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Beat Me Halfway LOVE LETTERS

Skater testimonials from BMH 2012

By Bat Wing

Featuring submissions by Black Market Baby, Shanego Fett, D Mouthful and Tigre Force

If you are in any way involved in the sport of roller derby, chances are you have heard of Beat Me Halfway — or BMH, as it has come to be known. If not, picture a downscaled and downhome twist on the basic premise of RollerCon. If you are new to derby, imagine a three-day palooza of roller derby workshops, demos and open-participation mini-bouts unravelling under one roof in the soybean fields of central Missouri.

The rapid growth and international recognition of the annual co-ed derby extravaganza should speak for itself. In 2010, the event was an end-of-season whim in a rented Jefferson City skating rink that was nearly snowed out, stunting attendance significantly. BMH has since grown into a widely anticipated national-scale calendar event that shows no signs of slowing its roll. Last year's event was sold out at just under 200 participants due to the limited capacity of the rink. The 2013 event will see a new convention center venue with estimated attendance more than doubling.

For all the good fortune and luck that has befallen Coach Spanx (fellow BMH co-founder) and me, and for all of the hard work that we and our huge-hearted volunteer staff have put in, the things that have continued to make BMH such a magical and viral event are the experiences shared by its participants. BMH is fun — very fun. In the wake of each BMH event, a shower of beaming testimonials pours into our inbox. This Roll Out Magazine exclusive serves to outline several of our most thoughtful and colorful testimonial letters from the desks of four different participants offering their unique perspectives on the BMH experience.

First, Arch Rival Roller Girl Black Market baby offers a nostalgic look at BMH 2010 and reflects on how the event has changed and developed over the past three years.

BMB on BMH

By Black Market Baby

BAM! The emergency break was thrown, and we started skidding down the icy hill towards Sk8 Zone. I heard someone laughing. Shit! It was me. Right then I knew we were going to have a good time. It was December 2010 and a dude-friend and I were off to Missouri's first ever co-ed derby weekend.

Half the attendees were skaters out of my home city of St. Louis, but I was super excited to skate with more people from around the state. All of us were at the forefront of developing a strong Midwest derby community and I was proud to be a part of it.

The thing I remember the most about the first Beat Me Halfway event was the camaraderie and excitement. We arrived late, but I felt right at home as soon as we walked in. It was like an episode of Cheers. We laced up for a second to try the floor. Not long after, it was time for dinner, followed by beer, liquor, and hotel room. And yes, things got stupid. The next day, we got our tired, groggy asses up and were completely ready to do it again.

Beat Me Halfway 2011 built on the excitement and fun from the previous year, except things were more organized. Hell, I was more organized. I got there earlier and took a few clinics instead of just jumping in on scrimmages. It was great to see the

familiar faces and roughhouse with them a little. PITCHIT DAVIS and MAGNUM P.I.M.P. had each returned for a second year of coaching. It was also great to see the support and growth of the Midwest derby community. Everyone in attendance really wanted to play better derby and work to develop the sport; this was the main goal that everyone shared.

This past year Beat Me Halfway (2012) extended its reach even further. The organizers brought in Quadzilla, Vanilla skates, and it was the first appearance of Team Xtreme — Shane Darby's brain child. Missouri is proving to be a hotspot for top level derby, but it is also home to a very supportive and dedicated community of skaters. Beat Me Halfway has been a great opportunity for many people to experience this. Mark your calendars for 2013: November 29th weekend. You won't want to miss it!





Whether a BMH participant is a fella braving his first year as a competitive skater or a veteran derby dame trying her hand at refereeing, the common thread that unifies the BMH experience for all is the parties! BMH regular Shanego Fett of the St. Louis Gatekeepers gives us a candid look at just how much fun a person can have on the lighter side of BMH.

Epically Cozy

By Shanego Fett (Shane Bower)

①

As I laced up my skates on the carpet-covered benches at SK8 Zone in Jefferson City, Mo., I looked up to see numerous, unfamiliar skaters gearing up in preparation for a night of scrimmaging. That is when it hit me that Beat Me Halfway (BMH) once again was upon us. Though I was there the night before helping mark out the tracks and prepare tables for vendors, it didn't feel like a real event until I saw the tape on the ground, helmets on skaters' heads, and the wheels in motion. I was truly excited to once again take to that grippy, coated-wood floor and skate my heart out for an entire weekend.

This year marks the third time I have attended BMH. And if my math is correct, that means I've been to every BMH so far. Every year has been fun, but I would say that BMH 2012 has been my favorite of them all. The atmosphere was the perfect mix of small/cozy and large/epic. The way this atmosphere was created can best be explained through a musical number that includes song, dance, rap, and jam skating.

Big-Name Skaters: BMH 2012 featured more nationally recognized talent than any BMH prior. I couldn't count the times I overheard someone say, "Hey, isn't that so-and-so from the (insert awesome team here)?" This gave the event the feel of a big-time roller derby convention. The reason that so many big-name skaters were at the event was because they were a part of the debut of Team Xtreme.

Team Xtreme: Team Xtreme is a national-level, co-ed, all-star roller derby team organized by Xtreme Roller Sports, LLC. Owner Shane Darby (aka Coach Spanx) served as event manager and co-producer of BMH 2012, and was instrumental in orchestrating Team Xtreme's challenge debut against Team Berzecker. Team Xtreme comprises some of the highest-caliber skaters in the U.S., including two of my teammates from the St. Louis Gatekeepers. As a chartered member of Team Xtreme, it felt good to walk around the event knowing that there was some hype surrounding the main event bout that I would be playing in. The game was a lot of fun, and I never took the track feeling unsure of the pack that was on the track with me.

Rad People: This factor is not unique to BMH 2012. There have always been rad people attending this event, but this BMH has

definitely been my favorite experience to date. It was great to be able to hang out with and skate with/against people who I normally only see when I travel, or when there's a national tournament in town. Also in attendance were people I never have met in my life, many of whom I formed an instant connection with.

The Parties: With rad people come rad parties. From the official "Zebras' Ball" to the unofficial hotel after-parties, the people at this event knew how to have a good time. With any great roller derby occasion comes great roller derby parties. One such event I always refer to is RollerCon. It is a perfect mix of skating and partying. And while BMH does not have the space (yet) to support RollerCon-sized parties, I do wish the nights could have been a bit longer. However, my Sunday night did stretch out until 6 a.m., thanks to Springfield's Capital City Hooligans.

All of these factors combined to make BMH 2012 a truly special event. It was a fitting end to the first saga of BMH at its original Jefferson City location*, and I will remember it for the rest of my days. I am interested to see how next year's event plays out. The new venue will surely affect the atmosphere, but I'm hoping (and predicting) that it will change it for the better, even if this year made that a tough goal to meet.

* BMH 2013 will be held at a new venue: Cowan Civic Center in Lebanon, MO.

Although many St. Louis and central Missouri skaters can boast of having attended BMH consecutively since 2010, many of our most enthusiastic patrons attended their first BMH event in 2012. Some of the Midwest region's newest kids on the block are the Springfield, Illinois Capital City Hooligans. Hooligan David "D Mouthful" Metcalfe offers an earnest and heartfelt testimony to the joys of his BMH experience this past fall.



GOLD BRICKS

By D Mouthful

Trying to pick out your favorite gold brick at Fort Knox would be easier than picking out my favorite part of Beat Me Halfway 2012. A good chunk of our brand new league, along with some of our sister skaters, made it out to Jefferson City, Missouri, and we were blown away! The clinics were run by all-stars such as Quadzilla, Pitchit, Spanx and Meow Mix – legends who make us starry-eyed. And they were run well. Within five minutes of the two-to-four hour clinics, you were drenched in sweat!

The depth of knowledge was incomparable. Not only did they run our happy little butts off, but they drilled into our heads the whys of what we were doing, and the hows of implementing each facet of our training into game play. For someone who had zero bout/scrimmage experience prior to BMH, this was very important. Quadzilla hammered on stops and spins, Magnum built our avoidance, Coach Spanx made our feet fast, and Pitchit gave us the strategy to put it all together.

When the scrimms started, it was like a derby programmer had uploaded a different player into my head! Never would I have imagined that it would all come so naturally, yet it wasn't natural at all; it was the result of world class training and guidance from every coach, skater, and the derby rich environment that encouraged us all to push past our limits. That was Beat Me Halfway 2012.

As BMH grows, so does its scope of participants. BMH 2012 saw its first international skater in Tigre Force, who hails from the Helsinki Roller Girls in Finland. Tigre's stateside roller derby encounters have been extensive, ranging from visits to Rat City and Oly Rollers practices to participation in Rolling Sturgis, a burgeoning derby event that has risen in the common spirit of events such as RollerCon and BMH. Her letter takes us back to 2010 at RollerCon, ending up at BMH in 2012.

