



Laura Robinson got the first Play the game Award: A painting and a poem by Torben Ulrich, Danish artist and tennis player. Also Robinson was invited to the next edition of Play the game

Cracks in the ice

Canadian journalist Laura Robinson was awarded the Play the Game Award for her revelations on sexual abuse in ice hockey

By Jonna Toft

As documented on pp. 18-20 in this magazine, Canada's national pride, the ice hockey, has concealed a culture of rape amongst its junior athletes. Trainers and older players abused younger players in crude initiation rituals.

These younger players then themselves took the role of abusers, participating in the group rape of young girls.

The article's author, Canadian journalist Laura Robinson, worked deep within her country's ice hockey circles during the six years it took her to write the book "Crossing the Line: Violence

and Sexual Assault in Canada's National Sport".

For that achievement she received the Play the Game Award.

»The quality of your investigation and its effect has made a deep impression on us, as has your courage' said English reporter Andrew Jennings when presenting the award. 'You did what was necessary even though you were blacklisted: you found the conclusive evidence and arranged for your work to be made available to the public,« he said.

For Robinson, it was a special honour to receive the prize from Jen-

nings who has done his share of uncovering the sporting world's less-than-salubrious stories.

»After all my work, where I often felt unwanted, it's very nice to feel wanted,« Laura Robinson said.

'Crossing the Line' came out in Canada in 1998, two years after Laura Robinson had made a TV documentary detailing a culture of rape in the nation's national sport. The revelations came as a shock

»Boys are viewed as little gods,« she says. »People just can't understand that they are capable of carrying out this type of horrific attack. Therefore most of the focus has been on paedophilia in the sport, not on the fact that the boys themselves committed group rape.«

»Once in a while cases came up involving attacks on boys« she continues, »but I was the only one who focused on the possibility that these young boys themselves would commit attacks. Many men and boys often deal with humiliation by subjecting another person to the same humiliation. I interviewed a large number of girls, and they spoke of some terrifying experiences.«

In Canada, women's ice hockey has grown explosively in recent years. This, Laura Robinson believes, could be as a method of altering the relationship between the sexes. 'Ice hockey is essentially part of a man's world' she says.

»With women standing on the sidelines, the relationship between the sexes is not equal. It only becomes more equal if women are themselves on the ice, playing hockey.«

Since Laura Robinson's revelations were made public, Canadian's sports authorities have introduced a wide-ranging programme designed to combat sexual harassment and abuse. However, she believes that in all probability, similar problems exist in other sports and in other countries.

»The danger is greatest when the sport which means most for the nation puts emphasis on aggression, violence and power,« she adds. »I know that US baseball has major problems – and here at the conference people from many different countries have approached me to say 'the same thing happened in my home country'.«