue to life and make the stranger you cannot imagine into a friend you or your kids have known. It also gives numbers and statistics to people who need those to connect to an issue. This book would make an excellent read for policymakers for athletics groups, school board members, concerned parents of either cis and trans athletes who worry about their children's current or future involvement in sports, and teachers and coaches who want to understand the actual effects these policies might have on their students. This is a book that will give people the information they need to make informed choices and will give comfort to those who worry about the unknown.

References

- Barnes, K. (2023). *Fair play: How sports shape the gender debates*. St. Martin's Press.
- Harper, J. (2019). *Sporting gender: The history, science, and stories of transgender and intersex athletes*. Rowman & Littlefield.

About the Reviewer

Fox Dickey (they/them) is a first-year master's student in the Teaching + Licensure Program in the School of Education and Human Development at University of Colorado – Denver. They are passionate about diversity in education, the rights and representation of LGBTQ+ students, special education, and teaching for equity in underserved and marginalized communities. In their spare time, Fox is an avid audiobook listener of science fiction, fantasy, and literary fiction and a crafter of many varieties. They earned a BA in English and studio art from the College of Wooster in 2016 and spent nearly a decade working in the technology field before pivoting to elementary special education in 2024.



About the Authors

Ellie Roscher is an author, speaker and facilitator who travels the country growing wellness, belonging, leadership and resiliency with organizations and teams. She brings more than a decade of experience teaching youth and adults in topics ranging from yoga to writing. Ellie holds a master's degree in theology/urban ministry from Luther Seminary and



an MFA in creative nonfiction writing from Sarah Lawrence College. She lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she teaches theology and coaching. She is the author of *How Coffee Saved My Life* and *Other Stories of Stumbling to Grace*.



Anna Baeth is a critical feminist scholar and a cultural studies practitioner of sport. Her research centers on the gendering of sport spaces, the eternally moving body, and social movements and sport. Anna has a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota with a concentration in sport sociology. While there, Baeth was a research assistant in the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. Holding an M.S. in exercise and sport studies from Smith College (MA), Baeth has been an assistant lacrosse coach at Hamline University (MN), Head Field Hockey Coach at Oberlin College and Conservatory (OH), and assistant field hockey/lacrosse coach at Mt. Holyoke College (MA). Baeth graduated from Swarthmore College (PA) with a degree in sociology/anthropology, peace studies, and educational studies.

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