

## Star Penn swimmer Lia Thomas at the center of a rancorous controversy over trans athletes

Each time University of Pennsylvania swimmer Lia Thomas dives off the race block, she's swimming against more than just the women next to her.

The 22-year-old transgender woman holds the fastest swim times in the country among NCAA women in two events.

But Thomas' success has placed her at the center of a heated national debate on transgender athletes' — especially trans women's — rights to play sports, and even led the NCAA and [national swimming league to change their eligibility policies](#).

Thomas' detractors say that her male-at-birth assignment gives her an unfair biological advantage, while supporters say that because Thomas has followed all eligibility protocols, she has a right to compete.

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Thomas is not the first trans swimmer to begin transitioning during college, but she is one of the first to near championship-level competition post-transition.

There are also other highly successful trans women athletes, such as [CeCé Telfer, who won an NCAA Division II title](#) in the hurdles in 2019. There are many more trans athletes who — like everyone — are [just average](#).

# Thomas' times compared to other top-ranked swimmers

Looking at how Thomas' times fare next to top olympic and college swimmers.

| Freestyle       | 100m    | 200m    | 500m    | 1650m    |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| Lia Thomas      | 0:49.42 | 1:41.93 | 4:34.06 | 15:59.71 |
| Katie Ledecky   | 0:48.28 | 1:40.36 | 4:24.06 | 15:03.31 |
| Missy Franklin  | 0:46.66 | 1:39.10 |         |          |
| Simone Manuel   | 0:45.56 | 1:40.37 |         |          |
| Maggie Mac Neil | 0:46.02 | 1:47.00 |         |          |
| Paige Madden    |         | 1:42.35 | 4:32.98 | 15:41.86 |

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