

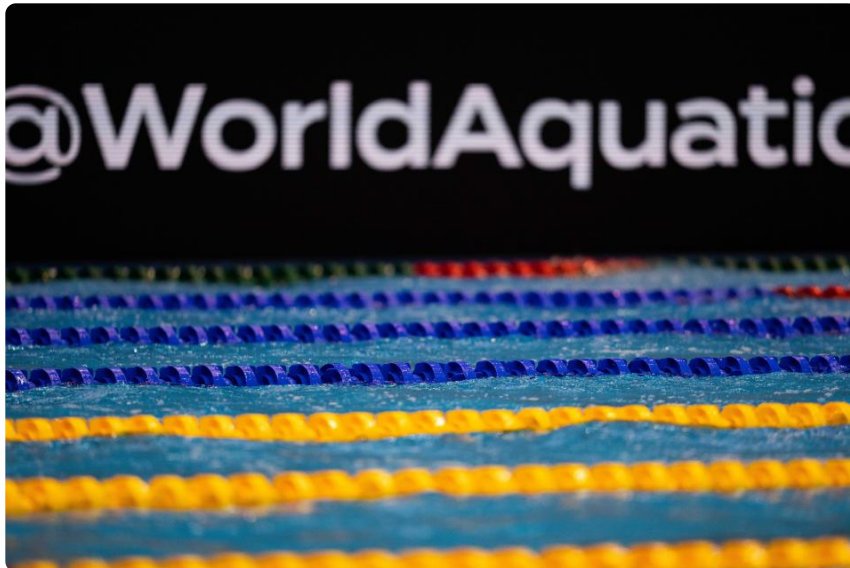
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Transgender swimmers will be included in new 'open category' trial for races

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Transgender swimmers will be included in new 'open category' trial for races

Transgender swimmers will eventually be able to compete in a new category set up by the sport's world governing body.

World Aquatics president Husain Al-Musallam announced Tuesday that a trial run for a "open category" will be held for future races and that would include transgender competitors. He did not offer a timetable on when it would begin, though.

"This is a very complex topic," Al-Musallam said at the World Aquatics Congress in Fukuoka, Japan, per the Associated Press. "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,"

This idea was broached in 2022 after World Aquatics, formally known as FINA, [restricted transgender participation](#) to those who have completed their transition by age 12. This ruling trickled down to collegiate races after the [NCAA said it would defer to national and international governing bodies](#) on the subject.

That decision did not affect Penn swimmer Lia Thomas, [who became the first transgender woman to win an NCAA title in 2022](#). She won the women's 500-meter freestyle race after she competed on the men's team in previous years. Thomas met the NCAA's standards for testosterone suppression therapy for more than two years before joining the women's team.

Thomas [did say she wanted to continue swimming professionally after college](#), though, which included the 2024 Olympic trials. So while it's unclear if she would be allowed to do so in the sport's current form, perhaps an "open category" would pave the way for her and other transgender swimmers to compete without controversy.

"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."

While swimming is making an attempt to create a separate category, other organizations have not.

World Athletics, the governing body of track and field, [banned transgender athletes from track events](#) earlier this year and reduced its testosterone threshold for all events.

The United States House of Representatives also [passed a bill which would prevent male-born transgender athletes](#) from competing on women's sports teams with federal funding. It's unlikely the bill would pass through the Democrat-controlled Senate and President Joe Biden already said he would veto the bill if it did. Texas governor Gregg Abbott also [signed a bill in June](#) that would require transgender women to compete on men's teams and transgender men to play on women's teams.

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Saquon Barkley and NFL RBs are getting a taste of the real world, where jobs aren't valued as they

once were

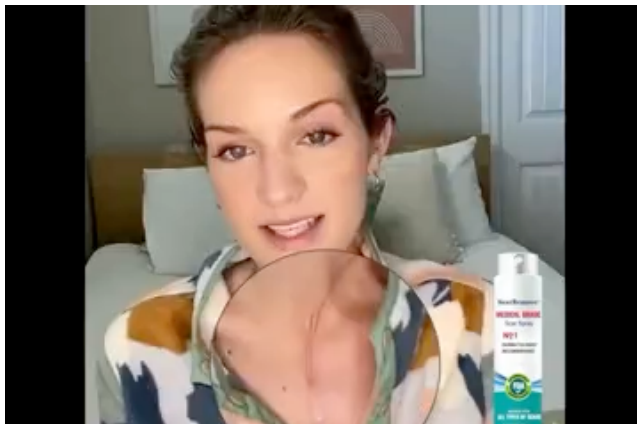
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359



Back in the day, NFL salaries were so modest that even star players had to take offseason jobs to make a living.

