



Winston Negotiates Significant Rules Change in Transgender Rights Case Against the Professional Disc Golf Association

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Winston negotiated a settlement between Natalie Ryan, a transgender female athlete, and the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA), which makes her and other transgender women who have completed two years of hormone therapy eligible to compete in the female professional open division at all PDGA events.

As part of the settlement agreement, the PDGA dropped a highly controversial clause in its gender eligibility rules which barred trans women unless they began gender-affirming care before the onset of puberty or before the age of 12. The PDGA announced the rule in December 2022, shortly after Natalie had won several elite disc golf tournaments and finished the tour ranked in the top 10.

Natalie sued the PDGA in the Eastern District of California citing the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. In May 2023, the Court temporarily enjoined the PDGA from enforcing the new policy against Natalie. The Court found that Natalie had made a sufficiently strong showing on the merits because “it appears there was an intentional act, the creation of a policy, which excludes individuals based on their protected status as a transgender woman.”

On appeal, the Ninth Circuit vacated the temporary restraining order on jurisdictional grounds and Natalie was removed from tournament play. At this point, Los Angeles partner **Kevin Simpson**, who is also a disc golfer, offered to join forces with Natalie’s legal counsel, a solo practitioner, and sue for permanent injunctive relief as well as for damages. After months of grueling discovery and trial preparation, the Winston team, along with co-counsel, negotiated a significant and well-deserved win for Natalie and other transgender disc golfers.

“Natalie’s case is a shining example of Winston’s unwavering commitment to representing marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ+ community. I’m proud to work with caring and talented colleagues who work tirelessly to pursue justice for people like Natalie,” said Kevin Simpson.

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