Photo 1: Black Market Baby Photo 2: Creeper, Meow Mix Photo 3: Creeper, Quadzilla, Nuke'em, Meek, Sir Nixalot Photo 4: Vyolent GriMm, Hannah Barbaric Photography by David Strong and Bob Dunnell

(Beat Me) Halfway Around the World

By Tigre Force

I am Tigre Force. I skate for Helsinki Roller Derby and love my team to death, but I've got one weakness: traveling. I fell in love with USA when I attended RollerCon in 2010. We visited Los Angeles for a week with my teammate Ice-S StoneArm before driving to Vegas, had a fun practice with the LA Derby Dolls and got to try out banked track.

RollerCon was an experience that got me hooked up with roller derby for life. I made a lot of connections in there, met my close friend Danger Girl (founder of Rolling Sturgis and Black Hills Wildfire), invited Hunter S. Toss'Em (Rat City Rollergirls referee) to Helsinki and the list goes on.

After a year, I came back and traveled around USA for two months. Got to skate with Oly Rollers, Rat City, Rocky Mountain and Denver Roller Dolls to name a few, went to 9 different states and learned a ton to get ready for the first Roller Derby World Cup in 2011. Team Finland (on which I was the assistant coach and a skater) was placed 5th out of 13 teams.

In 2012 I returned to the USA twice. Earlier in the year I got to see a men's derby triple-header in Fargo, ND. Men's roller derby is still taking its first steps in Finland, so it was good to see the level of men's gameplay in the US.

Recently the eye-opening and unforgettable event that I attended was the Beat Me Halfway co-ed boot camp in Jefferson City, Missouri. I didn't know what to expect when I got the invitation from Coach Spanx via Danger Girl. So far, I had been to 17 states, met the best leagues in the US, played against Team USA, and attended who knows how many boot camps around the world. Yet still, this event blew my mind.

The basic structure of each day was 1-3 clinics from the morning until afternoon, and non-

stop mini scrimmages all the way until the end of the night. Meaning, you might skate as much as you physically could. For three days in a row. The bootcamp's clinics and scrimmages were taught and played by the new WFTDA rules. However, there was a scrimmage played by MADE rules as well. Quadzilla was there to pump up our agility skills, Streak and Meow taught some fancy footwork and basics of jam skating, Magnum p.i.m.p. broke in some new drills that will help all the participating skaters and their leagues to kick some serious ass in their upcoming season. Pitchit (is it ok to include a heart in here?) was whooping ass at two Default Strategy clinics (These were the loudest classes!), Coach Spanx made sure everybody moved their feet as they were blocking, and the cherry on the top was to watch Team Xtreme (national all-star co-ed team) beat up another all-star co-ed team called Berzerker.

The skating skill level at this boot camp was very high. It was the highest I've ever seen. Yes, there was a beginner class and yes there were novice bouts, but none of them looked like rookies on the track. The intermediate level was definitely advanced, and the advanced scrimmages were fast, tough, rough and awesome! If you are not a fan of slow derby, Beat Me Halfway is your kind of a bootcamp. If you like to get your ass kicked and get inspiration from the fastest and strongest female and male skaters in the States, and push yourself to the max, go to BMH 2013.

With the experience I got from the three years I've been doing roller derby, this was absolutely my favorite boot camp. I made some new friends, got another magnet to put on my huge US map, and am planning my next trip to Missouri. I heard it's going to be amazing.

Whether attending BMH for your first time or returning for your annual pilgrimage, you are sure to have a unique roller derby experience that goes beyond the track and into the heart of what roller derby culture is all about. Co-ed roller derby fosters a socially inclusive atmosphere within a socially exclusive (and, at times, elitist) fringe-sport society. BMH breaks down the walls that separate legendary veterans from fresh meat novices. To say, "There are no rock stars at BMH," would

be inaccurate. At BMH, we are all rock stars, each taking our turn on stage at one giant, weekend-long show. Any skater who has passed the minimum skills test requirements and is comfortable skating with members of the opposite gender has full access to what this event has to offer. This commitment to the spirit of equality and inclusiveness is the golden kernel responsible for the greatness that BMH is and will continue to be. ■

For information on BMH 2013, go to www.BeatMeHalfway.com

From LION to ZEBRA

A TRANSITION FROM SKATER TO REF

By Stormy Trooper

I am often asked what it is like to become a skating referee after having been a derby skater for eight years. I honestly can say that I truly love it. As a former competitor, I was already familiar with the rules (or at least as familiar as any skater should have been). Therefore, no major studying was needed, aside from the occasional brush up, especially when a new rules revision would come out.

As a ref, I get to come to practice and skate without the hassle of attendance requirements and the burden of monthly dues. Many refs will tend to meet just the minimum attendance and participation

requirements necessary to maintain their position in the league. But I have always felt that refs, like skaters, need to hone their skills — and not just skating skills. Refs need to practice knowing what to look for in the pack and clarifying the numerous questions skaters have regarding the specifics of the rules.

Best of all, refs get to skate every jam, and Team Zebra almost always wins the game. When we don't win, it's best to start developing that tough outer skin to deal with both skater and audience opinions. A referee mentor once told me, "Boooooo' is how the audience cheers for the officials."

I have had the opportunity to travel all over the Midwest, from Texas to Nebraska, Nevada, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and almost everywhere in between. I have been given the opportunity to officiate men's, women's, juniors', banked track and flat track derby, as well as assist in the creation of the USA Roller Sports (USARS) rule set. None of these things would have been possible as a non-officiating skater.

Sometimes I am asked if I miss being part of a team. The way I look at it, I am still on a team — a really big team that constantly changes with each and every bout. Team Zebra has its own game strategy and its own verbal and nonverbal language. We refs have our own inside jokes. (How many refs sing the color song at halftime?) Like any team, we have teammates performing at an elite level and those who fall as the weakest link. However, we always back each other up. We don't get the applause and rarely get the thank-yous and handshakes. Usually, at the end of the game, Team Zebra just rolls away into the mist. We typically sit by ourselves at the after-party and often hear how Team X would have won if not for the bad calls. As refs, we have to stand by our calls and usually spend most of the time explaining ourselves. It's all part of belonging to Team Zebra.

One of the best parts of becoming an official is that I have been given the opportunity to help create a network of skating



Photography by Ken Mitchell and David Strong



Hugh Jorgan skates with the St. Louis Gatekeepers and considers himself a “nomadic ref.” On reffing: “I enjoy working with new officials who want to learn and love seeing that ah-ha moment when a rule or call they have been struggling with clicks.”



Dr. Frank-N-Zebra refs for the Springfield Rollergirls and CoMo Derby Dames and skates as Samawry for CenMo Roller Derby. On reffing: “As a ref, I can do my best to make sure the game is safe and fair for everyone involved.”



Danarchy, who recently retired from derby, skated for a year with the Cowtown Butchers and reffed flat track and banked track for four years. On becoming a ref: “I was swept up into a small grassroots league and didn’t think much of it at the time. Before I knew it, roller derby was everything to me.”

referees and non-skating officials (NSOs) called Damaged Goods Officials. We have developed independent training programs, raised funds to help compensate for travel expenses, and continue to provide a support system for leagues across the Midwest. The most significant accomplishment of Damaged Goods has been the inception of the annual Zebras’ Ball held during the Beat Me Halfway event in Missouri. The Zebras’ Ball is a way for the derby community to celebrate and show appreciation for officials who put in hard work each and every season. The Zebras’ Ball features raffles and giveaways,

music and a bar. We also present the Espresso Award, which is named after Espresso, who was a Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) referee associated with the Kansas City Roller Warriors and Men’s Roller Derby Association (MRDA) skater with the Cowtown Butchers. Espresso passed away in 2011 during a Butchers practice. The award is given to an official who exemplifies excellence in officiating. Leagues can nominate either a ref or NSO they feel is worthy of the honor by sending their recommendation in the form of a short essay to: damagedgoodsofficials@gmail.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stormy Trooper has been involved in roller derby since April of 2005, when she started with the Kansas City Roller Warriors. She founded Dead Girl Derby (est. 2009) in Kansas City and skated with the Kansas City Banked Beauties from 2011 to 2012 until a knee injury forced her to retire from playing roller derby. Since then, she has coached the Cowtown Butchers (Kansas City’s MRDA league) and continues to work independently as a referee for various leagues across the Midwest. She is also on the planning committee for RollerCon, an annual roller derby convention in Las Vegas, and serves on the USARS Roller Derby committee. She is also vice president of Old School Derby Association (OSDA) and vice president of Damaged Goods Officials.

