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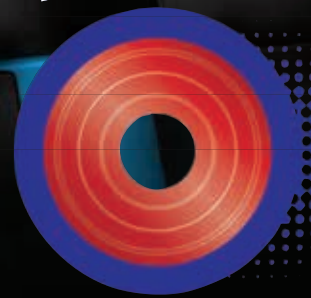


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LEARNING TO LOSE

Skaters from across the skills spectrum share their woes with losing and their courage to rise above...

Written by **Bat Wing**

Whether you are an elite roller derby athlete or a novice braving your first season of competitive play, a common thread binds every skater in our sport: the experience of defeat. As with any difficult ordeal, defeat is a topic that is often buffered, downplayed or altogether avoided. We love to bask together in the glory of our accomplishments but may stop short of baring our souls in matters of disappointment.

Mainstream sports media offer brief glimpses into how a loss is received, usually in the course of post-competition press conferences and interviews. Post-game interviews with out-of-breath athletes and their hoarse-from-yelling coaches are effective in capturing sentiment at its freshest, but they often favor the practical and the obvious — Where did failure occur, and what could have been executed differently? Questions such as these are key to improving performance and securing future wins, but they stop short of a more personal conversation — How has this loss affected you as an athlete and as a person?

In the Women's Flat Track Derby Association's (WFTDA) December 2012 Skater of the Month interview with Sandrine Rangeon, formerly of the Denver Roller Dolls*, the skater spoke

candidly on a wide variety of topics, one of them being the lessons of athletic defeat. Referring to Rangeon's international athletic achievements prior to playing roller derby, WFTDA asked, "How have these elite-level sport experiences helped you develop as an athlete?" Rangeon, who skates as "Francey Pants" in non-WFTDA bouts, credited the lessons of her international ice and roller hockey experiences.

"I learned to lose," she told WFTDA. "During my international ice hockey career, we definitely lost a lot more games than we won. It taught me to put things in perspective and to keep working hard, even when it seems as if you will never achieve the goals you set."

In the spirit of Rangeon's poignant acknowledgement, Roll Out offers a stark look into the hearts and minds of roller derby athletes who each have faced defeat and disappointment in their own unique sets of circumstances.

**According to Rangeon's Oct. 1 blog entry on srangeon.com, a motion to move to Milwaukee and transfer to nearby Windy City Rollers (Chicago, WFTDA No. 9) is underway.*

Winning a Great Defeat

In rare cases, a skater might be lucky enough to ride the tide of fortune through a short career on the roster of a reigning team and never know the humbling impact of defeat. For most roller derby athletes, however, defeat comes as a familiar or even routine experience. A radical loss bearing a final score differential of 100 points or greater — or blowout, as some call it — can be among the most challenging and demoralizing moments a team's skaters will ever face. One of the most dramatic blowouts in WFTDA history occurred on Sept. 20 when No. 34 ranked Oklahoma Victory Dolls (Oklahoma City, OK) were pitted against No. 1 ranked Gotham Girls Roller Derby All-Stars (New York) at the 2013 WFTDA Division 1 Playoff tournament in Asheville, NC. When the final whistle was blown, the Victory Dolls would make their way to the locker room with just 21 points to Gotham's 545. While statistics and public opinions certainly favored Gotham going into this bout, a blowout of such magnitude was unprecedented in WFTDA post-season play.

Victory Dolls skater Dolly Dynamite was among the 14 who braved the Gotham gauntlet. "Playing Gotham wasn't demoralizing," she reflects. "It was surreal. It was like your high school football team getting to compete against Super Bowl champions."

After acknowledging her joy and honor in competing against the most decorated team in WFTDA history, Dolly Dynamite focused on "small victories" that her team accomplished throughout the game. "Penalties got the best of us, and the spread may have seemed disheartening. We focused on offense, getting our jammers out, forcing call-offs and scoring what few points we could. These small victories, although few and far between, sent us to the locker room celebrating and planning for next time."

Blowout point spreads are certainly not limited to tournament underdogs taking their best shots at reigning champions. For newer and developing leagues, sometimes getting pummeled by team after team is merely par for the course as they struggle to make a name for themselves. In the case of Team United Women's Roller Derby (Des Moines, IA, pending WFTDA apprenticeship), however, new and novice are not mutually imperative. Established in March of this year, Team United came as the result of several skaters' decision to split from a regionally competitive WFTDA league and form their own. On March 23, Team United held the McLean County Missfits All-Stars (Danvers, IL, WFTDA unranked) to just 11 total points in a non-sanctioned bout — the seasoned Iowa outfit closing the coffin with a final score of 374-11. It is fair to note that McLean County Missfits graduated WFTDA's apprentice program in December, 2012 with a squad of homegrown skaters bearing limited experience in sanctioned play.

When McLean County jammer Ice Hurt stepped up to the jammer line for the first time, the score was 40-0.

"I'd watched three of my teammates fail before me," she says. "We scored one point in the entire first half. Everyone was feeling defeated, but I am proud to say that I don't think any skater ever gave up on the game." With only one point on the board after the first half, the Missfits rallied their spirits in the locker room.

"During the halftime talk we made a pact that we wanted to just fight, and our goal was to get 20 points," Ice Hurt says. "We didn't make it to our goal, but every point was a victory."



Opposite Page: Magnum, p.l.m.p.; Above Top:; Bottom: The scoreboard tells only part of the story of the MissFits' defeat.

Packing Your Derby Bag

TIPS FROM PRO-TRAVELER ANNIE MAUL



Like a great game of roller derby, the key to packing for a derby weekend is planning and execution. When I travel, I bring one larger bag and a smaller carry-on bag. I rarely check any bags with the airline. My teammates often wonder how I manage to fit it all in. I'm going to share my secrets with you.

Plan-it-out phase:

1. Pick one pair of shoes.

(Two if you are a diva.) They should be fashionable yet functional. In other words, don't plan on walking around a city in your flip-flops.



2. Plan all outfits around your shoes.

Remember that you can recycle bottoms (jeans, shorts, skirts), but it's important to have clean shirts for each day.

3. Don't overpack.

You are attending a roller derby event. What is the likelihood you'll need that second pair of jeans or a fancy dress? Not that likely. Leave it home. Swimsuits, nude suits and tuxedo leotards are all acceptable, as they require very little room and may be necessary for an after party appearance.

Packing-it-in phase:

1. Pack your skates in your bag.

If you predict you will need all the room you can spare, shove socks and underwear into your skates before placing them in the bag.*

2. Use the space around your skates.

Pack other small items such as wheels, undergarments and swimsuits into void areas around skate trucks and skate boots.*



3. Fold all garments.

Fold all garments in a uniform manner, as flatly as possible. Place in bag. Don't forget to pack your jersey, as it is the most important clothing item for your trip. Keep it in a safe spot, and know where it is in your bag.

4. Utilize the nooks and crannies.

Find small areas to pack other miscellaneous items, such as derby pads, brushes, combs, extra laces, duct tape, etc. Think of your items as Tetris pieces, and leave your bag with as few holes as possible.

5. Pack toiletries in your carry-on.

Keep all toiletry items in the smaller carry-on bag, as to have easy access to any liquids that you will need to take out while going through airport security. The bonus is that you can easily brush your teeth on the layover, which can be very refreshing.



6. Do not pack your helmet.

The helmet is awkward and takes up too much room in your bag. You can attach it to your smaller carry-on bag.

7. Do not pack your hair dryer.

Almost every hotel has a hair dryer you can use. If they don't, you shouldn't stress about it because your hair will be in a helmet most of the time anyway. Don't be a diva.

**Keep sanitation in mind when packing personal items in an around skates. Plastic storage bags work nicely for this.*

Make-sure-it-fits phase:

1. Zip your bag.

You will be amazed with a little determination and adjustments made while zipping up the bag that you will eventually find a way to get it closed.

2. If it doesn't...

Negotiate what has to go with you (skates, pads, jersey) and what is extraneous (second pair of shoes). Take out whatever you can leave behind and re-zip.

You-did-it phase:

1. Brag!

Brag to your teammates about your amazing packing skills. Make sure they know you managed to fit in the tuxedo leotard in case it needs to make an after party appearance.



