

**SPECIAL FEATURE!**

**STAN FISCHLER'S INTERVIEW WITH SKATING GURU LAURA STAMM - January, 2010**

More now than ever, proficient skating is vital to the success of NHL players.

This explains why Laura Stamm has been *the* Dean of Power Skating instructors for nearly four decades. Stamm has been responsible for the success of more NHL stars than anyone else in the field of power skating.

Laura's recently published (fifth) book, **LAURA STAMM'S POWER SKATING**, covers all the critical components of explosive skating. It includes nearly 300 hundred drawings and photographs.

In a recent interview, Stamm touches on the following topics:

**\* CHANGES IN SKATING IN THE PAST 40 YEARS:**

*It wasn't very artistic back then. It was more laborious. Players weren't trained for the kind of speed they have today. Defensemen stayed back – except for the Bobby Orr-types – the others skated straight up and down their wings. That was basically the game – checking, dumping the puck, dump-and-chase. It wasn't a finesse game like it is today. The speed today is incredible. It seems to get faster by the day, not by the decade. The players now train year-round. The emphasis on skill is huge. If you're not fast and you don't have skill, you're just not going to make the NHL today.*

**\* EQUIPMENT CHANGES:**

*It's more the players than the skates. You could put today's great players in an old pair of skates and they'd still be able to make phenomenal moves. The skates don't make the player – the player makes the skates. The same is true for any equipment. Take great tennis players –if you give them an old, outdated racket they will still be able to do some miraculous things with it.*

**\* SKATING IN THE NHL TODAY:**

*Look at Alex Ovechkin; he can do miraculous things and make incredible moves. And there are others who are just quick and fast. Defensemen are much more mobile laterally than they were years before. There are so many types of movement in hockey. There's lateral movement, there's backward movement, there's quick acceleration and straight ahead movement. These make the game so phenomenal. Just imagine another sport where you have to go backward as quickly as you go forward. Today's players can move backward faster than most of us can move forward.*

**\* NON-SUPERSTAR BEST SKATERS:**

*A few players who come to mind are three of my former students – Scott Niedermayer, Doug Brown, and Brian Rafalski. What stands out is their efficiency. When Niedermayer won the fastest skater award at the NHL All-Star skills competitions (1998, 2004) everyone said, "It doesn't even look like he's moving. This was because he was so efficient". Efficiency may be why these players have lasted so long. If you save 50 strides a game and extend that over 15 years, you've saved a lot of energy.*



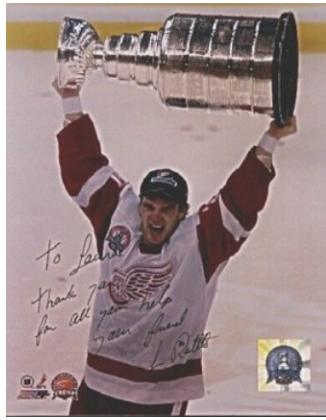
**Laura and Doug Brown with Stanley Cup**

**\* EUROPEAN SKATERS:**

*I just love watching the European skaters and how beautifully they move. The influx of Europeans to the NHL has really changed and improved the "FLOW game".*

**\* STANDOUT STUDENT:**

*Luc Robitaille. They said he'd never make it in the NHL because he couldn't skate well enough. I can't turn fair skaters into superstar skaters, but if I can give them a couple of extra steps that's huge at that level. Robitaille (who was just inducted into The NHL Hall of Fame) still thanks me for all that I did for him. He's somebody I'm really proud of, not just as a hockey player but also as a human being.*



**Luc Robitaille with Stanley Cup**

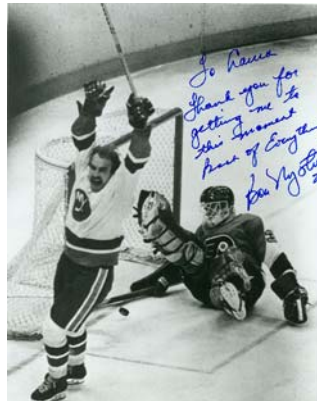
Dear Laura -  
 Thank you for the nice letter.  
 I just wanted you to know that I've never forgotten all the Power Skating tips you gave me all those years ago. I've used them all throughout my career.