GATEWAY TO THE BEST

Drafting a Landmark Tournament

By **Screech Around**

Last October I had the honor and challenge of serving as chief organizer of the 2012 Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) Championships: Gateway to the Best (GTTB). Planning for GTTB began with a conversation that took place on the return flight from New York City following the 2011 MRDA Championships and soon took shape as a plan of action.

I am not sure at what point I actually agreed to take over as chief organizer on behalf of the St. Louis Gatekeepers, but I had no idea what I was getting myself into and what the coming year was going to require of me. As we began putting together the proposal, we agreed that GTTB had the potential to set the standard for what MRDA events can be. I wanted to make it better than the previous year's tournament (hosted by New York Shock Exchange), and I wanted next year's hosts to have to work their asses off to live up to the standard we set.

Organizing this event was like having a second full-time job. I would leave work and spend the rest of my night sending emails, creating lists and making phone calls. At every practice, I would talk to league members about their job descriptions and deadlines. Every bout and derby event that I attended during that period became a networking opportunity, and I viewed anyone I met who had ever planned a derby event as a conversation waiting

to happen. I would ignore the action on the track and pay careful attention to the venue setup and layout. From local games to RollerCon, GTTB was all I could talk about.

To this day, the hours that went into planning this event make my head spin. The Gatekeepers graphic designers worked their asses off. From the logo and website to the banners and stickers, they were working non-stop, punctually carrying out changes to the finest project details. I was certainly not anyone's favorite person when I would send a 3 a.m. text or e-mail requesting changes to a graphic on the website or an edit of the wording in the sponsorship packets. Our graphics department gave life to our vision and sold people on GTTB months in advance.

The two greatest challenges I faced in the course of organizing this tournament were fundraising and sponsorship. In the derby world, people like to wait until the last minute to follow through on commitments. With this in mind, I started contacting potential sponsors in February — eight months before the tournament — but it was not until the eleventh hour that the sponsorship moneys and donations actually began to arrive.

Derby often requires a do-it-yourself mentality, and GTTB was no exception; the entire production was managed, coordinated and executed by people from within the St. Louis roller derby scene. The finances, however,





were the crucial element that we were not able to provide on our own. The derby community does not have the deepest pockets, but the companies we support support us in return. It felt great to be in contact with representatives — many of them fellow skaters — from skate equipment companies such as Vanilla and GRN MNSTR. Not only were these companies supporting our event with monetary and material provisions, but their people were also supporting us with excitement and acknowledgement of the importance of MRDA Championships as a rapidly expanding, internationally recognized event.

As with any other sports league or athletics sanctioning body, MRDA's annual championship represents the pinnacle of achievement. This is the time for each skater to bring his best game and fight for the title of champion. It is the culmination of a year's worth of practice unleashed at last into a churning sea of blood, sweat and tears. However, the unique perspective I have gained from working as a central figure in the production of GTTB has helped me to see that there is so much more than meets the eye. Championships is the primary advertising tool for all of MRDA. It represents us not just as skaters with our respective teams, but also as members of the larger group. Interest in the sport of men's roller

derby is at an all-time high with new teams forming each month in countries across the Western Hemisphere.

Championships showcases the talent and dedication we have to our sport, but it also serves as our platform for establishing the legitimacy of our sport. MRDA roller derby grew out of women's flat track roller derby, which has enjoyed surging popularity and international growth for the past seven years and is showing no signs of slowing down. MRDA's decision to skate under the Women's Flat Track Derby Association rule set was forward-thinking. It paved the way for male and female skaters to see eye-to-eye and even attend each other's practices or play on recreational teams together. Unlike any other sport, women's and men's roller derby is stronger with each other, and this has everything to do with the culture element: We are each other's coaches, fans and supporters. The more we work together, the better it is for us as people and for derby as a sport. 🍻

Photo 1: Buster Mufinhaf, Zambone, B.S. Smacker, Jason Moseley, Megasoreass **Photo 2:** Starsky, Jonny Longhare, Ace of Skates **Photo 3:** Filthy McNasty, Debaucherous Prime, Willverine, Jonathan R, Double Excel, Jefferee **Photography by** Bob Dunnell and Jeffrey Bazzell

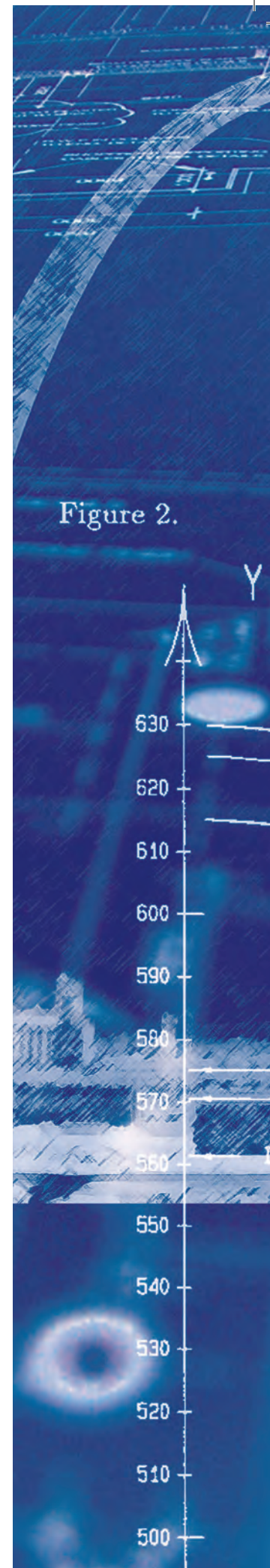


Figure 2.

Hockey Honey Speaks

WFTDA's most versatile athlete offers her candid thoughts on big toe stops, big hair and the direction of USARS roller derby.

Interview by **Elektra Q. Tion**

Photography by **Dave Wood**

What got you into skating?

I watched The Mighty Ducks and the women's roller hockey team at the Olympics. It inspired me to skate and compete. I also saw the '90s version of rollerball, and that was my first introduction to what I thought was roller derby. The players wore their numbers under their eyes, which is why I do it. It's my way of honoring my first experience with derby. All in all, I've been skating for 15 years. I've trained with quad skate hockey, jam skated and artistic skated. I haven't competed in speed skating. I'm very team-oriented, so I wasn't as interested in speed skating. But I experienced a lot of that when I skated with Oly Rollers, hailing from Olympia, WA, because many of the skaters there were speed skaters.

What have you taken from hockey that you feel has made you a better derby player?

I think a lot less about the track, and I think more about what I can do in the space I have. You have to be able to move efficiently in the space you have, not just be able to skate forward and turn left. I get a lot of my stops and starts and lateral movements from hockey, but I use my toe stops to do a lot of it. I prefer big toe stops, like the Piccolo toe stop or the Crazy Skates hockey toe stop, which is a little bigger. I do so much running on my toe stops, and I like the bigger ones.

I wish more derby girls were able to get into rink hockey because it has helped me so much in derby. In hockey, you do a lot of repetitive drills and focusing on your default strategies. In hockey, you use more systems, but I think derby is a little more unpredictable. It's not like you can control people the same way you can control the puck, so skaters need to be ready to fall back on the strategy they have practiced over and over again.

Not only do you skate, you also coach. Do you have any recommendations for other leagues to make their training better?

At the beginning of the year, you want your league doing each drill absolutely correctly.



I am a real stickler for precision, and you need to work on your skating skills. Then, as the year progresses, you want them to do each drill faster, and then harder. Sometimes derby girls can be kind of lazy, but they need to skate hard. Every practice should have at least 30 to 45 minutes of intense skating in it to build your endurance. You don't have to skate intensely for two hours, but you have to use your time wisely.

You also need to have your expectations clear from the beginning of the season for your travel team. That way they know what they have to do to make rosters. I do not hesitate moving a B-team player up to an A-team roster if that B-teamer is improving and showing up for practices when the

A-teamer isn't. They need to know that they always have to earn a spot, not that they have already earned it.

What kind of training do you do off skates?

I try to do weight lifting — light weights and high reps. I used to do heavy weights and fewer reps, but I got really bulky and I was slow on the rink. I also do high-intensity cardio, like super-intense-burst cardio. It's 20 to 30 minutes of sweating. I need to do more cardio because it helps with endurance. You'd be surprised how much just doing 30 minutes of cardio helps!

Do you have any suggestions for junior derby skaters?

When I worked for Atom Wheels, I started their junior program. We have to get kids skating derby, or we won't have a sport in 20 years. My suggestion to junior skaters is

to work on skating skills and agility. Derby is a lot easier when you know how to skate really well. When junior derby players are on the track, they have to focus on what they need to be doing two or three steps ahead. Nobody should just be skating in the pack. I know it happens in adult derby, too. Everyone should be thinking about what they need to be doing next.