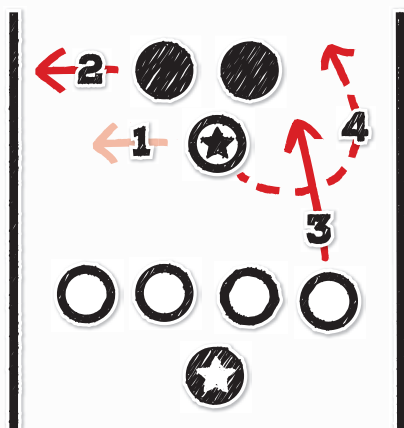
The Roll Out Whiteboard

Offensive drills from
Carmen Getsome of
Rat City Rollergirls



Drill 1: Two-Four-Two

Focus: making quick, accurate offensive decisions while your team is playing defense



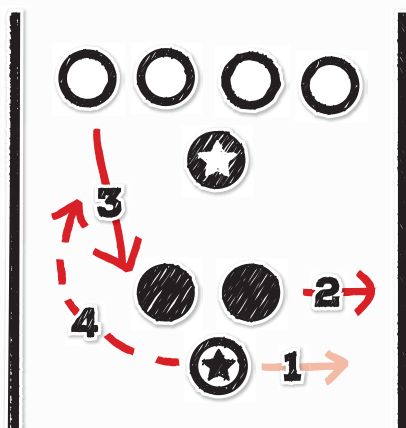
STAGE ONE FROM THE BACK

Setup: Two black blockers in front with a white jammer behind, then 5 feet of space followed by a white four-wall with a black jammer behind it.

All skaters roll, and the jammers apply pressure to the walls (not enough to get out on their own but enough for the blockers to have to stay in front of them to contain).

On the whistle, one white blocker must move forward and play offense for his or her jammer. (Note: The white jammer should bait the blockers to one side of the track or the other and wait for his or her offensive help before taking off.)

A double whistle as soon as the black jammer gets out resets the drill to pack speed in the same formation.

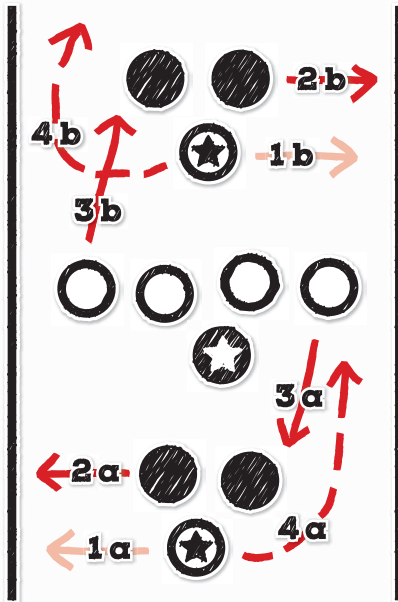


STAGE TWO FROM THE FRONT

Setup: Switch the two- and four-wall locations — four-wall in the front, two-wall in the back.

The drill starts the same, at a rolling pack speed with the jammers applying some pressure.

On the whistle, one of the white blockers must drop to play LEGAL offense. A double whistle resets the drill.

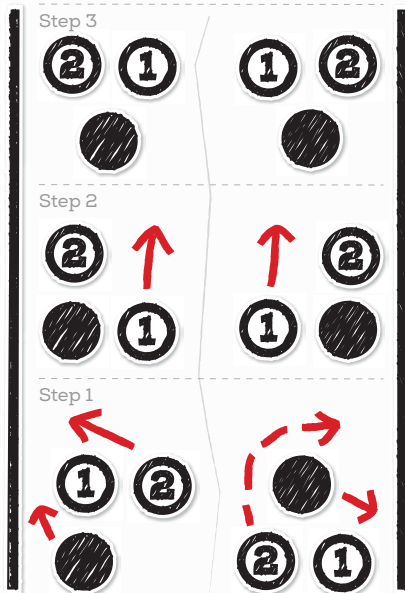


STAGE THREE PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Setup: Yes, there are three jammers on the floor. This doesn't happen in real derby, but for the sake of this drill, it allows you to make quick choices.

This part of the drill starts the same, everyone rolling forward at pack speed. It is essential that the three walls (two, four and two) all stay close to each other (5 feet between each wall). The jammers again apply a bit of pressure.

This time instead of the whistle, the coach yells a direction, front or back. Upon hearing the direction, one member of the white wall must leave to play offense on the appropriate wall. (Note: The jammer with that wall should draw the black blockers to one side to help the white blocker play offense.) The other two jammers should play at 100% and try to escape their walls. The coach will double whistle to end the drill and reset to the beginning formation. The drill should run about 5-8 times with this group and then switch out so all skaters have the chance to participate in the four-wall.



Drill 2: Bad Guy

Focus: learning how to detect an offensive screen and escape it while maintaining a wall

Setup: This drill is run with three players, two people skating in a wall and a third person attempting to screen the wall off of a line. (This is the bad guy.)

The bad guy should start slightly behind or in front and attempt to move the players off the line. Once the bad guy makes contact with blocker 1, then blocker 2 skates in front of 1 and takes 1's position on the inside allowing 1 to take the spot on the right in the wall. This allows the two-wall to maintain a wall by simply switching spots. If 2 can make contact with the bad guy at the same time as moving in front of him or her, this takes the bad guy slightly out of position and keeps the wall a bit more solid.

Carmen Getsome and Getsome Athletics

Carmen Getsome is one of two lead coaches for Getsome Athletics, alongside fellow trainer and teammate Shorty Ounce. Getsome Athletics is an international traveling roller derby training company. Carmen Getsome and Shorty Ounce also skate with the Rat City Rollergirls all-star team.

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-Carmen Getsome



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UNDER THE HELMET

The Many Faces of **KIKI URHAZ**

Written by **Mary Lou Wretched**
Photography by **Richard Kimbrough**



Kiki UrHaz, or Rebecca Dickie, has a long derby résumé that reads like the story of a successful business person: founder, entrepreneur, coach, teammate and mentor.

During her six years playing roller derby, she's taken advantage of every opportunity possible in order to become a better skater. Then, she's used those opportunities to further her derby career. It all began in Kalamazoo, MI as a member of the Killamazoo Derby Darlins.

"I was in a tough place in life and needed a hobby," she recalls. "I searched Craigslist for events, and Kelly Ka-Pow-Ski had a blast about tryouts. I was on skates three times before I tried out and made the team. I was rostered for the next game, and the rest is still unfolding."

In fact, it's been unfolding in a bit of a whirlwind for her. In 2010, she moved to Arizona, where she skated with Arizona Roller Derby's Tent City Terrors. She founded Arizona's all-star co-ed team, Hellazona, and coached the Phoenix Rattleskates men's all-star team. She later founded the Colorado co-ed team the ColoRadicals and is now coaching the Mountain Mad Men of Colorado Springs and Denver. She is a member of the national co-ed Team Xtreme, the national banked track Team Bionic, and the all-female southwestern all-star team the Wild West Outlaws.

This is all in addition to skating with the Denver Roller Dolls on both the highly ranked travel team, the Mile High Club, and her home team, the Bad Apples. While skating with so many teams might be stressful for some skaters, Kiki welcomes the challenge.

"I love playing with everyone," she says. "Of course, [the Denver Roller Dolls] is always my first choice, but I find the beauty in every game — even if I didn't play my best, we lost, or we lost our tempers. I just learn from it, own it and move on. I think playing with so many different people and teams makes you stronger and more adaptable in game play."

Part of what makes Kiki such a strong, effective team member is that she's done it all: blocking and jamming every step of the way.

"I started as a jammer, grew into a blocker, finally became a pivot and did it all everywhere I went," she says.

And these are just a few of the many reasons why she's been able to found leagues, coach and earn spots on some of the nation's top all-star teams.

"Because of moving and switching teams in Phoenix, I got to know people," she says. "Any chance to skate or sub, I was always on board from day one. That soon grew into a permanent spot on rosters — and more chances to skate just makes you better. So it's

just climbing up the ladders and getting into any games you can and learning from every moment.”

