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Regatta Revisited: The Race for Equity in Virtual Sports

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In today's internet driven world, virtual sports tournaments where competitors from across the globe use exercise machines connected via cyber technology are becoming increasingly popular. These competitions, in which athletes can participate from afar, have the potential to increase inclusion for athletes with disabilities. However, many virtual athletic competitions currently fall short of the mandate that organizers accommodate and reward disabled athletes in ways comparable to nondisabled athletes. Specifically, disabled athletes are far too often not equitably categorized into competitive classifications according to their impairments and disabilities. This discriminatory practice affects notions of fairness for disabled athletes. This note is the first to shed light on the regulatory and legal aspects of virtual sport tournaments and aims to recommend policy to ensure equity in those competitions for disabled athletes. Almost thirty years have passed since Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which recognizes that ?physical and mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society.? The Paralympic Movement is also very clear about the importance of comparable opportunities for disabled and nondisabled athletes as essential for the inclusion of the former and for reducing disability stigma. We argue that when competition and award categories are delineated across nondisabled sports, it is imperative that opportunities are mirrored for disabled athletes.

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