

Herald Sun

Federal court rules no gender bias in teen sailor's race ban

Jordy Atkinson, Bayside Leader
August 5, 2019 1:00pm

A young sailor has lost her sex discrimination case after being banned from competing in a men's yachting race.

A federal court judge last week dismissed Stephanie Coady's claim she was discriminated against when Yachting Victoria disqualified her and father Paul Coady for [breaching competition gender rules in 2014](#).

Ms Coady was 16 when her father entered her to sail with him at the ISAF Sailing World Cup, held at Sandringham.

The father-daughter team had registered for the "men's 49er class", with points from the races counting towards Olympic selection.

Ms Coady took aim at Yachting Victoria for "throwing the book" at her [in a change.org petition](#), claiming she had been subjected to "unprecedented heavy-handed bullying".

In 2016, she launched her legal fight against Yachting Victoria after attempts to resolve matters via the Australian Human Rights Commission were unsuccessful.

Stephanie Coady claimed Yachting Victoria discriminated against her based on gender when she was banned from racing with her dad in the Sailing World Cup in 2014 at Sandringham.

Ms Coady told the Federal Circuit Court she had suffered "profound distress" and had turned her back on the sport as a result of her treatment, which she claimed left her feeling "humiliated and intimidated".

Mr Coady was also disciplined over a gross breach of good manners and sportsmanship after he was found to have "engaged in offensive and disrespectful behaviour" towards yacht club members, including being "insulting, rude, threatening and verbally abusive".



Under the *Sex Discrimination Act* men and women can be ruled ineligible to compete against each other in sporting events where strength, stamina or physique is deemed relevant.

Ms Coady admitted to the court she knew she was signing up for a men's event when completing the online registration form with her father.

But she argued her role during the race was that of the helm, which did not require as much strength as the role of her crew member.

According to expert witness Emmett Lazrich, the traits were "crucial" to competitive sailing.

"Strength, stamina and physique of competitors sailing in a high performance two-handed skiff such as the 49er is not just relevant but critical to the prospect of individual crews competing successfully at an elite level," Mr Lazrich said.

Judge Patrizia Mercuri last week dismissed Ms Coady's claim, putting an end to the three-year legal battle.

"I accept (those attributes) are relevant to elite competition sailing, including the role of the helm," she said.

"Consequently, it was not unlawful for the respondent or others associated with the 2014 regatta to raise this with the applicant, to initiate the protest hearing and then to reach the conclusions it did arising from the applicant's failure to comply with the gender rules."

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Source: https://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/inner-south/federal-court-rules-no-gender-bias-in-teen-sailors-race-ban/news-story/9660223088637763631fa2d4cca59ac7?fbclid=IwAR3CA_DVM3oyFOHTcYKpcFQMlfp19ZT7PXDvGsPR69xpJSftwDohLnOp3KA