“Roller derby is Kiki’s life,” says Mile High Club teammate Angela Death. “She’s skated with and against the most talented skaters in roller derby and has been involved in flat track, banked track and co-ed derby. She skates for the love of the sport and can’t get enough. She’s truly tireless. She has been known to spend six to eight hours straight at the Glitterdome, coaching the Mountain Mad Men and attending every practice and scrimmage she can.”

When she’s not practicing or traveling with the Denver Roller Dolls, she is traveling and coaching on her own. She’s also sponsored by Derby Supply, which she credits with helping her in her career.

“I have recently been able to quit my job and really spend all my time doing derby,” Kiki says. “I started a coaching company and am about to launch a website: coachingurhaz.com. I have been working so hard all these years to make derby a life that can support me — it’s happening!”

Pitchit Davis, who owns Derby Supply, says sponsoring Kiki was a “no-brainer.”

“Kiki’s super high energy, super high motivation and super high love for the game are infectious”

“Kiki’s super high energy, super high motivation and super high love for the game are infectious,” he says.

Kiki’s highly motivated desire to learn and grow made her derby career take off.

“I really didn’t skate too much as a kid,” she admits. “I definitely rollerbladed a bit as a pre-teen, but when I got on skates for derby it was fresh as can be. I was a mess.”

Kiki’s coaching focus is on teaching skating basics to teams of all levels. “You can never stop practicing the fundamentals,” she says.

Her effort to continue her growth also shows in the awards she’s won in her six years of skating, beginning with Rookie of the Year and Best Attendance in 2008.

“I am still a stickler on attendance, and I skate almost every day,” she says. She was recognized as MVP Blocker and Jammer for Killamazoo, then earned MVP awards plus Worst Injury and the Lampshade Award in Arizona.

“The Lampshade Award goes to the person on your team who is most likely to end up with a lampshade on top of their head at the end of the night,” she jokes. “I reject that I am most likely to end up with a lampshade on my head at any time during the day. Anyone that knows me knows that I am extremely outgoing, I have a lot of energy, and I love to be around anything and anyone derby. This is truly my passion.”

Angela Death agrees. “Her positivity, passion and knowledge make her a great coach and teammate,” Angela says. “She comes to us with a lot of experience but also the humbleness and willingness to take feedback, work hard and be a student of derby. Kiki’s positive attitude and tenacity helped her earn a spot on the roster. She’s not only a badass skater, she is fun to be around and is great at lightening the mood and helping the team refocus our mental game when things are not going our way.”

Surrounding herself with derby has certainly paid off from those long ago days as fresh meat with zero skating experience.

“I have been to Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Michigan, Vegas, Durango, San Louis Obispo and lots of states,” she says. “This year I still have Germany, Spain, Virginia, Utah and lots of other places still left to go. I love traveling and coaching, and I am doing everything in my power to make it possible for me to continue being a traveling derby coach.”

It seems she’s just getting started.



Knee Support

MAINTENANCE TIPS FOR SKATERS

Written By **Sum Mo Payne**

Photography by ?????

protecting your knees

We all know derby can be hard on the knees, but what can we do to make sure we don't hurt them?

If you are new to skating or roller derby, DO NOT skimp on knee pads. Instead, get pads that will protect your knees as you push yourself to higher levels. As you progress, you are bound to fall on your knees. Knowing the correct way to fall is just as important as having effective knee pads.

Roller derby is not about falling (so don't practice it too much), but falling is inevitable in this high-contact sport.

preventing injury

Once you have a good set of knee pads, it's time to think about the muscles in your knees and how to prevent injury. Consider the opposing muscle groups that we use skating — not just in derby direction but skating in general. If you repeatedly skate in one direction, one side will become significantly stronger than the other. In off-skates workouts, try to strengthen any weaker muscles.

Learning how to effectively strengthen muscles begins with understanding how muscles work together. Antagonist muscle groups (opposing muscles) work in unison to give you the ability to move, so keeping those in balance helps prevent injuries. We want those opposing muscles to work together, rather than having one muscle overpower the other. An imbalance or weakness, specifically in your knees, can create a higher probability of injuries.

Hamstrings are the antagonists to our quads (quadriceps), and boy-oh-boy do we use our quads while skating! It may not be essential to work on your quads at the gym if you skate 3-4 times a week, but keep those hamstrings in check to make sure they are strong and flexible. Hamstrings can be strengthened by jumping and doing kickbacks or walking lunges.

Now let's think about your ankles. Are they weak? If your ankles are not up to par, this is a bad sign for the knees as well. (Knee supports and ankle supports are available, so take advantage of them, and work on strengthening your knees and ankles in the meantime.) You can strengthen your ankles by doing calf raises and balancing on one foot for 30-60 seconds at a time.

stretches

Stretching is a power tool for injury prevention. Hold these stretches for a minimum of 30 seconds.

Glute (butt) release:

Lie on your bed, flat on your back. Move your leg and butt cheek off of the bed, leaving your shoulders flat on the bed. Allow your leg to stretch out but not touch the floor. To really release the gluteal, after a 30-second stretch, lift your leg up slowly; then bring it down for an even further stretch, do this as many times as needed. This move is a game changer. It can really take a lot of pressure off the glutes and lower back.



Hip flexor stretch:

On your knees, one knee in front of the other, keep your torso straight and lean forward, stretching out your hip flexor. This muscle can get really tight in skaters. This stretch should be a daily, if not more than daily, stretch. You will see a difference in the lower back and legs, which, in turn, is good for the knees.

Hamstring stretch:

The old kindergarten stretches are good for hamstrings. Sit on your bum with one leg straight out and the other bent; reach for your toes and let your body feel the stretch. Come back up for a count of five, and go back into the stretch for 30 seconds. Each time you should be able to stretch a little further.



Iliotibial Band or IT Band stretch:

This is often tight in skaters, which can pull the knee caps. Keep these muscles loose and the antagonist muscles strengthened. To stretch the IT band: Standing, cross your legs; lean over for 30 seconds to your right, back to the center, and then to the left. Cross your legs the opposite way and lean over to both directions again, holding for 30 seconds.



Yoga:

If you think yoga sounds like a ritual only performed by hippies, think again. Yoga is great for fine muscle work and overall strengthening and toning. Go take a yoga class and tell me I am wrong — I dare you.

things to remember

Don't push pain to injury! If it hurts, do not overdo it. You can heal a small tear with some time off and TLC, but a small tear can easily turn into a LARGE tear that can be fixed only with surgery. Play it smart — sitting out one bout to heal is better than sitting out a season to heal from knee surgery.

Arch supports! Do you have them in your shoes? Your skates? Supportive orthotics or insoles can make a world of difference to help support those arches, which in turn support your knees. Remember, your whole body is connected, and you have to take care of it as a whole in order for it to work properly.

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QUEEN ON QUADS

MAGIC CITY'S MEGASOREASS

Heath "Megasoreass" Frazier reflects on derby, drag and growing up gay in a small, Midwestern town

Written by **Samantha Rayburn**

Heath Frazier spreads happiness. He eases aches and pains as a massage therapist, is the life of the party as Misty Meanor, roller skating drag queen, and excites derby fans as Megasoreass. His love of life seems to permeate everything he does, and it is contagious.

As one of the founding players on the Magic City Misfits in Jacksonville, FL, a member of Team USA, and a contender for a spot on the team that will head to England for the first Men's Roller Derby World Cup, Megasoreass is making a name for himself in the emerging sport of men's roller derby.

It's easy to see by his accomplishments that Mega is an above-average athlete. Many factors shaped him through the years to help him become the positive person and successful competitor he is today.

Perhaps the most defining aspect of his early life in Webb City, MO, was knowing he was gay and feeling that he needed to hide who he was to protect himself.

"There were gay bashings in our area," Mega recalls. "In high school, I still expressed myself. As a person, I am very colorful, over the top, happy all the time — but there was a part of me inside that wasn't able to be expressed, and I knew that. I was scared to let that person out during high school because of the ridicule, and possibly the threats, that I would receive."

After high school, he wanted to try living in another part of the country, so he attended the Utah College of Massage Therapy in Salt Lake City. Once he moved away from his hometown, he felt more comfortable exploring the side of himself that he had been apprehensive about for so long.