Two-time MVP Don Hutson, for example, worked in a lumber mill along with some [Green Bay Packer](#) teammates. Bears tackle Willis Brennan was a Chicago cop. Cleveland's John Wooten taught high school math. Even the great Jim Brown, arguably the best running back of all time, was a marketing rep for Pepsi in the 1960s.

It was said this helped connect athletes with fans. They were one of us. And maybe it did. Those days are gone, of course. Even the league minimums put players in, or at least near, the top 1 percent of salaries.

Enter Saquon Barkley, who certainly won't be clipping coupons any time soon, but may have channeled the old days in a new way Tuesday when he agreed to a [one-year, \\$11 million deal with the New York Giants](#).

The money is enormous, of course. It's just not as enormous as you might expect from a player of Barkley's productivity, let alone obvious talent.

He rushed for a career-high 1,312 yards last year and scored 10 touchdowns. He added another 338 yards as a receiver. Maybe most important, he moved past a couple of injury-plagued seasons and started 16 regular-season games and two more in the playoffs.

And yet, the Giants wanted no part of a rich, long-term deal. He's just another guy.

Welcome to the real world.



Saquon Barkley took the best deal available. And maybe for the first time since NFL stars regularly took offseason jobs, fans might have a little more in common with a marquee player. (Photo by Al Bello/Getty Images)

Barkley is like a lot of workers, the value placed on his job is no longer what it once was. The old adage that pro athletes leaned on when people complained about soaring salaries is that you are worth what someone will pay you.

[For Barkley and this generation of running backs](#), that worth is less than it used to be.

A generation ago star backs such as Emmitt Smith and Terrell Davis were among the league leaders in salaries. Not anymore. This is a quarterback league and everything is focused on getting a quarterback, protecting a quarterback or stopping a quarterback. [Running backs](#), even a great one such as Barkley, are worth only so much, especially as they age off their rookie contracts.

[Per Spotrac](#), the highest-paid position in the NFL is left tackle, a job that requires guarding the QB's blindside. They average \$8.95 million per season. Next up, right tackles at \$5.13 million.

QBs come in \$5 million, a number dragged down by low-paid backups on rookie salaries. In terms of total cash payout for the 2023 season, QBs hold the top five spots, including \$80 million that Baltimore's [Lamar Jackson](#) will earn.

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After that, average salaries are as such: free safety (\$4.98M), strong safety (\$4.44M), inside linebacker (\$3.84M), outside linebacker (\$3.63M), edge rusher (\$3.18M), defensive tackle (\$2.95M), guard (\$2.49M), center (\$2.41M), wide receiver (\$2.25M), place kicker (\$2.13M), cornerback (\$2.0M), tight end (\$1.99M) and then, and only then, running back at \$1.76 million.

The only positions with lower average salaries? Punter at \$1.54 million and long snapper at \$1.07 million.

That's the harsh reality for a glamor position.

Barkley and other running backs have lamented their declining value, [even holding a running back conference call recently](#). There were rumors of a position-only strike or some other way to try to reverse this trend.

It's understandable. Barkley has contributed mightily to the Giants. Advanced stats, which fuel status quo thinking, show that even the best running backs are no longer worth much more than the average running back though. That certainly isn't the case with [Patrick Mahomes](#) or [Joe Burrow](#).

That's how industries evolve. That's how careers change. Jobs get shipped. Technology comes along. If the NFL could use Artificial Intelligence to create a running back, it would.

This is capitalism. This is the free market. It might be frustrating. If Barkley was born two decades ago he'd likely be making \$30 million.

Consider Barry Sanders, who in 1997, at the age of 29 and with 2,384 carries under his belt, signed a five-year deal with Detroit for an average of \$5.7 million per year. It was just above Dallas QB Troy Aikman's \$5.67 annual average and thus made Sanders the highest-paid player.

Barkley, meanwhile, is just 26 and has just 954 career carries. Yet durability concerns are an issue.

With no choice, with little bargaining power, Barkley did what most workers do. He took the best deal he could.

No one needs to hold a fundraiser for the Saquon. He's going to be fine.

But for the first time since your postman might have also been a moonlighting linebacker trying to knock out the offseason mortgage, an NFL star and the regular fan might have a little more in common.

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