**Press Pass Awards 2015**

**Sports Category**

**Second Place**

**The right to fight**

**By Aoife Fennell, Donabate Community School**

Neymar, Suarez and Rooney. Lloyd, Morgan and Rampone. I’m sure you have heard of the first three names, right? Have you heard of the other three? They’re professional female soccer players. Most people probably have never heard of them even though they are just as good as their male counterparts. This is because of an ever growing problem in sport. Discrimination against women. I am an under 16 Irish international for soccer so this cause is something I feel very strongly about.

Firstly, I’ve been discriminated against numerous times. Whether it’s the wearing of old kit and letting the lads take the clean one, to training on the pitch with holes and bumps the day before an all - Ireland final where the men's team have the premier pitch. It's not right to grow up thinking that this is how life works. That men will always be prioritised. It's about time we put a stop to it before it affects even more children forever.

Did you watch the women's World Cup this year? It was fantastic. I couldn't believe how much coverage it attracted! The final between the USA and Japan was the most watched soccer match ever in American history! When the USA won they were given a total payout of fifteen million dollars. Now, you might think that that's a lot, and it is, but just compare that to the five hundred and seventy three million the German men's team were awarded in 2014 for winning their respective world cup. Plus, each player got a bonus of 200,000 dollars as well. This is completely unfair! The women work just as hard as the men and are not rewarded equally for their efforts at all.

I'm sure you're aware of how much the big guns like Ronaldo and Messi earn a week. In case you aren't, they earn close to 300,000! It is a well-known fact that men are paid a much higher wage than women in soccer. Some ask why? There's actually quite a simple answer. In terms of development, women's soccer is approximately 100 years behind men's, so; in one hundred years’ time, the women's game will finally be as developed as the men's game and equal pay will be introduced. The men's game will grow from strength to strength however the basic formalities such as pay and training facilities will probably stay similar to the way they are now. I propose this question.  Why give this system the power to negatively affect more people? With the improvements and advances in technology and the world's economies as powerful as ever, now is the time to change these conditions. For good. Why are we waiting?

Women like Celia Sasic and Abby Wambach have become idols and more importantly, examples of how you can make a living out of playing soccer if you're a girl. Up and coming players such as Heath, Brian and Morgan are current examples.

Furthermore, media coverage, advertising and publicity are problems yet to be fixed. However, the situation improved enormously after the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada earlier this year. It was the first time I have seen any significant change this decade. I was thrilled to see it however this was just a small step in the right direction. But at least we're finally heading in a direction.

I know I can't change the world. I hope to inspire others to get involved, just like you reading this today. It makes me sick to think that young girls growing up playing sport are have the mentality that they will never be equal. That they will never be as good as the boys. That they can't aspire to be professional sports stars just because of their gender. Do people really want their kids growing up with this mentality? I don't think so.

I've done my bit. Now it's time for the world to do theirs.

**Judging Panel Citation**

Those of us in love with the beautiful game know all about Neymar, Suarez and Rooney. But who knows about Lloyd, Morgan and Rampone? That is the question posed by our second placed winner Aoife Fennell in an engaging article as she defends the rights of soccer’s top female players to the same adulation and earning power as their male counterparts. An Ireland under 16 international herself, she admits there have been improvements since the 2015 World Cup in Canada but there is still much to be done. As Aoife says, she is doing her bit and this article proves it.