"I came out of my shell [in Salt Lake City] because no one knew me there, so no one was going to judge me," he says. "And if I didn't know them, I didn't care. So I really kind of opened up and found who I truly was on the inside and was okay with that."

When he came home for Thanksgiving break, though, he once again felt that his personality was confined by his environment. Despite his newly discovered freedom of expression in Salt Lake City, when he came home, he still felt the need to hide who he was. He was miserable, and his family could tell something was wrong. His stepmother asked him to go on a drive with her, and that was when he told her about his struggle.

He recalls, "I told her I might be bisexual, and she said, 'No you're not; you're gay. Your father and I have known for a long time, and it's okay.'" Shortly after his talk with her, his brothers let him know that they also supported him. This allowed Mega to finally feel that he could drop his guard around his family.

Telling his mother was a different story. Her deeply religious background made him worry about how it would affect their relationship. It took a year for him to open up to her, and she struggled to reconcile with her beliefs. However, she told him she loved him no matter what, and over time, she has grown more accepting. She has not only come to support Mega's drag shows, but she loves his partner like another son.

Had it not been for the acceptance of his derby family, Mega says he would have had a much harder time talking to his mother about his sexuality. Between the strong derby support system he had in place and the other side of his family, he felt confident to be himself.

Mega's deep connection with the sport of roller derby began taking root even before he knew it existed. He started skating when he learned to walk. Though Mega participated in other sports in high school, skating was always been his true passion. He skated every chance he could find.

Mega grew up in a small town without skate teams and instead skated outside with friends. When he was 11, a friend's parents opened a rink, and he worked there for about five years. Although he felt the need to remain guarded while off skates, he believed he could truly express himself through his skating. He dreamed of making a career of it, and when he got older, he traveled to



Opposite Page Top: Victorian's Ruby Ribcrisher holds up Colt 45 of Sacred City; Bottom: Silicon Valley's Mad 4 Gravy gets sandwiched by Terminal City's Hittin Miss and Buffy Sainte Fury; **Above Left:** Ermah Gerd of the Cinder Kittens tries to get by Aqua Knock You Out of Kitsap Derby Brats; **Above Right:** Puget's



different rinks in other towns to learn new styles from them.

Mega first got involved in roller derby with his best friend, Mancakes, who is now his teammate on the Misfits. They met in 2006 when Mega traveled to Springdale, AR to skate at a rink where Mancakes was a regular. They had an almost immediate skating connection.

"We started showing off our skating skills against each other and ended up realizing we skate a lot alike," Mancakes recalls. "We started talking about skating and different things that we have done with it and have been best friends ever since."

For two years, they traveled and skated together, even putting on jam skating shows at elementary schools for fun. Mancakes came up with Mega's derby name, which has a double meaning.

"I gave Mega his name due to his sexuality as a joke," Mancakes says. "It stuck because it fits the way he plays." That's because unlike most derby players, who execute hits with their shoulders, Mega has his own style.

"I am known for my ass, basically," Mega says. "Some people call it a deadly weapon because I use it to hit. I don't use my shoulders — I use my ass."

Meow Mix Yo Face Up, the Magic City Misfits coach, agrees.

"Mega is a beast on the track," she says. "He has some of the best connecting hits that I have seen in any male player to date. His ass has a mind of its own! It picks the opposing blocker or jammer up and sends them flying off the track."

With many skills to contribute to his team, Mega's power, agility and versatility on the track make him a valuable player. Because of his size, he is mainly a blocker, but he also loves jamming. He says it confuses the opposing team because they see a big guy and think he can't move. Then they get a surprise.

"I like to think of Mega as a chameleon for the team," Meow Mix says. "He can change anything he is doing and morph to what we need the second I ask him to. To me, that is one of the most valuable traits any skater could have."

What Mega describes as the "aha! moment" in his derby career happened two years ago at Spring Roll in Fort Wayne, IN. He was getting too many penalties because the referees weren't sure what to make of his trademark move.

"Refs aren't used to seeing someone using their butt to make someone fly five feet off the track," Mega says. "So when they would see it, they would say, 'Oh, that's a penalty. Let's call him on it,' when really it wasn't."

Mega's team captain, Streak, told him to try something new: not hit anyone for the rest of the tournament. He advised Mega to skate in front of an opposing player and just positional block. That way, one of his teammates could make that hit, and Mega wouldn't get any more penalties. The strategy worked. At that point, Mega stopped his big hits and let his teammates sweep the other players out. He can still send his opponents soaring when he needs to, but now he is more of a team player.

Meow Mix explains that Mega has since learned to rely less on sheer skating ability and big hits, and has instead developed new strategies.

"He is smarter, faster and much cleaner on the track," she says. "Now, Mega believes in himself just as much as we believe in him. I admire his confidence on the track and humbleness on the bench. He really is a coach's dream player."



The evolution of his abilities has worked in his favor. In July, Mega made Team USA.

This is the first time there has been a men's version of Team USA, so he truly is a pioneer in the sport. The tryouts comprised endurance drills, a skills course, blocking and jamming drills and two scrimmages. Mega will be with Team USA at Beat Me Halfway this November, where 16 players from Team USA will be chosen to represent the United States at the first Men's Roller Derby World Cup in Birmingham, England, next March.

But no matter where his derby career goes from here, Mega still considers the Magic City Misfits home. Although he lives in Joplin, MO. and travels to meet them for games, his teammates are like brothers to him. His experiences with the Misfits have changed his life and encouraged him to be more open and expressive.

Mega claims that when he first joined the team, he was very closed because he was worried about how the other players would react if they knew he was gay. Their acceptance and support has instead built his confidence both off and on the track.

"Trust is a big thing in roller derby," he says. "Once you've made that connection with someone it doesn't matter if they're gay, straight, black, white ... because you know your teammate is there for you. ... And that carries over off the track."

The love and respect Mega feels for his teammates is definitely mutual.

"Mega brings the team to life," Meow Mix says. "We really are not complete without him. From his communication and teamwork skills on the track to his dedication and love for the MCM off the track, we wouldn't be whole without our Megasoreass."

Thanks to the support of his friends and family and the confidence he has gained through derby, Mega has found the self-assurance to pursue another passion: drag. He was working

as a bartender in Joplin when one of his coworkers suggested he try performing in drag once just for fun. It was so fun, in fact, that now, under the pseudonym Misty Meanor, he performs in drag shows at the bar several times a week.

"I do drag on my roller skates, which is something people have never seen before," he says. "I like to call it a 'show shocker' because for one, you're doing this illusion, this female impersonation. And also to be on skates — I do spins, tricks, everything like that, and it just blows peoples' minds. People ask me, 'How do you do what you do on roller skates?'"

When he isn't on the derby track using his butt as a "deadly weapon" or inciting shock, awe and amazement as Misty Meanor, Mega enjoys his career as a massage therapist.



Opposite Page Top: Victorian's Ruby Ribcrisher holds up Colt 45 of Sacred City; **Bottom:** Silicon Valley's Mad 4 Gravy gets sandwiched by Terminal City's Hittin Miss and Buffy Sainte Fury; **Above Left:** Ermah Gerd of the Cinder Kittens tries to get by Aqua Knock You Out of Kitsap Derby Brats; **Above Right:** Puget's



Each of these roles fills a specific need in his life. Because his clients come in to see him for relaxation, he tends to be more reserved.

“I can have focus at one job, and at the other job I get to have fun and make fun of people on the microphone,” he says. “So they balance each other out. I get to be that crazy fun person, but I also get to relax and calm down at my other job.”

Mega’s advice for skaters who are interested in roller derby is to get involved. Go to a bout and find out what it’s all about. Find a team near you, contact them, and go to their beginners’ classes.

“Even if you’re not to the skill level of skating, be an NSO, be a volunteer, just surround yourself with the sport and you’re going to fall even more in love with it,” he says.

For young people who are exploring their sexuality or gender identity, Mega advises all to be themselves and surround themselves with love and support.

“No matter where you live, there are going to be people to support you. Yes, you will go through hard times — everyone does. But be who you are because life’s too short to not be happy and once you find who you are, life is going to be so much better.”

