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For Immediate Release

**BLACK & BLUE**

**Love, Sports, and the Art of Empowerment**

By Andra Douglas

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**CAN A GOOD SOUTHERN GIRL PLAY TACKLE FOOTBALL?  
YES, IF SHE NURTURES HER DREAM AND NEVER GIVES UP.**

**Mixing Fact and Fiction, BLACK & BLUE is a Powerful Novel about Fortitude and Determination, a Coming-of-Age Story for a New Generation of Women**

Growing up in Zephyrhills, Florida, Toady loves nothing more than playing football. It isn't surprising, given that football is a religion in the small Southern town. Indeed, a winning team is a cure-all throughout the South. But for Toady, the love of football is bittersweet – because Toady's given name is Christine. She's a girl and girls "can't" play football. Christine's story, and how she beats the odds to become the owner of – and player on – a championship women's tackle football team, is told in Andra Douglas's new novel, **BLACK & BLUE: Love, Sports, and the Art of Empowerment** (BookBaby, July 2019).

Loosely based on the author's own story, **BLACK & BLUE** chronicles Christine's struggle to "get a slice" of the "pigskin pie" of life. The youngest of three sisters, she chafes against what the South tells her she should be. From childhood on, she loves football and plays exceptionally well. But she is denied a spot on the high school team, and by senior year, she watches unhappily as her male classmates win college football scholarships – knowing that for her it cannot be. Reluctantly, she puts aside her football dreams and moves to New York City, never expecting to play the game she loves – but life is full of surprises.

Douglas, the former owner of the New York Sharks Women's Pro Football team and a player herself, paints a compelling picture of Christine's struggle. But more importantly,

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**BLACK & BLUE** lays bare the complexity of being a woman who wants to play what has essentially been a man's sport since it was first created. Once in New York, Christine hears rumors about women playing flag football on Fire Island. She rides the ferry over, clutching her ball – and there she finds her people. The women who will one day be her teammates on the New York Sharks.

This quirky, tough, and diverse group is held together by their love of the game. When after several years of successful flag competitions, the Women's Professional Football Association is launched, Christine becomes part of this new tackle league – against her better judgment, because she senses that something isn't quite right. Before long, she discovers the truth – the Association has no funding and the team needs money and an owner if they want to compete. To keep her dream alive, Christine haggles and scrapes together the cash to buy the franchise.

And that's when the tension really heats up. In order to create a championship team, Christine must make countless personal and financial sacrifices. Finding a coach who isn't abusive is a struggle. Rallying team spirit is an endless quest. Add to that the loss of her one true love, the devastation of the September 11 attacks, and the sudden death of one of her players, and Christine's dream seems doomed. Does she have the guts and the stamina despite the odds? Will her sacrifices pay off?

**BLACK & BLUE** not only challenges gender stereotypes, but takes readers behind the scenes of one of America's least understood sports. Readers will cheer Christine as she doubles down to fight for the women who want nothing more than to be allowed to play the sport they love. This is a story of empowerment that will inspire anyone who is struggling to fulfill their dreams.

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**ANDRA DOUGLAS** is a native of central Florida and a graduate of Florida State University and Pratt Institute. A national champion athlete in rugby and women's tackle football, she was the owner of the New York Sharks Women's Pro Football team for nineteen years and is the founder of the Fins Up! Foundation for Female Athletes, a non-profit to benefit at-risk teens. In addition to her love of football, Andra is a professional artist and served as a Vice President/Creative Director at Time Warner for many years. Today, she lives with her parrot, Pie, in New York's Greenwich Village where she creates mixed-media artwork. To learn more, visit: [www.andradouglasart.com](http://www.andradouglasart.com).