You are on the board of USA Roller Sports (USARS) and have played in both the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) Championships and USARS National Championship. Which one do you like better?

I prefer USARS because it's an active defense versus a passive offense. I also gravitated toward USARS because I feel like it's more athletically focused than WFTDA, which I think seems to be more derby community-focused. I do think that the new WFTDA bracket system has been an improvement, though.

I like to play and play hard, and I feel that the USARS rules allow that. USARS also encompasses junior derby and men's derby, as opposed to WFTDA, which really hadn't until recently. I think that more athletic-minded skaters will join USARS in the future, especially if the USARS rule set will be adopted into the Olympics.





My only complaint about the USARS National Championship was that I felt the refs were calling penalties more from a WFTDA standard. The USARS rule set is supposed to allow the skaters the ability to skate. But because they brought many high-ranking WFTDA refs over to officiate, they were still calling penalties tightly. I wish USARS would have the confidence of standing alone without relying of WFTDA officials to step in, and I think that will happen. Eventually, one of these two rule sets will be the last one standing.

I have to ask you about your hairstyles. You're famous for them as well as your amazing skating.

I used to throw up before every practice, I was so nervous! I started doing my hair as a calming thing because in hockey you don't wear makeup, etc. It was to calm me down for derby. As far as the crazy hair, that didn't happen until this year. I was playing with the Arizona Roller Derby Tent City Terrors, and we were up against Rocky Mountain Rollergirls. Everyone was pretty nervous, so I thought it would be a tension breaker to do my hair big. The crazy hair can block my peripheral vision, so I have to be careful to put it behind my helmet straps, but the curls actually block my vision worse. People always want to know what I use to keep my hair looking like that the whole bout — it's Helmet Head by Chi.

This year was the year of Transfergate, which you were a part of. How do you feel about the whole situation now that you've had a chance to get some distance from it?

Well, seven months ago, I had quit Atom Wheels and was doing my own thing. I wasn't skating with Tent City Terrors because I couldn't make the practices. I was considering retiring, and Oly invited me to play. I knew Joy Collision had thought about moving up to Oly, but I didn't know exactly what had happened until the roster was announced. I wasn't happy about Atomatrix and Joy leaving Tent City to go to Oly, but I personally didn't get a lot of backlash from it.

I noticed that there was a definite division in the crowd support at the Gotham-Oly game at WFTDA Championships. Did you feel any pressure from the crowd?

Western Regionals was way more offensive. It wasn't the crowd that was against us, but other derby girls. It makes me sad to think of what derby girls said to us at Regionals. It really took the wind out of my sails. Some skaters yelled things at us. It got pretty obnoxious. Oly and I have a chill relationship. They want me to skate, and I skate. It's not about being best friends. This is an all-star team, not home teams. I think

that derby skaters and derby need to make a decision. Do we want to be professional athletes? I am on the side of wanting to be a professional athlete. The derby community got over Transfergate. They'll find some new drama to focus on next season.

There is a rumor that you are retiring soon. What would call you out of retirement?

Well, I wanted to retire this year, but I booked a contract game with Oly for this season. My team is still working on developing leadership on the floor, so I want to be there to help them with that transition. Also, we skated really well against Oly in the USARS National Championship. I am excited to see what will happen next time. I definitely will keep coaching, even when I do retire. If roller derby gets into the Olympics, I will definitely come out of retirement. I was on the rink hockey world team from 2007-2012, and we placed fourth in 2008. It was a huge honor, and I'd love to do the same with derby, given that kind of opportunity to skate at that level. I have to remind myself that I've met my goals for now in derby and there are other things in life I want to achieve. Being nominated as Blocker of the Year on Derby News Network was one of those goals, and I was nominated in 2011 and 2012. What an honor! 🍀

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FEATURE //

BEHIND THE SCENES: DOWNTOWN DALLIS

The first Roll Out cover girl, Downtown Dallis of the Arch Rival Roller Girls and Team Xtreme National Co-Ed All Stars, on training and overcoming obstacles

Written by **Mel Breakdown**
Photography by **Bob Dunnell**



Downtown Dallis is like a high school prom queen – one who can probably out-skate you, or even lay you out.

She's played roller derby since February 2009, skating for Assassination City Roller Derby in Dallas before relocating to St. Louis to join the Arch Rival Roller Girls. Dallis has played both blocker and jammer for the Smashinistas (her home team) and the Arch Rival Roller Girls All-Stars (the league's WFTDA charter team). During the 2011 season, she racked up more than 440 points in sanctioned games as a debut jammer. Her skills have landed her sponsorships from Xtreme Roller Sports, Atom wheels and SISU (formerly Protec) mouth guards.

After giving birth to her little boy, Gage Kincade Meyer, June 21 of this year, Dallis is eager to rejoin Arch Rival in time for playoff season.

"I petitioned for the all-star team charter two weeks post-op," she says. "It was quite ambitious, but I am heading into playoff season with no expectations and a fresh start in regards to training."

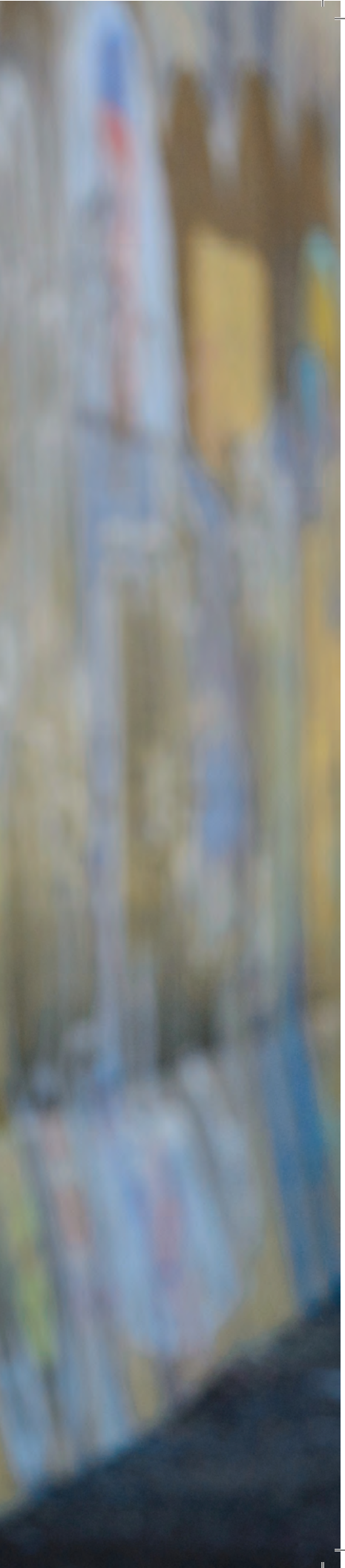
During pregnancy, Dallis focused on maintaining her strength by lifting low weights at high reps. She also maintained a presence at Arch Rival events and practices and stayed on as bench coach of the St. Louis Gatekeepers. Now, losing her baby weight through nursing and long walks with Gage, she is ready to resume training.

Returning to derby post-Cesarean will not be her first uphill battle with her body. While she might make roller derby look effortless, Dallis has struggled with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) for the past two seasons. She was diagnosed with the chronic disease, which leads to inflammation of the joints and surrounding tissues, in 2011. The condition has been a huge hurdle, causing various joint dislocations from the beginning of the 2012 season to the playoffs.

"I would show up scatter-brained to practices and games with a 100-degree-plus fevers and locked joints," Dallis explains. "I just felt void of any fire, confidence or motivation." Her teammates were a source of support and encouragement.

"This became a matter of mental fortitude that I had to learn"

"This became a matter of mental fortitude that I had to learn," she says. "I know of several women and men who overcome autoimmune diseases, or worse, and skate their hearts out with confidence. I have an incredible amount of respect for them, and it is very motivating. I'm still figuring things out, but a positive attitude, great doctors, stress management and a strong support system seems vital to thrive in this sport with RA."



Nonetheless, Dallis' pre-pregnancy training regimen involved going to the gym four to six days a week, and she advises other skaters to do the same. She has played football with the boys, surfed competitively, aggressive skated since middle school, and played every sport she could in high school and college. One of her keys is to mix up workout types.

"I love lifting, I experiment with fads, and I hate running," she says. "But I do it all. I belong to a gym but cash in on Groupons and Living Social deals all the time for ideas and variety. Within one year I was able to try spinning, hot yoga, boot camps in parking lots, tabata and CrossFit."