If your family is not supportive, he says, “Find an organization, find a teacher who you trust and you can talk with. Just be happy, because you never know what’s going to happen or what connection you can make.”

Opposite Page: *Magnum, p.i.m.p.* ; **Above Top:** *.....*; **Bottom:** *The scoreboard tells only part of the story of the MissFits’ defeat.*

Behind the Lens:

DUANE BAKER

Spotlighting Roller Derby Photographers

By **Eenie Meanie**

When derby teams are playing in bouts or tournaments, they never know who is watching. It could be friends, it could be family, or it could be a photographer.

Duane Baker accidentally stumbled upon roller derby in March of 2012 while shooting a club volleyball tournament at a large sports complex in North Richland Hills, TX.

“During a break in the volleyball action, I explored the complex a bit,” he says. “A roller derby event was taking place. It was the 2012 Clover Cup tournament. I paid my entrance fee and sat in the stands and fired off a few rounds of the action.”

Baker currently shoots for three leagues in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area: Dallas Derby Devils, Assassination City Roller Derby and North Texas Derby Revolution. His love of photography began in his teens, but he says it didn't really become professional until he took up scuba diving in the early '90s.

“I bought a Nikonos IV underwater camera and was hooked,” he says.

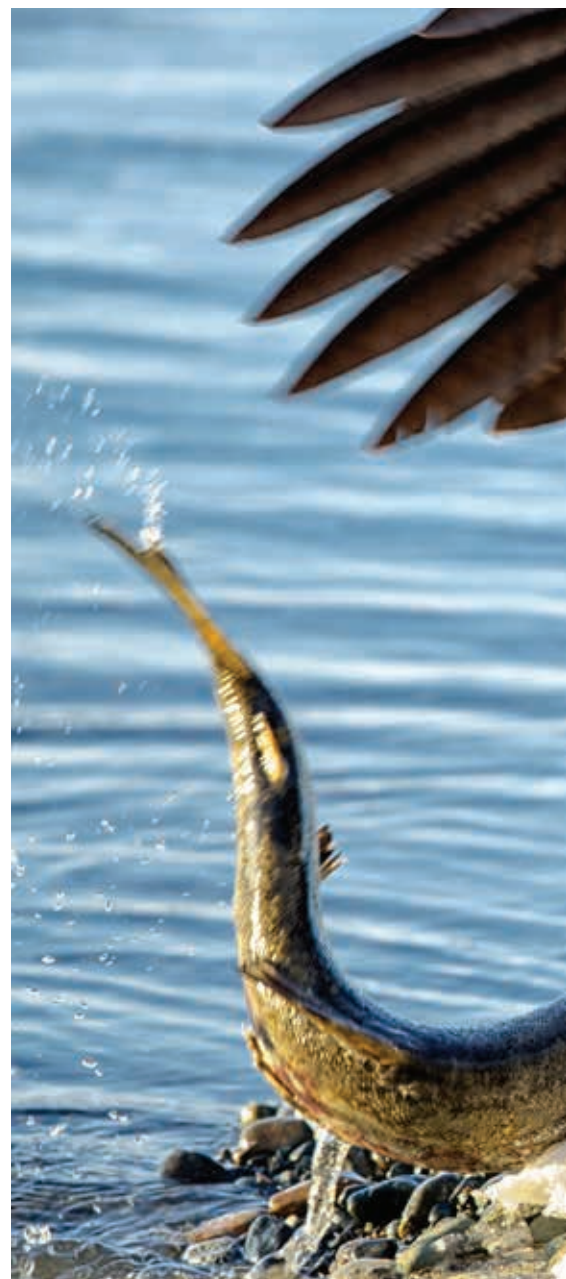
Like many discovering the new version of roller derby, Baker was stunned by the turn the game has taken to a legitimate sport.

“It was nothing like I had seen on television back during the '70s and '80s,” he says. “I was excited, and even though my first photos were not that spectacular, I submitted the images to the Dallas Derby Devils organization and was invited to their next regular season bout as a trackside photographer.”

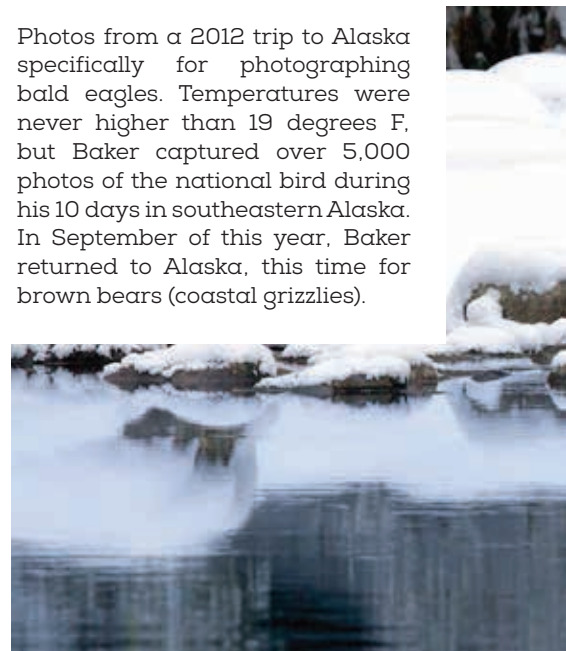
Even though Baker is an experienced sports photographer, roller derby presents unique challenges — lighting chief among them. Baker initially used the lighting already present at bout venues, but the resulting pictures were too grainy.

“I found that I spent a lot of time in post-production trying to remove the noise without degrading the quality of the image,” he says.

Baker says he can see the progress of his skill grow with each bout as he learns to anticipate the action. Capturing it means adjusting the equipment he uses. The first camera he used for derby was a Canon 7D.



Photos from a 2012 trip to Alaska specifically for photographing bald eagles. Temperatures were never higher than 19 degrees F, but Baker captured over 5,000 photos of the national bird during his 10 days in southeastern Alaska. In September of this year, Baker returned to Alaska, this time for brown bears (coastal grizzlies).





Jet City Rollergirls takes on Sin City Rollergirls in the semifinals at the WFTDA Division 2 Playoffs in Des Moines. Jet City went on to win the tournament, and Sin City came in fourth.



Treasure Valley Rollergirls jammer Dawn of the Shred attacks a Sin City Rollergirls two-wall in the bid for third place at the WFTDA Division 2 Playoffs. Treasure Valley finished the tournament in third place with Dawn of the Shred voted tournament MVP.





Brandi Danger, a jammer for Dallas Derby Devils, takes on Omaha Rollergirls at the WFTDA Division 2 Playoffs. Dallas went on to take fifth place in the tournament, while Omaha took eighth.

The Hogback Covered Bridge in Madison County, IA. When the WFTDA Division 2 Playoffs were completed, he searched out all six remaining bridges of Madison County made famous by the movie with Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep. "I am really just an old romantic at heart," Baker says.





A wakeboarder at a local wakeboard park near Dallas. Baker shot this action sequence with a Canon 1D Mark IV and merged all of the separate photos into one composite.

It has a quick frame-per-second shooting rate and a cropped APS-C sensor but doesn't hold up in ambient light. Now he utilizes a Canon 1D Mark IV for action shots coupled to a Canon 70-200mm F2.8L IS Mark II lens. His second camera is the Canon 5D Mark III, which he uses with a Canon 300mm F2.8L IS lens for extreme action portraits.

To fix the low lighting, Baker brings four 300-watt second strobes controlled by Pocketwizard remote triggers. He usually uses two strobes at both turns three and four because he prefers shooting most of his photos at turn four.

Though Baker sets up his equipment on the sidelines of the action, sometimes the hits and spills of derby extend beyond the track, potentially endangering a photographer or equipment. Baker discovered this during the 2013 Clover Cup.

"I decided to go up into the stands and shoot from the upper bleachers when a skater lost their footing at turn two near where one

of my strobes was stationed on a 12-foot light stand," he says. "They took out the stand, but fortunately the people that were near it caught the strobe and stand before it hit the ground. I was watching the whole thing through my lens, having a near heart attack. Everyone, including the skater, looked around to observe my reaction. At over \$1.4 K per

stand and strobe, it can certainly make you sweat when people or children go near them."

