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staggered figures

I'm not a sports person; in fact, it stresses me out. I've tried all kinds of sports, but I always got so tense doing them that I never lasted long. I couldn't get past the feeling that my body wasn't moving as anticipated. So, I grew up watching sports instead. All kinds of races: *slalom skiing, track running, formula racing, biathlon, swimming, cross-country rally, speed skating, road bicycle racing, and ice cross downhill*. – The last one, in particular, is brutal to watch. Four ice skaters race each other on a slim racing track, going up and down at full speed. Most of the time, two to three athletes crash into each other, instantly falling onto the clear ice surface. Even with protective gear, it looks pretty rough. They stand up as quickly as they fall while sliding along the track like it is the easiest thing to do. At least, this is how I remember it.

When I was nine, I started to collect stamps. I was fascinated by some of them, like the one showing *Senna*. I had no idea who he was back then, but he looked important with his gleaming red *Formula One* car in the background. The stamp felt like a cherished prize. In my collection, I assembled a page dedicated to stamps showcasing sports themes. *Senna* found his place beside *Hermann Maier*, my favorite slalom racer at the time. He was one of the few I recognized by name, explaining my attachment. To be honest, my interest in *slalom skiing* mostly revolved around its starting ritual. – The rhythmic tapping of the ski poles, the adjustment of the helmet, and pre-race jumps. After four piercing beeps that dragged the moment into eternity, the bar was finally broken, and my interest vanished with the following jump onto the racetrack.

I struggle to remember owning a stamp featuring a specific female athlete. Typically, my collection included series such as those honoring the 1964 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck. They show various disciplines, such as *cross-country skiing, ice hockey, bobsledding, slalom skiing, ski jumping*^a, and *figure skating*. Events measured by speed were showcased differently than those judged regarding aesthetic qualities. While recently perusing my collection, I stumbled upon a stamp capturing supermodel *Heidi Klum* gazing into the camera. Not exactly what I was looking for.

^a Although *ski jumping* has been a staple event at the Winter Olympics since 1924, the women's event was not introduced until 2014, despite *Ragna Pettersen* setting the first women's record in 1897.

Whenever I watched a racing event on television, the tension eventually took over the whole space, as if the race was taking place in my bedroom. No matter how thrilling a race was, there were moments when the television noise faded into the background due to the sheer monotony. Nevertheless, racing has an incredibly clear structure, which makes it possible to return to it anytime.

Each discipline has its own rules and mechanisms. For example, the *athletics*^b running event is divided into *sprints, middle distance, long distance, relay races, and hurdling*. The starting sequences of the individual distances differ from one another. In the *100 m*^c and *200 m*^c *sprints*, athletes start in a crouching position using *starting blocks* to support their feet. This allows them to set off more effectively and to develop higher speed over the short distance. In the *800 m*^d *middle distance* race, athletes are required to start in an upright position and staggered formation, ensuring all athletes^e have the same distance to the finish line. After the first 100 m, they can break their line and run on the inside of the track. I learned different structures and rules over time by watching them. I took them as given and logical. Questioning them never occurred to me.

^b In 1928, women were allowed to compete in *athletics* for the first time in the *100 m, 4x100 m relay, 800 m, high jump, and discus* categories. In the first *800 m* women's event at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam, *Lina Radke* set a record with a 2 min 16.9 sec race time. After the race, several falsified press reports, like the one by the *New York Times* saying that "six out of the nine runners were completely exhausted and fell headlong on the ground." and an incorrect assessment by the medical staff led to the exclusion of women in this category until 1960. The *IOC* and *IAAF* debated whether or not women's track and field should be included in the program at all.

^c In 1964, *Ewa Kłobukowska*, a Polish sprinter and athlete, won gold in the *4x100 m relay* and bronze in the *100 m* at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. *Kłobukowska* set three world records, one in the *100 m* with 11.1 sec and two in the *4x100 m relay* with 44.2 sec, which she improved by 0.6 sec later the same year. In 1966, she had to undergo her first sex verification, a so-called nude parade in which her body was examined in front of a medical panel. She passed. In 1967, the test was changed to a chromosome test, and she was tested again. This time, she did not pass. As a result, her three world records were subsequently annulled, and she was no longer allowed to compete in any category.

^d In 2009, *Caster Semenya*, a South African middle-distance runner and athlete, won the *800 m* at the World Championship in Berlin. After her victory, the *IAAF* selected her to undergo a sex verification and announced: "It is clear that she is a woman, but perhaps not 100 percent." She was banned until 2010. *Semenya* won Olympic gold in the *800 m* in 2012 and 2016. However, since the permitted testosterone level threshold was changed in 2019, she has been unable to compete at her favored distance. *Caster Semenya* won her case but not the right to compete.

^e In 2014, *Dutee Chand*, an Indian sprinter and athlete, won the *200 m* and *4x400 m relay* at the Junior Championships in Taipei. The *AFI* conducted sex verification on *Chand* without her consent, including blood tests, gynecological examinations, karyotyping, an *MRI*, and further ultrasound examinations. *SAI* notified her that she would not be permitted to compete in the upcoming World Junior Championships because her "male hormone" levels were too high. *Chand* appealed to the Court. In 2015, the Court of Arbitration for Sport suspended *IAAF* regulations due to *Chand's* case.

^f In 2018, the *IAAF* released new regulations regarding women athletes. Women with higher natural testosterone levels who compete in "restricted" events (*400 m, 400 m hurdles, 800 m, 1500 m, the mile, and relays*) must lower their testosterone levels to below a designated threshold. If they do not lower their testosterone levels, women can compete in the male category, in an intersex category (which is non-existent), or at the national level in non-restricted events.

I believe I got a television when I was four years old. As a teenager, I had it turned on almost all the time, mainly as background noise. I was surrounded by actresses, cartoon characters, athletes, and talk show hosts. – Figures, larger than life, play their role in clichéd and exclusionary programs.

IOC International Olympic Committee
IAAF International Amateur Athletics Federation
AFI Athletic Federation of India

IAAF female sex verification regulations :

before 1967	physical exam
1967 - 2011	chromosome test
2011 - 2015	10 nmol / L testosterone limit
2015 - 2018	rules suspended
2019 - 2023	5 nmol / L testosterone limit
since 2023	2.5 nmol / L testosterone limit

- 1 Patricia Vertinsky, Shannon Jette & Annette Hofmann, "Sklerinas' in the Olympics Gender Justice and Gender Politics at the Local, National and International Level over the Challenge of Women's Ski Jumping".
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- 3 Dennis Krämer, "Intersexualität im Sport. Mediale und medizinische Körperpolitiken.", 2020, p.192-293.
- 4 Lindsay Parks Pleper, "Sex Testing, Gender Policing in Women's Sports.", 2016.
- 5 CAS 2014/A/3759 Dutee Chand v. Athletics Federation of India (AFI) & The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). Interim Arbitral Award delivered by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.
- 6 Katrina Karkazis & Morgan Carpenter, "Impossible Choices: The Inherent Harms of Regulating Women's Testosterone in Sport.", 2018; "Eligibility regulations for the female classification (athletes with differences of sex development)", 2023.