Diet is equally important. Dallis and her teammate, The Educator, made a pact to eat a salad a day for a season. "It felt amazing. You would be surprised what you can turn your body into, and you have total control over it."

She eats a lot of "superfoods," veggies and small portions of meat. She snacks on bags of spinach, snap peas and frozen red grapes at work. "Weekdays, I aim for a disciplined diet so I can splurge a little on the weekend," she confesses.

When Dallis isn't training to be the best skater she can be, she studies for her master's degree to become a nurse practitioner. "I love being a nurse," she says. "While caring for my dad, who has multiple sclerosis, I've seen both good and jaded nurses come and go since I was a kid. To me, this really impacted the way I wanted to practice. I have aspired to treat patients and also go on medical missions out of the country since I was a teenager."

If that weren't enough, Dallis is married to Magnum p.i.m.p. of the Gatekeepers. Can you say roller derby's Midwest Prom King and Queen?

"He is easy-peasy, and we love to keep it light, adventurous and fun," she says.



"We have a lot of respect for each other as individuals and skaters, and still maintain our own identities. He makes me purr."

The couple lives in St. Louis, where Dallis says the roller derby community is like family. "We both deeply love our teams," she says. "The 'Keepers welcome Arch Rival Roller Girls to their practices, and Arch Rival gals are the Gatekeepers' biggest fans. We are so fortunate to be able to travel together with our friends and do something we are passionate about. On a personal level, it is pretty rad to be married to your ultimate derby crush. He blows my mind with his skills, and I admire him deeply."

Fortunately, Dallis says that marriage to a coach causes only temporary tensions. "Whatever challenges we face, we always come out stronger," she says. "We are lucky to be able to communicate honestly and talk out the situations until we get to heart of the matter. We each know the other person always has the best intentions. At the end of the day, it's just derby."

How are there enough hours in a day to balance all of these identities? It's difficult enough for many skaters to handle derby along with other life stresses. Dallis combats

this by trying to focus on one task at a time.

"Otherwise, I look at everything on my plate and become overwhelmed," she says. "Roller derby and training at the gym is an awesome release for me, physically. Watching sports and highlights is a daily routine to decompress at home. Last but not least, girl time. My friends know how to party."

The Educator, who skates with Dallis on both the Smashinistas and the all-star team, says being friends outside of derby helps them work together and give each other feedback on the track.

"We never take anything personally and just get our jobs done," The Educator says. "The greatest strength she brings to our team is her calm, focused, let's-get-this-shit-done, attitude. Our whole team thrives on her positive energy."

Dallis also spends time outside and maintains a cactus garden. She uses music and podcasts from her old church in Texas to stay energized when working out, running and driving. Most of her time these days, though, is spent mothering her little guy.

"Motherhood is easy to embrace when you love someone so much and perceive it as a new adventure to take on," she says. "We look forward to experiencing the Legos, first pair of skates, zoo trips, bouts and ball games with him. Scott and I are fortunate to have a rad family that adores him and supports us maintaining our relationship and derby lifestyle that keeps us both happy."

During her time with the Arch Rival Roller Girls, Downtown Dallis has won numerous awards, including WFTDA August 2011 Featured Skater; 2011 Smashinistas MVP Jammer and Fan Favorite; 2010 and 2011 Sweetest Roller Girl; 2010 Arch Rival Best All-Star Pivot; and 2009 Assassination City League MVP, Most Athletic Body and Fan Favorite. 🍀





The Down Low on Downtown Dallis

The Midwest derby superstar talks tats, her tresses and tips on strategy.

Any tattoos?

I have a hot pink grenade on my right hip. Go, Smashies!

Is your hair real?

Yes. Weave jokes are rampant in our league because I get asked a lot by other skaters. I get tagged by my teammates in local tumbleweave sightings on Facebook as a joke, but it cracks me up.

Why the Union Jack helmet?

I had a skateboard with this as the deck art as a kid and was crazy about punk rock.

What is your biggest weakness?

Chips and salsa.

What is something uncool about you?

Movie-reference jokes go way over my head.

Besides Magnum, what skaters inspire you?

I admire Debaucherous Prime and Percy Controll. Both are hardworking and very talented with great attitudes.

Tips on how to be an effective blocker?

When you're done with one task, find something else to do immediately and avoid coasting in the back of the pack. When working with others in a pack or wall, be a good communicator. Push, pull, talk and keep it slow. Take up a wide stance and keep your legs loaded for anything to happen. Be aggressive. Make jammers panic and reroute their path. A good solution for smaller frames is strength training outside of practice. This adds a lot to your game.



NO REST

Mass Maelstrom of Lancaster, MA took the derby world by surprise, earning the No. 8 seed at the 2012 Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) Championships. Maelstrom's own Smiteochondria offers his perspective on one of the most thrilling ranking escalations in MRDA history.

Written by R. Taylor Pickering
Photography by Jeffrey Bazzell





The words reverberated around the crowded Midwest Sport Hockey complex as we completed our final pregame chant that defined the 2012 season of the Mass Maelstrom (Lancaster, MA, currently MRDA No. 6), “No rest until Valhalla!” Originally meant to pay homage to the hammer-wielding Viking that adorns our jerseys and his quest to reach the Halls of Odin, “No rest” became more than just a chant. It was the phrase shouted during every practice and every bout and quietly traded between players for motivation during times of difficulty. This season, it drove us to achieve more than most thought possible.

The 2011 season was less than glorious for the Mass Maelstrom, as a short roster and other difficulties left us with too few bouts to even be considered for MRDA rankings. However, an infusion of new blood during the fall of that year brought new hopes and high aspirations. The year ahead promised to be in stark contrast to the previous season with an unprecedented 13 regular season, sanctioned MRDA bouts — more than any other league in the organization. These bouts, combined with numerous scrimmages against men’s and women’s leagues in the area, served to further solidify our coordination and cohesiveness as a team. Each bout brought noticeable improvement in all aspects of our game play.

The first challenge (and my first bout) to the “new” Maelstrom came in early April 2012 against the Connecticut Death Quads (Waterbury, CT, currently MRDA No. 13). With roughly four months of practice together, our team was pitted against a league that had participated in the first Men’s Derby Coalition (MRDA’s original name) Championships in 2010. A very close game ensued with several lead changes and short packs, ultimately leading to a 35-point Maelstrom win, 207-172. Though the obligatory post-bout handshakes and trading of praises were present, many remarks from players and observers hinted at the great potential we had as a team. The bout served as a morale boost to start the season, but more challenges loomed as we looked toward the Spring Roll tournament (Fort Wayne, IN) in just one month’s time. Then we would be pitted against teams we had never played.

The Race City Rebels (Indianapolis, currently MRDA No. 9) were our first opponents of the three-bout weekend. The game simultaneously demonstrated how far we had come and how far we still had to go. Early penalty accumulation on our end met with solid play by the Rebels to quickly turn the first half in their favor. We managed to keep the deficit from expanding in the second period,



but ultimately the Maelstrom were handed our first loss of the season, with a final score of 168-135. The bout demonstrated we had much to improve upon and produced a rivalry that would become very important in the future.

The next day provided two bouts that were essential for keeping us in the running for championship considerations. A strong bout against the shorthanded but tenacious Sioux City Korn Stalkers (Sioux City, IA, currently MRDA No. 17) brought a much-needed shot of adrenaline leading into what would be our closest bout of the season — our matchup with the Rock City Riot (Fargo, ND, currently MRDA No. 11). The score remained close for the entirety of the bout leading up to the final jam, in which the recipient of lead jammer would likely win the game. We turned to an exhausted, but determined, Peter Rottentail with self-admitted “legs like jelly, man” to take the jam line against the formidable Rock City blockers. Quick footwork by Rottentail and strong defensive/offensive combo in Stryker and Jack Hammer’D allowed acquisition of lead jammer status and subsequent call-off for the Maelstrom, leaving the final score at 177-176.

Our next bouts would be the last two before mid-season rankings and pitted us against teams that Maelstrom had yet to beat, Pioneer Valley Roller Derby (Northampton, MA, currently MRDA No. 16) and the East Coast powerhouse New York Shock Exchange (New York, currently MRDA No. 3). Like many bouts before it, the match with Pioneer Valley resulted in a very close point differential, and lessons taken from Spring Roll proved to be a deciding factor as Maelstrom came out victorious, 165-148. The following week, the bout with New York showed what years of experience together and a pool of talented skaters is capable of, handing us an 82-201 loss. However, positive commentary from the likes of Jonathan R and Ace of Skates concerning our skill and potential boded well for our placement. Mid-season rankings came out in late June, placing Maelstrom at No. 10 in MRDA, so very close to the coveted top eight. With many games still left in the season and potential rematches with the Race City Rebels and New York Shock Exchange looming, our hopes remained high and determination unfettered.