Despite such risks, Baker truly loves documenting the progress of roller derby and its individual teams and players. Aside from shooting for area leagues, he also shoots the Clover Cup tournament and events such as the WFTDA division two playoffs in Des Moines, Iowa.

"Of all the sporting events I shoot, it is Women's Flat Track Roller Derby that fuels my passion," he says. "Not only for photography, but for the women whose athleticism and dedication make up the core of a wonderful organization."

“Of all the sporting events I shoot, it is Women’s Flat Track Roller Derby that fuels my passion”



Duane Baker

Leagues: Dallas Derby Devils, Assassination City Roller Derby and North Texas Derby Revolution

Cameras: Canon 1D Mark IV and Canon 5D Mark III

Lighting: Four 300-watt second strobes controlled by Pocketwizard remote triggers

Favorite spot on the track: Turn four

Two things on his bucket list: Running with the bulls in Pamplano, Spain and renting a convertible and driving the Amalfi Coast of Italy.

Best vacation spot: The "majestic scenery and wilderness" he encountered in Alaska last December. "The solitude helped me get a lot of things into perspective," Baker says.

Biggest pet peeve: Tardiness. "If you are going to be late, it would be better of you to just not come at all," Baker says.

Website: www.duanebakerphotography.com

TEAM USA



MAKING THE CUT

300
SKATERS TRIED OUT FOR THE TEAM.

32
MADE THE ROSTER.

This summer skaters from across the country converged on taped-off tracks in Milwaukee, Seattle and Feasterville, PA, to prove themselves to the coaches of Team USA Roller Derby. They demonstrated skills such as plow stops, hockey stops, crossovers, backward skating and blocking. They fought through two-on-one and three-on-one drills and battled each other in extended-length scrimmages.

“The skill level was not as broad as last time around, meaning there were fewer weaker skaters,” says Assistant Coach “Endless” Justin Campoy. “But the overall skill was much much higher, and the game play was much much higher. Also the separation between the top and the middle was much closer.”

On Oct. 15, Campoy and Head Coach Aaron “Buster Cheatin”

Goed announced the 32 skaters selected from these tryouts to form Team USA, which will represent the United States at the 2014 World Cup in Dallas next December. In the meantime, the team will play internationally as much as possible, Campoy says.

In selecting the team, Campoy says the coaches were looking for skaters who proved themselves to be, first and foremost, good at roller derby, secondly, solid team players, and lastly, able to perform “fancy skating moves.”

“Each one of these supports the others,” he says.

Roll Out would like to introduce you to a few of the 300 who tried out.

*“As I trained and skated
and became stronger,*

I FELT MORE CONFIDENT.

*...Scrimmaging with such amazing ladies
was an honor. I felt a little out of my league
but gave it my all and was successful
in both jamming and blocking.*

-WHIPLASH”

-Whiplash of Rollergirls of Pagosa. Here she takes a break at the Milwaukee tryout. She decided to try out for the team despite the fact that, at 40, she was aware of being nearly twice the age of several of her competitors. PHOTO BY CHRIS M. RODGERS



-BELLE TOLLS of Rat City Rollergirls. Here she powerslides at the Seattle tryout. She says participating in events with skaters from across the country motivates her to improve her form and technique. PHOTO BY DANNY NGAN

*“I wanted to pit myself against the
BEST OF THE BEST*

*– that’s how you learn.
And I learned a lot. ...I wanted
to take myself beyond being a
fan of the top skaters in the world,
and put myself among them, to
compete with and against them,
even if it’s just for a day.*

-BELLE TOLLS”

*“We are always hungry and always
PUSHING EACH OTHER
to be better.*

-“ENDLESS” JUSTIN CAMPOY

-Team USA Assistant Coach “Endless” Justin Campoy. Here he prepares the teams for scrimmage at the Seattle tryout, explaining that it’s all about how good they are at roller derby, not necessarily how good they are at roller skating. Campoy is also bench coach for Gotham Girls Roller Derby. He first became involved in derby in 2004 as a referee. PHOTO BY DANNY NGAN





*“It’s intimidating and vulnerable to
PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE
 and be judged in a five-hour
 sweatfest. Only crazy people do that.
 And I wanted to skate with those
 crazy people! It was glorious.”*

-BONNIE D. STROIR

-Bonnie D. Stroir, former assistant coach of Team USA. This year she decided to try out as a skater. Due to Seattle traffic on the way to the tryout, she was unable to stop for food. Throughout the day, she was “humbled and moved” by offers of food from skaters of at least five different leagues. PHOTO BY JULES DOYLE

2013-2014 **TEAM USA**

- Julie Adams** Denver Roller Dolls
- Tracy Akers** Denver Roller Dolls
- Amanda Jamitinya** Bay Area Derby Girls
- Atomatrix** Arizona Roller Derby
- Baller Shot Caller** Gold Coast Derby Girls
- Bonnie Thunders** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Carmen Getsome** Rat City Rollergirls
- Donna Matrix** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Fifi Nomenon** Texas Rollergirls
- Fisti Cuffs** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Jackie Daniels** Windy City Rollers
- Juke Boxx** Minnestoa Rollergirls
- Mercy** Rose City Rollers
- Mick Swagger** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- OMG WTF** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Onda Sligh** Oly Rollers

- Melaine Pfister**, Wasatch Roller Derby
- Polly Gone** Texas Rollergirls
- Jes Rivas** Denver Roller Dolls
- Scald Eagle** Rose City Rollers
- Second Hand Smoke** Minnestoa Rollergirls
- Serelson, Shaina** Denver Roller Dolls
- Sexy Slaydie** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Shenita Stretcher** Philly Rollergirls
- Smarty Pants** Texas Rollergirls
- Snot Rocket Science** Steel City Roller Derby
- Suzy Hotrod** Gotham Girls Roller Derby
- Teflon Donna** Philly Rollergirls
- Trauma** Kansas City Roller Warriors
- Urrk’n Jerk’n** Denver Roller Dolls
- V. Diva** Philly Rollergirls
- Wild Cherri** Atlanta Rollergirls



Mark Your Calendar:
 December 4-7, 2014

For the latest on Team USA Roller Derby, find the team on Facebook.

On Page 27: Skaters bring it in after five hours of drills and scrimmage at tryouts in Seattle.
 PHOTO BY DANNY NGAN

Working to Make a Gold Level Team

Team USA Men's Roller Derby is born

Written by **Magnum, p.i.m.p.**

Derby Alchemy

Setting the Stage

Team USA. TEAM USA!!! It is the greatest accumulation of talent that our country can offer, in one lineup. Since the beginning of international game play, athletes have been dreaming of the opportunity to play for their country. To be counted among the best of the best and compete on a global level could be considered the ultimate goal in any sport.

When the creation of women's Team USA Roller Derby was announced several years back, there was a buzz throughout the derby community of excitement, pride and curiosity about which skaters would assemble as, presumably, the most lethal team in the world. That team lived up to and exceeded the hype, winning the maiden 2011 World Cup championship bout by a point margin of more than 10 to 1 and holding its other tournament opponents to fewer than 10 points in each bout. Thirteen countries competed in that event, showing that roller derby's reach was expansive and just getting started.

Fast forward several years. Now the men's game has developed and matured to a level of international competition.

Jonathan R, one of the organizers of Team USA Men's Roller Derby, explains how the concept of a men's world cup gained traction: "After the success of the first Men's European Roller Derby Championships and New York's Shock the UK Tour, talks began about having an international men's roller derby tournament. Reaching out to skaters around the globe revealed a very high interest. Once everyone was brought together, all the pieces were in place for a world cup."

The inaugural Men's Roller Derby World Cup will be held March 14-16, 2014, in Birmingham, England. Seventeen countries have applied and been formally invited to compete: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, USA and Wales. The Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) has officially endorsed this event. Though men's derby was years behind the women in getting off the ground, this event will mark the largest pool of international derby teams to date.

Creating a Monster

The formation of Team USA Men's Roller Derby originated when Shortbus and Chuck Best Jr. contacted Joy Collision about creating a coed Team USA. After bringing in some other long-time players, it was decided that establishing a men's team would be the appropriate first step.

