

Hurt Reynolds, Utility Infielder Extraordinaire

By Summer Assault (RCRG, DLF)

Q: How did you stumble into derby?

A: It's the same story for me as it is for a lot of derby support types. A few of my coworkers at a little Internet startup were among the earliest members of Seattle's Rat City Rollergirls. At first, I'd hear them talking about how they were going to do roller derby, which I vaguely understood involved skating, and I thought, "oh ha ha, yes, that's very hipster-ironic, that'll be a hoot." But then the weeks went by, and the months... and, damn, they are **always** talking about derby practice...

Q: Your contributions to the world of derby are all over the map, literally and figuratively. Tell us about your day-to-day operations and some of your favorite projects.

A: A: I usually have my fingers in a few different things. After a couple of years assisting Rat City with scorekeeping and production tasks, I spent most of 2007 on the road taking the measure of the growing roller derby scene and helping out in little ways wherever I could. Apart from writing about my travels on the Have Derby Will Travel site, my main contribution during this time was helping administer the WFTDA tournaments throughout 2007. RollerCon also garnered a bunch of my attention throughout the last three years.

Right now the DNN site at www.derbynewsnetwork.com is front and center. Justice Feelgood Marshall launched DNN in 2007 as a derby blog. I moved the bulk of my derby writing to DNN after I came off the road last fall, but the site really took off when Gnosis suggested merging his long-running Leadjammer.com site into DNN earlier this year. Since the June relaunch of the merged site, we've been off to the races... the hard part is just keeping up with the momentum!

My other major project right now is the Derbymatic bout results database. There have been several attempts to globally gather and organize data on bouts, but for the most part they've been a little overly ambitious in scope, and they've collapsed under their own weight. I'm pleased that the small volunteer crew behind Derbymatic has successfully created a manageable database of bout results, which now drives the bout listings at DNN and which we hope to make more widely accessible to drive other derby projects. Stay tuned for more information and calls for Derbymatic volunteers!

Q: What are your favorite derby names?

A: Molotov Cocktease is my all-time favorite derby name. She tells me that it's not original, but I prefer to believe otherwise. My other favorites vary, but currently it's Montreal's OMG WTF, Detroit's Effin' Money, Boston's Lois Carmen Dominator and Gotham's Em Dash. When moderating join requests on Yahoo's roller_girls group, I see several dozen new derby names per week, and usually there's at least once a week that I quite literally laugh out loud. I am here to tell you that we are nowhere near running out of good derby names.

On a related note, I'm beginning to get my panties in a bind about a new trend in names that are explicit, rather than suggestive. Part of the fun of derby names, for me, is that they're good for a clever giggle... they take you most of the way there, but you have to make the connection yourself. Seriously, folks, is it really necessary to go with "Anita Fingerbang"? Could you not also accomplish the same rhetorical goals with the suggestive, but *not* explicit, "Anita Finger"? It seems to me that the suggestive approach retains all the punch, but leaves a lot more room to maneuver and have fun with it.

Also: You kids! Get off my lawn!

Q: You have undoubtedly witnessed many acts of brilliant derby athleticism. Has there been a moment when you thought, "Holy shit, did I just see that? That was unbelievable."

A: There were a couple of instances at Dust Devil 2007 where, as far as I could tell, Snot Rocket reached the back of the pack, phase-shifted into another dimension, and then reappeared back in our universe at the front of the pack. She is crazy good, and we will miss her in retirement.

Before that, probably the first time my eyes popped out of my head were watching Goodie Two Skates jamming and taking the apex of the turn on a single skate in order to snake inside the pack but avoid a cutting penalty. Other skaters manage that feat pretty routinely these days, but the first time I saw the "Goodie One Skate" was a revelation.

Q: What are three things that you cannot live without when you are traveling for derby business?

A: Easy. Ibuprofen, Diet Coke, and Internet access.

Q: What is the most outrageous thing that you have seen a fan do?

A: Well, I've got to say that it takes a giant brass pair to dress up in a homemade banana costume and travel coast to coast spreading the derby mascot love, like Bane-Ana did this year. Likewise Scorey Feldman, who's been known to wear WCR blue body paint in places I prefer not to think about. And then there's Dumptruck. At first you're thinking, wow, that's, just, really? But then about halftime, you start to get him, and by the end of the bout you realize he's the greatest announcer in the world of modern roller derby. WORK IT OUT!

Q: If you were a player, what penalty do you think you would get called for the most?

A: Well, I would suck, and I would fall down a lot, so probably tripping.

Q: What are some unique ways that people can become part of the derby community off the track?

A: Wow, you name it. I've often said that I think the modern roller derby resurgence is possible only because of the recent

transformation in communications technology, be it email, free long distance phone service, yahoo groups, all of that. One key effect of the ease of communication is that it's dramatically easier for an interested person to bring his or her skills to bear on a project wherever they might best help. Follow the message boards, read for a while to learn the culture before you jump in with suggestions of your own, and most importantly, remember that today's all-volunteer, DIY derby is a not a place for big, fragile egos.

As an interested person, keep in mind that it isn't always easy for a local league to tell the difference between a potential valuable source of help, and a *crazy dangerous stalker*. You may very well have a lot to offer, perhaps including specialized skills like marketing or sound engineering or whatever, but your league will want to be comfortable with you before they start entrusting you with mission-critical volunteer tasks. You can develop that trust by leaps and bounds by offering to simply help with setup and takedown for a bout -- do not underestimate the value of pulling up tape when everyone's eager to get to the after party!

Q: Imagine flat track derby in fifteen years. How do you see it evolving?

A: Damn, I have a hard time thinking about what next summer is going to look like. The growth curve of the sport shows no sign of tapering off, and the Drew Barrymore film coming out next year seems likely to just blow it right up beyond anyone's imagination. I think the big question in everyone's mind is, will there come a time when a large number of skaters can quit their day jobs and do derby for a living? And if so, will the economics involved change the unique culture of the sport in such a way that it loses much of its current appeal? Everyone asks. Nobody knows. I am bullish on the future, but only time will tell.

Q: Derby differs from town to town, league to league, region to region. What is the one thing that is always consistent about a derby community, regardless of where it is located?

A: This might surprise you, but in my experience the opposite is largely true. On the road, I took to calling the phenomenon

"Different city, same conversation." Example topics include: "There are 50 girls in the league, but only four or five of us end up doing all the work"; "My league management talked a good game about by-skaters for-skaters democracy, but they keep making decisions and not involving the rest of us"; "I think our dues money is winding up in a shoebox and the league treasurer might be a coke addict and where is my money going?"

Here's the good news: I have yet to see a league that doesn't grow past themes like these. Sometimes it takes a major shakeup, sometimes it takes an organizational split, but that's the price we pay for the freedoms we gain through the all-volunteer, DIY approach we've taken to get here.