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SPORTS

Transgender swimmers to be included in the trial of an open category at competitions



1 of 2 | FILE - First Vice President of the International Swimming Federation, FINA, Husain Al-Musallam, attends the FINA World Aquatics Gala in Budapest, Hungary, on Jan. 31, 2016. Swimming will set up an “open category”

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BY STEPHEN WADE

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FUKUOKA, Japan (AP) — [Swimming](#) will set up an “open category” that will include transgender competitors, the governing body of the sport said Tuesday.

World Aquatics president Husain Al-Musallam said the event would take place in the future

among other races but gave no details. Reports suggest it could be this year.

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“This is a very complex topic,” Al-Musallam said at the World Aquatics Congress in the southwestern Japanese city of Fukuoka. “But I am delighted to tell you today that we are now making plans for the first trial of an open category, and we hope to be able to confirm all the details soon.

“Our sport must be open to everybody,” he said.

World Aquatics had previously banned transgender competitors from major events like the Olympics and world championships.

The topic has been divisive and many governing bodies in major sports have avoided it. And there will be many questions to answer as the first trial event unfolds under the eyes of lawyers and scientists.

“It was very important that we protected fair competition for our female athletes,” Al-Musallam said. “But you have heard me say many times there should be no discrimination. Nobody should be excluded from our competitions.”

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In March 2022, [American swimmer Lia Thomas won the women's 500-yard freestyle](#) at the NCAA championships in Atlanta, becoming the first transgender woman to claim a national title in swimming.

Thomas became a leading symbol of transgender athletes — stirring both opposition and support — when she joined the University of Pennsylvania women's swim team after competing for three years on the men's squad at the Ivy League school.

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