A blow to our confidence came at the hands of the Harm City Homicide (Baltimore, currently MRDA No. 12) only a week later, as they handed us a 41-point loss. To some that signaled the proverbial nail in the coffin for our chances at Championships. We pushed forward, channeling any doubts or disappointment we may have had

into strengthening ourselves as a team. Communication and pack work took precedence during practice, and our teamwork continued to improve. Our efforts led to a very convincing win against Pioneer Valley, after which we looked to the Mohawk Valley Cup (Rome, NY) that potentially could pit us against both Race City and New York.

We first had to overcome a strong and upcoming league in the Capital District Trauma Authority (Albany, NY, currently MRDA No. 15). A hard-fought bout found Maelstrom on the winning side (231-74), setting up a Race City-Maelstrom rematch from Spring Roll, in which a win could translate into a ticket to Championships, and a loss could mean landing just outside the top eight. The bout proved to be both glorious and tragic as a major blocker and dominant voice in the pack of the Maelstrom lineup, Zed, sustained season-ending fractures to his tibia and fibula of one leg.

After twenty minutes of agonizing silence while the paramedics and Race City's Doc Flatliner prepared Zed for his departure to the hospital, the bout resumed. Shaken but determined not to let this setback define the day, we rallied together and took the bout 203-125, demonstrating we had come a long way since April of that year. However the weekend was by no means over, as we looked to our rematch with the New York Shock Exchange. With blue Z's emblazoned on our helmets and cheeks in dedication to Zed's sacrifice and as a demonstration of our unity as a team, we entered the bout ready to leave everything on the track. Heavy penalties and short packs in favor of the Shock Exchange, combined with their strong and consistent play, led to our fourth loss of the season, 281-

52, again highlighting that we had a lot of room to grow and develop. The weekend ended with Maelstrom taking second, with No Big Deal and Jack Hammer'D taking Jammer and Blocker MVPs for the weekend, keeping hopes high for our inclusion in the top eight.

Still uncertain but hopeful for favorable rankings, practices increased in intensity and frequency, driven by our desire to continue what was already a "Cinderella" season. Numerous scrimmages and two late season bouts against the Mean Mountain Boys (Burlington, VT, currently MRDA No. 20) and The Dow Jones Average (New York's B-team) honed our teamwork, polished our strategies and identified flaws that needed to be addressed. When official rankings finally came out in September, placing Maelstrom at the eighth spot, the euphoria and obligatory "F**K yeah!"s were quickly replaced with a renewed determination to show that we could play and be competitive with the strongest leagues in MRDA. We focused on our strengths and sought to minimize our weaknesses by tightening walls, improving jammer awareness and reducing penalties. The prospect of facing No. 1 ranked Your Mom Men's Derby (Des Moines, IA, currently MRDA No. 1) was both daunting and exciting, as it pitted us against some of the strongest skaters in MRDA and provided a chance to demonstrate our strength as a team.

We came to St. Louis as prepared as we could have been, and we entered our first bout with the determination and tenacity we had shown all year. Like so many times before, "No rest until Valhalla!" preceded the starting whistle, a reminder of how we play our game. Your Mom showed why they are ranked No. 1 with a decisive win of 201-98. Even though Your Mom may have won the bout, Maelstrom





certainly won the support of fans and players with our solid play and “No rest” approach, accentuated by the monstrous apex jump by Jack Hammer’D. Despite the loss, sentiments among the team were hardly negative, as we felt more cohesive than we had all season, leaving us in high spirits as we prepared for our next bout later that evening. With New York’s victory over Portland Men’s Roller Derby (Portland, OR, currently MRDA No. 7), our match was set, but our approach varied little; we wanted to play our game. Portland proved to have equal or even greater determination evidenced by numerous consecutive jams from Bruce Payne and powerful blocking from Carpe Demon. Back-and-forth power jams, brutal blocking, numerous penalties and even a dislocated thumb by Jack Hammer’D characterized the bout, ultimately resulting in a hard-fought and exciting Maelstrom victory, 169-157. This victory granted us a chance to play another day with our sights fixed on fifth place.

“No rest” again rang out as we prepared for our last bout of the season against consistently strong Puget Sound Outcast Derby (Tacoma, WA, currently MRDA No. 5). Early in the game, leads were traded back and forth with staunch defense and power jams coming from both sides. At the half, the score remained close. Locker-room talks by Stryker, Deep In Cider and jam coach Haley Contagious all emphasized: “Keep playing our game.” We returned to the track ready to show what “No rest” truly meant. However, strong jams by Wes Turn, No Big Deal and Cilantro combined with tight walls held together by Speeder Parker, MikeOPathic Chiller and Peter Rottentail weren’t enough to overcome short Maelstrom packs and strong play by the Outcasts. Even as the point gap widened in the latter portion of the second half in favor of Puget, we remained determined to play like we had all season, strong and together until

the final four whistles — with play that included the scaling of the rink’s plastic barriers by the impassioned Jack Hammer’D. While victory ultimately belonged to Puget Sound (221-137), we were deeply moved by the outpouring of support, praise and appreciation offered to us during the championship weekend.

We left St. Louis proud of our climb up the rankings ladder both during the regular season and in the final days of the play-offs, but having the chance to battle and trade high-fives with many of the MRDA greats meant much more than any statistical improvement. We returned home, ready to push ourselves and our team for what will no doubt be another amazing year for the Maelstrom.

Despite our storied season, we still have a lot of areas that need improvement. However, we will approach these challenges as we always have — as a team and with the tenacity that so characterized the previous season. We look forward to a year of culturing established relationships and fostering new ones with both men’s and women’s leagues through scrimmages, open practices and tournaments. We will continue to better ourselves and keep our game interesting and intense, for there is no rest until Valhalla. 🏆

Photo 1: No Big Deal, Mikeopathic Chiller, Belgian Awful, Wes Turn, Burnt Reynolds, Cilantro, Smiteochondria — at MRDA Championships 2012 against Puget Sound **Photo 2:** Speeder Parker, Smiteochondria, Bennar, Deep InCider — at Spring Roll 2013 against Magic City **Photo 3:** Bennar, Debaucherous Prime, No Big Deal, Smiteochondria, Magnum p.i.m.p., Percy Controll, Deep InCider — at Spring Roll 2013 against the Gatekeepers **Photo 4:** Mars Travolta, Deep InCider, Ruppert, Speeder Parker — at East Coast Derby Extravaganza 2013 against the NY Shock Exchange **Photo 5:** Cilantro, Smiteochondria, Stryker — at MRDA Championships 2012 against Puget Sound

*Some skaters have since changed their derby names.

BIG O 2013



The Big O Just got Bigger

One Oregon Tournament Kicks it up a Notch.

Written by **Jay Pegg** • Photography by **Erin Bourne**



The Big O tournament greeted its second year with a bigger venue holding not one, not two, but three tracks. This May tournament, co-hosted by Emerald City Roller Girls and Lane County Concussion, beckoned 24 teams to the impressively laid-back and floral Eugene, OR.

With the increase in size and scope, the tournament became a truly international event, hosting Canada's Terminal City Roller girls, Australia's Victorian Roller Derby League and England's Southern Discomfort Roller Derby. The western United States has long been known for its depth of derby talent, so there was a lot of interest in how the out-of-state teams would fare against the "local" teams from Oregon and Washington. As a trackside photographer, I had a front-row seat to the action.

The three-day, 36-game tournament consisted of five junior, 11 men's and 20 women's regulation games, with the schedule staggered so there were at least two games taking place at any one time. (That's a lot of skating!) The spread of teams was also impressive: from veteran teams such as Arizona Roller Derby's Tent City Terrors and Washington State's Puget Sound Outcast Derby to the newer Deep Valley Belligerents of Ukiah, CA and Sick Town Derby Dames of Corvallis, OR. It would take too much space to go through the matches game-by-game, so I will go through them by genre.



Junior Derby

Four junior derby teams were in attendance: I-5 Rollergirls (Renton, WA), Kitsap Derby Brats (Port Orchard, WA), Lava City Cinder Kittens (Bend, OR) and Emerald City Junior Gems (Eugene, OR). Hailing from Britain, where junior derby is almost non-existent, I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of performance, skill, strategy and gameplay. I must admit, I had concerns about juniors playing derby, but, after watching the juniors play at The Big O, I have changed my opinion.

The level of derby play by the junior teams was, quite simply, impressive. Watching the juniors fly into transitional hip checks, backward blocks and apex jumps was a revelation, as was the amount of heart they put into all their games. Heads never went down; teams never gave up. There was no fear, no quarter asked nor given.