Your friend Always -  


**A Note from Luc to Laura**

**\* FIRST PRO STUDENT:**

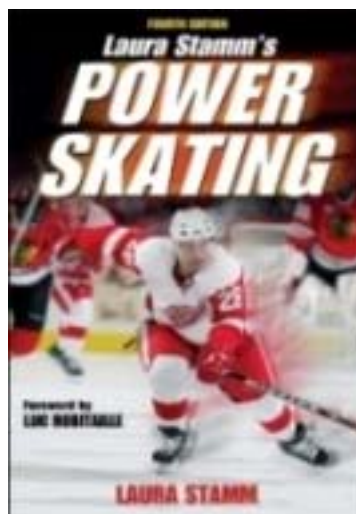
*Bobby Nystrom was the first pro that I ever taught – this was when he was a rookie with the NY Islanders in 1973. Bill Torrey heard about me and asked me to work with Nystrom. From there it took off. Back then it was unheard of for a female to teach a male pro athlete, so I told Bobby, “Don’t worry, I won’t tell anybody that I’m teaching you”. We had our skating sessions early in the mornings - five days a week for six weeks – Bobby never missed a day. I never said a word to anybody; Bob was the one who ended up telling the media that if it wasn’t for me, he would never have made it in the NHL. Then other teams started calling me and I started getting jobs teaching power skating for teams and hockey schools throughout the U.S. and Canada. My career had been jump-started.*



**Bob Nystrom with Stanley Cup**

**\* LAURA’S LATEST BOOK AND ITS AIM:**

*It’s a very technical book. It’s not really geared to youngsters, although youngsters can learn from the pictures. It’s geared to coaches, higher-level players, parents and those who really want to study hockey skating in-depth. I’ve had a lot of adults and coaches tell me they’ve learned a tremendous amount from it.*



**LAURA STAMM’S POWER SKATING, FOURTH EDITION**

**\* YOUR START IN SKATING:**

*Skating was a passion of mine since I was five-years-old. We used to skate on the lakes. My parents couldn’t afford to take me to rinks. I didn’t even know what a rink was until I was a teenager. I was a figure skater and a speed skater and I played hockey with my brothers.*

**\* TEACHING SKATING:**

*I taught figure skating at a rink the NY Rangers used for practice back in the late ‘60’s and ‘70’s. After practice they would all hang around for lunch at the snack bar and I would talk to them. I’d ask them, “Why do you do this?” or “Why don’t you do that?” Rod Gilbert once jokingly answered, “Why don’t you mind*

*your own business?” Then Gilbert recommended that I come out to his summer hockey school and see if I could help the kids skate better. I said I wouldn’t know what I was doing. He said I should come out anyway. From the very second I got on the ice, I knew that that was what I wanted to do. I didn’t have a clue what I was doing but I just loved it.*

**\* SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT:**

*At that time, there was no such thing as skating technique training for hockey players, Power Skating was stops and starts, skate as hard as you can, skate forward, then turn and skate backward, etc. No such thing as teaching players HOW to do these things! I knew they needed to know HOW in order to improve. So **my** Power Skating System became technique training for hockey players. I studied the hockey moves and made up drills as I went. I asked the assistant instructors (who were also players) why they did certain things in certain ways. Sometimes I agreed with them and sometimes I disagreed. I used my knowledge of skating and my knowledge of hockey (from having watched so many Ranger practices, and watching games on TV with my father). I literally made up drills and techniques based on my knowledge of skating and my background in biomechanics and physiology. I fell in love with my work and still love it after all these 39 years. I’ve always had a tremendous amount of success with hockey players on the ice; I can’t explain why.*