

# Debate!

## Should women compete against men in sports?

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JAY P. MORGAN - GETTY IMAGES

This past October, American skiing champion Lindsey Vonn requested permission from the International Ski Federation to compete against men in a downhill competition called the World Cup.

Vonn, who dominates women's downhill skiing, felt it was time for a new challenge. In 2010, she won the Olympic gold medal in downhill skiing. She has also earned 26 World Cup downhill victories. Nine of the World Cup wins took place in Lake Louise, Canada, which fans call "Lake Lindsey."

Vonn is not the only female athlete with the desire to compete against men. Annika Sorenstam played golf against men at the P.G.A. tournament in 2003. Danica Patrick raced to a third-place finish at the Indianapolis 500 in 2009. In 1973, tennis champ Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs in a nationally televised match.

Women athletes have come a long way since Title IX, a law that ensures equal funding for male and female sports in schools. Still, sports competitions in which men and women go head-to-head are few and far between. Why is this so? Some argue that even though the skills and strength of female athletes has increased tremendously over the years, men still have a size and strength advantage.

Other critics say that female athletes should focus on women's sports. They should stop comparing themselves to male athletes. Instead, they should work to promote women's sports as exciting, competitive events in themselves.

The International Ski Federation rejected Vonn's request. Its decision was not based on Vonn's abilities. The Federation simply refused to change the rules. "It's called the Men's World Cup and the Ladies' World Cup," says Sarah Lewis of the International Ski Federation. "The men race the men's World Cup and the ladies race the ladies' World Cup."

Vonn says she will not give up. "There's still next year," she said. "I'm going to keep working hard to make my dream a reality."

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► **What do you think? Should women be allowed to compete against men in sports?  
Motivate your answer!**