However, I would have to say that the most impressive thing was just how derby smart the junior teams were. Their level of strategic understanding would put some adult teams to shame, be it with bridge busting, recycling, soul crushing, you name it.

The future of any sport rests with its juniors, and this is particularly true of a sport as young as roller derby. These four teams showed just how bright the future of roller derby will be. There were many impressive performances, but my top picks for the future would be Cinder Kittens' Ermah Gerd and Scruffy Nerd Herder, Aqua Knock You Out of Kitsap, and Reservoir Dolls' Beautiful Deadly.



Men's Derby

Eight men's teams came to The Big O: Lane County Concussion (Eugene, OR, MRDA No. 26, and a the host of the tournament), Arizona Men's Derby (Phoenix, MRDA No. 15), Boise Men's Roller Derby (Boise, ID, MRDA No. 21), Deep Valley Belligerents (Ukiah, CA, MRDA No. 8), Drive-By City Rollers (Los Angeles, MRDA No. 19), Puget Sound Outcast Derby (Tacoma, WA, MRDA No. 5) and Uinta Madness (Salt Lake City), along with England's Southern Discomfort Roller Derby (London, MRDA No. 10). The American debut of Southern Discomfort fueled a lot of speculation on how a UK team would fare against teams in the United States.

The 11 games showed that men's derby has matured as a sport. It was still fast and furious, with bone-crunching hits and spills and thrills. But there was also a huge amount of skill and talent on display, led by Puget, which emerged from the tournament undefeated.

Southern Discomfort showed that men's derby outside the United States can hold its head high, with respectable losses against Deep Valley and Puget, as well as a hard-fought one-point victory over Drive-By City Rollers — via official review, due to a player being sent to the penalty box within four whistles of the final jam.

It was also interesting to note that the much-maligned passive

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 Thunderstruck tries to intercept Southern Discomfort's Reaper as Ryrod looks on



offense seemed to be on the wane with defensive walls succeeding in frustrating jammers, especially with the changes to the track-cutting penalty in the new rule set. There was certainly lots of offensive sweeping and goating taking place during the men's bouts.

The depth of talent on display from all the teams shows that, despite being very much the junior partner to the women's game on the flat track, the men's game is on a sharp upswing both in quantity and quality. The Big O was a great showcase for the legitimacy of men's roller derby and its skaters, such as Arizona's Sidelicious, Milk Toast Boy of Uinta Madness, the inimitable Mr. Dick of Deep Valley Belligerents, and Southern Discomfort's Reaper. All mentioned had standout performances and are definitely worthy of keeping a derby eye on.

Women's Derby

Despite being a showcase for junior and men's derby, the backbone of The Big O was of course the women's division. This entailed 20 bouts over all three days with Emerald City Roller Girls (Eugene, OR, WFTDA No. 85 and a host of the tournament) being joined by Arizona Roller Derby (Phoenix, WFTDA No. 69), Humboldt Roller Derby (Eureka, CA, WFTDA No. 70), Sacred City Derby Girls (Sacramento, CA, WFTDA No. 28), Sick Town Derby Dames (Corvallis, OR, WFTDA No. 111), Silicon Valley Roller Girls (San Jose, CA, WFTDA No. 56), Fabulous Sin City Rollergirls (Las Vegas, WFTDA No. 43), Slaughter County Roller Vixens (Kitsap County, WA, WFTDA No. 101), Wasatch Roller Derby (Boise ID, WFTDA No. 27) and Treasure Valley Roller Girls (Salt Lake City, WFTDA No. 64); Canada's Terminal City (Vancouver, British Columbia, WFTDA No. 38) and Victorian Roller Derby League (Melbourne, Australia, WFTDA No. 31) filled out the roster.

Much in the same way that Southern Discomfort was the

Top: Speed Dealer has Downer of Deep Valley Belligerents close on his heels;
Right: Wasatch's Bruiser Ego gets up close and personal with VRDL jammer G-BangerW

unknown factor in the men's games, so was Victorian in the women's. It is worth noting they were not able to attend on Friday due to a conflicting game with Rose City.


Going into the tournament, Wasatch and Sacred City were the teams to watch, both in the WFTDA top 25, but that didn't serve to downplay the crowd's excitement for the other teams in the tournament. Humboldt in particular seemed to keep the audience on the edge of its seat, beating Treasure Valley by two and then losing to Sin City by three. Speaking of the audience, Wasatch brought a particularly vocal crowd, complete with a raucous, seven-foot-tall Sasquatch as cheerleader, much to the amusement of the announcers.

The award for the team that had the greatest impact, however, has to go to Victorian, who showed that traveling over 8,000 miles hadn't taken the edge off their game. The Australian squad went undefeated in four games, beating Sacred City and then Wasatch in a ripshorter of a tournament finale, with the decision in doubt until the penultimate jam. Indeed, Victorian seemed to make a habit of getting into penalty trouble early on in games and then digging deep to come back in the second half. In the end, Victorian emerged victorious, besting Wasatch 206-176.

To give proper recognition to everyone who played would be impossible, but Terminal City's Kim Janna, Demolition Barbie of Treasure Valley, Arizona's Luz Chaos, The 4 Closer of Sacred City, and Victorian's G-Banger all had outstanding tournaments.

Equally deserving of recognition as the skaters, the announcers and officials put on a sterling and well-organized performance, too. The tournament would not have been anywhere near the success it was without the hard work of the officials and, of course, the volunteers.

The Big O 2013 was three days of quality competition showcasing just how deep the talent pool is in the Pacific Northwest while also shining the spotlight on teams from further afield.

If a tournament can be as well-run and exciting as this in just its second year, imagine how great The Big O 2014 is going to be — or indeed The Big O 2020, by which time this year's junior derby skaters will be tearing it up on the track for their respective adult teams. I, for one, cannot wait. 



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Rolling Thunder

Eight MRDA teams battle for the top spot

By Star-Spangled Hammer

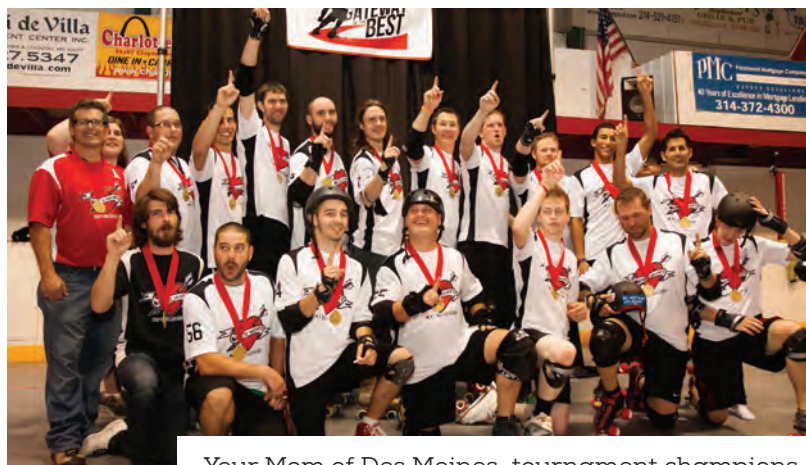
It was a brisk Saturday morning in late October when I pulled into the Midwest Sport Hockey complex at Queeny Park, in West St. Louis County. The sun was peeking just over the tree line as I made one last adjustment to my tie and put on my fedora. In just two hours, the 2012 Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) Championships, Gateway to the Best, would begin.

The top eight men's teams in the country were about to converge on St. Louis to battle it out for the ultimate prize. The crowd was beginning to gather, and at that moment, I realized I was about to witness a weekend of truly amazing roller derby.

The bouts began as Your Mom Men's Roller Derby (Des Moines, IA, MRDA No. 1) took the track against the Mass Maelstrom (Lancaster, MA, MRDA No. 8). The 9 a.m. start time did nothing to curb the enthusiasm of the growing crowd as the No. 8 seed put up one hell of a fight for the entire 60 minutes. In the end, the men from Des Moines proved to just be too much for Mass Maelstrom as the final was 201-98 in favor of Your Mom.

The spectator energy level remained high as the competitive matchups showcased varying skills and styles of play. This was especially apparent during the Magic City Misfits (Jacksonville, FL, MRDA No. 4) bout against Puget Sound Outcast Derby (Tacoma, WA, MRDA No. 5). The crowd went nuts as these two teams took it to each other. The clash of flash versus punishing, physical play, provided the spectators something rarely seen in roller derby. The two teams combined for more than 350 points, but in the end, Magic City out-skated Puget Sound and won by a score of 199-161.

