

HOW IT WAS REPORTED:

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Journalist and author Laura Robinson exposed a rape culture in Canadian hockey - but was discouraged to see that nothing seems to change.

'ABU GRAIB'-STYLE HOCKEY ABUSE CONTINUES

Exposure has not changed culture of violence in Canadian junior hockey

by Camilla Haldrup

Violence and sexual assault are still commonplace in Canada's national sport. And to journalist and author Laura Robinson some of the abuse is comparable to the infamous scenes at Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison.

Three years ago, Laura Robinson gave a harrowing insight to the Play the Game conference of a culture of abuse in Canadian junior ice hockey spanning ritual violence, humiliation and neglect – often with degrading sexual overtones.

Since then, she said, little has changed. "The culture is still the same," she told delegates at Play the Game 2005. "It is all about power, territory, violence and control."

In Autumn 2005, she stated, two more scandals surfaced in Canadian junior sport. The first concerned a team known as the Windsor Spitfires ice hockey club, and involved ritual beatings of first year players during practice.

The second concerned the McGill University football team, which allegedly subjected its rookies to degrading 'hazing' initiation ceremonies. Both cases involved stripping.

She compared the 'culture of abuse' to that which was uncovered at Abu Ghraib prison – an

abusive subculture where masculinity and violence rule.

"It's the same thing that has happened at Abu Ghraib," she said. "Soldiers forcing prisoners to strip, to masturbate, to look like they are having sex with another man or actually having it".

Frustrating that nothing changes

Robinson, who spent six years researching the abuse before the 2003 Play the Game conference, expressed her disappointment that the disturbing revelations are being more or less ignored in her home country.

"It is really frustrating because I've spend so many years researching these things. And nothing has changed," she said.

She no longer works as a journalist. Instead she coaches cross country skiing and mountain biking and works to ensure that children can practice sport in a safe environment.

"In a way I'm happy to be out of it," she said. "It swallows you up completely. It is hard having young people telling you about being raped and abused."