From the initial panel, a plan of action was voted on and approved: Five top-level skaters from different MRDA teams would serve as official organizers for Team USA Men's Roller Derby. The skaters chosen were Tony Muse (Your Mom Roller Derby), Magnum, p.i.m.p. (St. Louis GateKeepers), Jonathan R (New York Shock Exchange), Streak (Magic City Misfits) and Quadzilla L.K. (Puget Sound Derby Outcasts). These skaters represented the top five teams in MRDA at the time.

With rumors of the first men's World Cup being planned, the organizers quickly got to work designing logos and jerseys, finding sponsors, establishing a team structure, setting up tryouts, forming an LLC, creating merchandise and plotting the course for the team. The group settled on a mission statement:

The primary purpose of the team is to represent the United States of America in men's international roller derby competitions. The team will be composed of the best United States roller derby players in regards to talent, sportsmanship and spirit of the game. The team shall respect and abide by the governing rules.

Through the involvement of Streak and Quadzilla, Vanilla Skate Company and Antik Skate Boots stepped in to sponsor the jerseys and team warm-ups. Also, Tony Muse's relationship with Tour Hockey led to finding the team's jersey manufacturer in Roller Derby Elite.

Local contacts were used to design the logos and jerseys. With the organizers' connections throughout the derby community, the team has made fast progress in a short amount of time and more than covered the necessities for international play. It is not too late to support the team through sponsorship or donations. The organizers can be contacted at usamensrollerderby@gmail.com.





Proving Grounds

Tryouts took place June 22-23 at the Aurora Skate Center in Aurora, IL. Seventy people showed up to battle for a spot on the team. Saturday was a skills-based tryout used to evaluate and place the skaters for the “A” and “B” scrimmages on Sunday. Organizers made cuts after Saturday’s action, and the lineups were set. Standout players participating in the “B” scrimmage earned their way into the “A” scrimmage. To make Team USA’s National Team, a skater had to be a top performer in the “A” scrimmage. The competition of that weekend was some of the highest that derby has ever seen. With a chance to wear the stars and stripes at stake, players gave it their all to prove they deserved the spot they were after.

“I have never been around that much high-level roller derby talent in my life,” Tony Muse says. “The quality from top to bottom was beyond my expectations coming in and with that, I think the players pushed themselves even higher during the competition. The ‘A’ game had many unique characteristics. The pace was so fast, the walls so strong, the recycling so on-point that if and when a jammer got through, they were not in a physically fit manner to get through again to score. It was a jammer’s nightmare.”

Spirits were high after tryouts. A weekend of elite play in the name of country pride is a rare opportunity to be relished and appreciated.

Team Dream Team

The participants and video submission applicants were evaluated, and when the dust settled, the organizers had the tools at their disposal to engineer a complete roster for worldwide competition:

Team USA - National Team

Abraham Drinkin (Robert John Wyatt)
B.STANG (Brett Stang)
Christopher Smith
Chuck Best Jr.
Cory Pain (Cory Acklus)
Debaucherous Prime (Corey Porter)
Dirty Larry (Larry Hopper)
Frank Not Sohotra (Dante Muse)
GnatKingKill (Michael Walsh)
Heath Frazier (formerly Megasoreass)
Jack Hammer’D (William Lloyd Coulter)
Streak (Jeremy Strecker)
Jon Wical (formerly Johnny Long Hair)
Jonathan R (Jonathan Rockey)
Jurasskick Park (Andrew Townsend)
Just the Tip (TJ Binkley)
Lucky Charmer (Jon West)
Magnum, p.i.m.p. (Scott Meyer)
Neil Death Experience (Neil Cawvey)

Nicholas Becker (formerly BS)
Percy Controll (Tony Correnti)
Peter Pan (Tony Muse)
Quadzilla (Mo Sanders)
Radillac (Jeremy Franz)
Scott Slamilton (Christopher Scott Whitkop)
Seahorses Forever (Jason McDaniel)
Speed Dealer (Jeff Dupont)
Sugar Boots (Chris Burkard)
TINK (Mark Weber)
TwinkleToes (Ryan Dearth)

1st alt Erich Bennar (formerly Dr. Spankenstein)

2nd alt Ace of Skates (Chris Szabo)

These names represent the integral components in building a derby machine: evasive jammers, shut-down blockers, big men, pack leaders, offensive wrecking balls and athletic standouts.

“The roster is a great collection of well-rounded skaters that show all of the necessary skills and knowledge to not only dominate in their positions, but also to make their teammates better,” Quadzilla says.

Boot Camp and Beyond

Looking into the future of Team USA Men’s Roller Derby, the next step is a boot camp and scrimmage at Beat Me Halfway in Lebanon, MO, Nov. 29 through Dec. 1. The National Team of 30 skaters will come together to train as a group, and the skaters will further showcase why they belong on the World Team (the chosen 16 that will make the roster and travel to England).

Friday will be practice time for the squad to go over team strategy and execution. Saturday will be the main event of the weekend as the National Team will split to play a blue-versus-white regulation scrimmage. This scrimmage could be the greatest accumulation of derby talent to date.

Streak predicts the action of Team USA at Beat Me Halfway will “blow people away.”

“If the final ‘A’ scrimmage at tryouts was a hint of things to come, I can only imagine how we will play without the stress of tryouts hanging over everyone’s head,” he says. “From the guys’ teamwork to their execution, the Stars and Stripes game is guaranteed to have everyone in attendance glued to their seats!”

There are clearly high expectations for this team. There were some surprises from the entrants at tryouts, and the blue-versus-white scrimmage will be the perfect platform for the cream to rise to the top. When it is all said and done, 16 of the best skaters the USA has to offer will join with the singular goal of winning the first ever Men’s Roller Derby World Cup.

Learning to Lose continued...

South of McLean County, in nearby Springfield, IL, the Capital City Hooligans provide an opportunity for area men to take part in the sport of roller derby. Founded in September, 2012, the Hooligans have labored the past year at their in-progress goal of Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) membership. The 19-skater, single-team outfit holds a 2013 season record of 3-3 — their most precipitous loss being a 375-56 shakedown by the St. Louis B-Keepers (GateKeepers Roller Derby's development team) on Sept. 15.

Among the Hooligans' founding members is So Pretty, a veteran jam-skater (i.e., roller skating break dancer) who serves his team primarily as a jammer.

"There's no easy way to suffer a devastating blowout and maintain a positive team attitude," So Pretty states frankly. But he adds, "You have to approach every game as a learning experience, realizing that in every defeat there are small victories."

Though never pleasant at the time, humbling moments often leave valuable growth opportunities in their paths. For the skaters mentioned herein, the weapon of choice against big losses is the shift of focus to smaller victories.

To quote Indian film producer and philanthropist Shahrukh Khan, "Success is not a good teacher; failure makes you humble." If personal growth is a function of the degree to which one is humbled, then it is fair to speculate that great defeats serve as great opportunities.



jam," she tells Roll Out. "I had two of my teammates telling me to go block for Tannibal Lecter's last jam — and what I needed to do. But, my lack of experience at blocking made me hesitate. Looking back, I don't think I will ever forget that moment — What if?"

Not to be outdone by their sisters in derby, the final bout of 2012 MRDA Championships would deliver a strikingly similar outcome, in which the St. Louis GateKeepers would fall to Your Mom Men's Derby (Des Moines, IA) by a score of 136-135.

After leading for most of the bout, the GateKeepers had a jammer penalty in the second to last jam that put the score within four points. GateKeepers jammer and charter team captain Magnum, p.i.m.p. recalls that devastating shift in momentum.

"When Des Moines got lead in the last jam, I knew it put us behind the 8-ball," he says. "Then, getting called off on a no-impact jammer penalty — I knew the game was over and was crushed. I believe I was still skating to the box when the jam was called. I felt awful for letting down my team."

An optimist and a natural leader, however, Magnum turns his focus to the silver lining: "It was devastating, but the entire weekend was a great experience. Finishing second by a single point in the MRDA Championships was the second best thing that could have happened to the GateKeepers," he states proudly, also pointing out that he, despite his clutch

folly, was the highest-scoring jammer of the bout.

