

South Africa's Caster Semenya, beset by testosterone level restrictions and intersex challenges, fails to qualify for Tokyo Olympics

South Africa's Caster Semenya can run 800 meters faster than any woman on the planet. But the two-time Olympic gold medalist won't defend her title in Tokyo because her testosterone levels exceed a 2018 limit imposed by track's governing body on female athletes competing in distances between 400 meters and 1500 meters.

Semenya has vowed not to suppress her naturally elevated levels of testosterone in order to qualify for her race, so she aimed to make it to Tokyo via a longer route. This spring, she attempted to make the difficult pivot from the 800 meters to the 5,000 meters, an event that rewards stamina far more than strength.

Her time has run out. She improved her 5,000 time by more than 42 seconds to 15:32.15 in 2021, but was still 22 seconds shy of the Olympic standard.

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In court documents, Semenya recently confirmed that her [difference in sex development, or DSD,] is of the 46 XY variety, meaning that she has female features and male chromosomes.

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"This fight is not just about me, it's about taking a stand and fighting for dignity, equality and the human rights of women in sport," wrote Semenya on Twitter in February.

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