Day two led to some highly anticipated matchups, starting with Your Mom taking on Magic City. The pitting of speed skating against jam skating was like watching a giant highlight reel as these two teams left it all on the track. Magic City and Your Mom are two of the most talented skating teams in men's derby, and they did not disappoint. Ultimately, Magic City simply had no answer for Frank Not Sohotra of Your Mom, who averaged nine points per jam as he led Des Moines to a 188-87 victory. The win secured a spot for Your Mom in the championship game.



Your Mom of Des Moines, tournament champions

Your Mom's opponent in the championship game would be the winner of the bout featuring the St. Louis Gatekeepers (St. Louis, MRDA No. 2) facing off against rival New York Shock Exchange (New York City, MRDA No. 3) — a battle between two of the most fundamentally sound derby teams in MRDA. The crowd was now in a fever pitch, as previous games between these two teams had been amazing. The Gatekeepers definitely had the home court advantage. Much of that advantage was produced by the ladies of the Arch Rival Roller Girls and the St. Chux Derby Chix, out in force to cheer on the local boys. New York drew first blood when Jonathan R scored two points on the opening jam, but they would hold that lead for only two more jams as the Gatekeepers took the lead on a 15-point power jam by Shanego Fett in the fourth jam of the game. The Gatekeepers never looked back. New



St. Louis Gatekeepers, second place

York would get close a couple of times, as they were down only 87-73 at the half, but the second half was all Gatekeepers as they capitalized on a series of jammer penalties to pull out to a huge lead midway through the second half. New York would claw their way back into the bout, but the Gatekeepers lead was too big, and the final was 199-167.

The third-place matchup featured a rematch from 2011's MRDA tournament as the New York Shock Exchange battled the Magic City Misfits. The arena was now packed to near-capacity, and the sound at times was deafening. The first half was all Magic City as they jumped out to a 33-point lead by halftime with the score 91-58. New York came roaring back in the second half though, and the crowd erupted when it took New York only the first three jams of the period to take the lead. Magic City was reeling, and the crowd sensed the turn of the tide as New York went for the kill and skated to a 199-157 victory. Like Roman gladiators, the teams served up a feast of ferocity that left the crowd wanting seconds.

Seconds is exactly what they got as the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds faced off in the championship bout with Your Mom Men's Derby and the St. Louis Gatekeepers taking the track. The crowd erupted during every great

play the Gatekeepers made. Your Mom had a rather large cheering section, but they were regularly drowned out by the boisterous St. Louis contingent. Power jams were the highlight of the bout as each team took full advantage of one another's mistakes. These two evenly matched teams traded leads on a number of occasions. Just when it looked like the Gatekeepers would hold on to win Championships on their home track, in front of the hometown crowd, disaster struck. On the very last jam of a back-and-forth game, a jammer penalty would send Magnum p.i.m.p. to the penalty box and hand victory to Your Mom by a single point, with a final score of 136-135. After the stunned St. Louis crowd recovered, cheers returned as the fans acknowledged that they had just witnessed a bout for the ages. 🏆



New York Shock Exchange, third place

TRAIN INSANE: **The Age Campaign**

Pointers for the
over-30 athlete

By **Ninja Sass'em** (Darci McAfee)

Roller derby is not a collegiate sport. The average age in my league is 32. Chances are you have teammates over 30 as well. Becoming an athlete at this age is not an easy undertaking, and I often ask myself, “Why couldn’t I have discovered this fantastic sport at age 20 — at 25 even?”

If you are competitive, deep down in your soul, you will not be able to escape the inevitable. This is going to happen if it hasn’t already — it’s coming. You are going to morph into a serious athlete. Not just the “oh I dropped 10 pounds and don’t I

look cute in my skinny jeans” athlete. No, you will become the “I’m going to start weight training, maybe start that Paleo diet thing and wow that CrossFit sure looks awesome” athlete.

Our sport is demanding it. The top derby players look and play like hard-bodied, well-oiled machines. And even at our age, we can join them: Quadzilla, born in 1971; Atomatrix, born in 1979; and even the legendary Bonnie Thunders turns the big 3-0 this year.



Atomatrix



Suzy Hotrod



Quadzilla



V-Diva



Percy Controll

Here are four things that will help you on your journey to becoming a fantastic aging athlete:

GOALS

You will not be given time to train; you will have to make time. This usually means giving up something else. Set short-term and long-term goals, and refer to them regularly. Know that you are in it for the long haul and there are going to be times when you cannot get to the gym or the track as often as you would like. Work trips, sick kids and other unexpected predicaments will trip you up along the way. Staying focused on your goals will allow you the grace of enjoying some time off, even when it may not be your idea to take it.

BALANCE

As you get older, work and family obligations will persist, but you should not sacrifice what keeps you healthy and happy. In my opinion, going to the gym or to derby practice should be your haven; it should be a place where you can reduce stress and regain balance and perspective. In other words, it should be therapeutic, not just a fun hobby. When it stops being fun, it may be time to reassess your goals.

CONSISTENCY

If you are able to start by training at least two fitness sessions per week (in addition to your regular derby practices) and maintain positive momentum, success will follow. On the other hand, the biggest mistake you can make is to set the bar too high and over-train. If you start by training two to three days per week, you can always add more later. If you start out training every day and then have to cut back, it can feel like a mental failure.

RECOVERY

Your body's ability to recover slows down naturally with age, so filling in the void created by age with healthy recovery methods now becomes essential. Half of that is diet, and the other half is sports medicine. Fueling your body correctly before, during and after your workouts is key to muscle recovery. Discover which type of healthy eating method — such as Paleo, vegetarian, low-carb, etc. — will work best for you, and then change the way you fuel your body. Additionally, spend time planning your regular tune-ups and repair work, such as chiropractic visits, sports massage and other therapeutic treatments. 🏋️



Pitchit



Bonnie Thunders



Annie Maul



Frank Not Sohotra



Merry Khaos

'Payne' In The Back

By Sum Mo Payne

Roller derby can be hard on your whole body. According to a study published in the Feb., 2009 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine, lower-back pain affects 80 percent of adults at some point in their lives. Taking proper care of your back ensures that it will continue to hold you upright. There are many ways to make sure that you are cutting down on the amount of abuse your body and back take while training. Stretching properly before workouts, bouts or skating will help get your muscles ready to work efficiently.

Your abs play a significant role in the amount of work your erector spinae (spine muscles) have to do. If you have a weak core, your back muscles will have to work overtime to compensate. Strengthening your core is vital.

In addition to proper diet and exercise, alternative treatments such as massage therapy relax stressed muscles and can help with roller derby-induced back issues. Chiropractic care is another effective form of body maintenance. If you have vertebrae or other bones that are out of place, this can affect skeletal muscles as well. The combined benefit of chiropractic care and massage therapy is healthful in all aspects of body alignment.

New skaters should pay careful attention to their skating technique. If your back hurts when you are skating, you are doing something wrong. Make sure that your abdominal muscles remain engaged. This will help cut down on back strain during the novice period of your derby career. All those left turns can be hard on your body at first. But if you stick with it, you will develop a method that works for you. Finally, stretching your back muscles and legs is important while your body is adjusting to its new roller derby movements.

Stretching

Proper stretching is essential in mobility and injury prevention. Find the stretches that meet your needs. Lower back stretches like this one can be beneficial for skaters of all skill levels.

Lower Back Stretch

Lying supine, kick one leg over your body and keep your shoulders on the ground.



Flutter Kicks

Lying supine with legs straight, elevate your feet about six inches off the floor. Then kick your feet in short, alternating succession.



Back Extensions

While lying prone, elevate your hands and feet a short distance from the floor; then lower them and relax. It is recommended that you hold this position in short intervals to start. With practice, it is possible to hold the position for extended periods.



Crunches

You can make these as easy or hard as you want: add reps, twist, hold a crunch, etc.




Planks

This exercise can be done with elbows off to the side or together on the ground. For a challenging variation place hands in the push-up position, keeping your back straight.



The major muscles that support the spine are the rectus abdominis, obliques, transverse abdominis, multifidus and erector spinae. Research additional ways to strengthen and stretch these muscles in order to better care for your back.

Chiropractic care, massage therapy and stretching, along with proper diet and exercise, will greatly reduce your chances of back pain and trauma.

In roller derby, our bodies are our tools. We must take care of them. 

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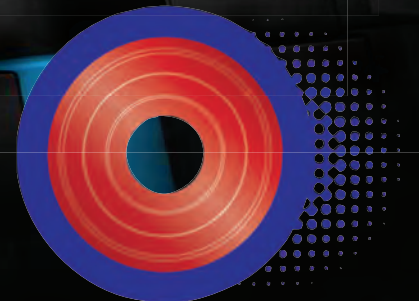


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