Never lacking for thrills, WFTDA roller derby offers yet more recent examples of triumphs gone awry. On Aug. 2, Denver's intra-city rivalry would come to a historic climax in Las Vegas of all places; during RollerCon 2013, Denver Roller Dolls' Mile High Club (WFTDA No. 4) would throw down with Rocky Mountain Rollergirls' 5280 Fight Club (WFTDA No. 10) to bang out a one-point squeaker from which Rocky Mountain would emerge victorious, 165-164. A not-as-close, though perhaps-more-thrilling, turn of events would play out on Sept. 6 during 2013 WFTDA Division 1 Playoff #1 in Fort Wayne, IN — the London Roller Girls' London Brawling (WFTDA No. 13) would best the Rose City Rollers' Wheels of Justice (Portland, OR, WFTDA No. 5) in a 193-190 clincher, closing the door on Rose City's shot at WFTDA Championships in November.

While losing big may be widely regarded as the most humbling face of defeat, a narrow loss can gnaw at an athlete for years to come. Still, when the game cards are signed and the track is pulled up, each skater must accept the final outcome and begin to move on. For those skaters who will walk away from heartbreaking near-triumphs, no amount of strategic insight or after-the-fact assertions will offer a second chance — to call off that jam a second earlier; to not pick

One Huge Point

There are few things that can weigh on an athlete's heart like a narrow loss. In the sport of roller derby, final scores often total in the hundreds. The outcome of a neck-and-neck bout in which each team has scored high marks may be decided by a difference of less than half a percentage point. To use a familiar sports analogy, a one-point loss in roller derby could be compared to two sprinters blasting across the finish line separated by one one-hundredth of a second. In the wake of a marginal shortfall, a disappointed athlete may dwell on his or her regrets, mulling over the possibilities of what could have been — If only I had...

For all the squeakers and nail-biters that have highlighted the short history of flat track roller derby, there may be none so memorable as the final bout of 2010 WFTDA Championships in which Rocky Mountain Rollergirls (Denver, CO) would grapple the previous year's champion Oly Rollers (Olympia, WA) to a breathtaking defeat, 147-146.

Three years later, Oly Rollers jammer Atomatrix reflects on this fumbled title. "There were things I knew we needed to do in the last



up that clumsy foot after it rolled out-of-bounds; to not yell at the ref, earning an extra minute in the penalty box; to not let victory slip away when we were so close.

Chatter in the Wake

Defeated skaters are by no means the only people who will feel the impact of a narrow loss, a blowout or any other dramatic or controversial outcome. If a controversial incident or hotly disputed outcome occurs in the course of a sanctioned bout between two highly ranked teams, one can be sure that opinions will be freely traded among fans, announcers, coaches, skaters and even refs. Points of critical focus can range from the quality of the officiating to the conditions of the venue. While the derby public may or may not be able to ignore the brash sentiment that bites at the heels of newly arrived controversy, most will at least pay mind to substantive, reasonable claims — If the jam ref hadn't looked away while his jammer was trying to call it, (opposing team) wouldn't have scraped up those two points that gave them the win.

The validity (or lack thereof) of such a claim might be debated at the tables of tournament after-parties and in the comment threads of social network communities. While such discussions can make for exciting drama, they tend to favor the voices of those most critical rather than those most credible. This is neither to say that our sport's observers are not capable of drawing astute conclusions, nor to say that experience as a skater or an official blesses one with derby-logical insight. Roller derby intellectuals of the highest order kneel behind

cameras, stand by as volunteer medics and even cartwheel as mascots; one need not necessarily be a skater or an official to possess a deep understanding of the sport.

It can be argued, however, that, regardless of a person's rank and station in the roller derby paradigm (skater, volunteer or otherwise), an incident review conducted solely by onlookers with no input from those directly involved will lack both credibility and relevant perspective. This argument withstanding, all would do well to consider the source of any assertion before firing back a response, particularly on a public forum.

However, when considering the perspectives of athletes directly implicated in controversial matters, one should remain aware that firsthand credibility is ever prone to personal bias. Under this argument, one could make the case that implicated participants have nothing helpful or rational to contribute to discussions of which they themselves are the subjects — If it's about you, stay out of it.

MRDA President and Mass Maelstrom (Lancaster, MA) skater Erich Bennar says that, in the wake of a loss, disciplined communication is a team policy.

"Our skaters know to keep their mouths shut publicly," Bennar says. "We trust that our leaders will do the right thing and go through the proper channels to ensure that the issue gets taken care of appropriately. It's very similar to how we run our bench during a game — everyone focuses on their job and how their actions affect the team."

Wise advice heeded by a cool mind may not prove so convincing to a skater or referee whose name is being thrown around unfavorably. And, while flaming on a social media forum (even justly in one's defense) might be cathartic for the individual, it tends to



Fuel for the Fire

For all the pitfalls of defeat, it bears one saving grace: its power to motivate improvement. For Jacksonville Roller Girls (Jacksonville, FL) skater Miley Virus, victories and shortfalls both have served as a source of motivation.

“Coming back to practice after a loss is always a back-to-the-drawing-board kind of feeling,” she says of her 2013 season with Jacksonville’s New Jax City Rollers — the 2011-incepted WFTDA charter team that managed over the past year to claw its way into Division 1, finishing the regular season with a respectable ranking of No. 26. “As a team we look at what we could have done differently and focus on practicing just that. For me personally, it is motivating to come back to practice after a loss because I want to prove to myself that I can be better.”

This ability to draw positivity and encouragement from daunting experiences is not just a default strategy for bolstering morale; it is a necessary survival mechanism for any athlete striving to stay competitive.

Oly Rollers’ Atomatrix emphasizes this necessity: “If you are afraid of failure, you will be crippled.”

St. Louis GateKeepers’ Magnum, p.i.m.p. acknowledges that winning and losing each affect him differently, but both serve as motivators in their own ways.

“Winning keeps me motivated to keep training hard for long periods of time,” he says. “Losing motivates me in the short term to get to the next level.”

These skaters’ sentiments each examine how disappointment and motivation correlate at a personal level. In a team sport such as roller derby, however, the outcome on the scoreboard does not always reflect each athlete’s sense of accomplishment. Miley Virus notes the complex relationship between her individual performance and a bout’s final score.

“My team can win a game, but I can feel awful about my role in it,” she confesses of her less spectacular performances since starting roller derby in 2007.

Oly Rollers’ Atomatrix possesses credible mileage as an athlete in an individual sport, with international inline speed skating titles dating back to her teens.

“I love competing in inline speed skating because I am one-hundred percent in control of my own destiny,” she says.

This falls in stark contrast to roller derby, of which she says, “There is only so much you can do alone before you have to rely on your team — not to mention how officiating and penalties can affect outcomes.”

Whether taking part in individual or team competition, each sport is a pyramid with only one spot at the top. For those who make winning an imperative objective, few will ever taste the storied sweetness of a championship title. Should one then be haunted by a sense of failure? Certainly not. Many athletes take great satisfaction in knowing that they have simply given their all.

To quote 1924 Olympic gold medalist Eric Liddell: “In the dust of defeat as well as the laurels of victory there is a glory to be found if one has done his best.”

Learning to lose is not a matter of defeat, but a matter of transcending the throes of failure to find the pure joy of playing the game.

reflect poorly on the league or organization that he or she represents. When such fuss is over a trivial middle finger (or two) that went up on one skater’s way to the penalty box one Saturday night, few leagues will bat an eyelash. However, when a league finds one or more of its skaters at the center of a particularly volatile public relations crisis — one that can affect organizational livelihood or even good standing with its sanctioning body — leadership might feel compelled to take matters into its own hands with a topic-specific gag order.

While tight-lipped bureaucratic obedience has never been roller derby’s calling card, basic social controls can be helpful in mitigating the impact of social fallout brought on by a public relations meltdown. In the age of viral information, however, it may be that there are simply too many lips for any one league to keep track of.

For winners, losers and critics alike, rhetorical discussion provides a venue in which to congratulate, to commiserate or to just blow off steam. We are each entitled to our woes, our opinions and even the right to brag (graciously, mind you). When the dust of a hard-fought battle settles, all must find their peace and move forward. As stewards and representatives of the roller derby community, it is up to each of us to be a good sport, win or lose.



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