

Roller Derby making a resurgence

Posted by [Joy Shrum-Reporter](#) On 12/16/2016

Waldorf, MD- Roller Derby is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. The sport is not only making a resurgence nationwide, but all around the world. The fast-paced, high intensity contact sport, featuring mostly female players, is also growing in popularity right here in Southern Maryland.

Southern Maryland Roller Derby, Inc. (SMRD) is a women's flat track roller derby league and a member of the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA). The team trains women who are looking to compete on amateur national competitive roller derby teams.

The non-profit team was formed back in 2012 with five co-founders, including marketing director Rachel Harris, or "Rach Against The Machine" as she's known in the derby world. "My best friend played and she wanted me to play. I went to my first bout and I was hooked. I didn't want to drive to DC or Baltimore to play, so I reached out to others who might be interested in starting a team in Southern Maryland," Harris explained.

It's a good idea to break down some derby terminology to help better understand the sport. A bout is what most other sports refer to as a game. The bout consists of a series of short match-ups called jams. There are five players from each team on the track during a jam. Each team designates a jammer who scores points by lapping members of the opposing team. The teams try to stop the jammer while assisting their own jammer. The players are essentially playing offense and defense at the same time. There are blockers, jammers and pivots who design a strategy to stop the other team.

In an effort to teach players how the sport works, SMRD offers a derby boot camp. In Derby 101, it's all about learning how to skate, fall, balance, weave—the basic fundamentals of skating. In Derby 201, this is where coaches and trainers teach the skills of the game. They work on teaching how to skate in a pack and how to block—the physical contact of the sport. Once skaters complete both classes, they're invited to join the league. In Derby 301, players will then focus on learning the basic game and playing strategies.

While roller derby is a very physical sport, it does not discriminate. Teresa Robey, derby name "Wonky Donkay," joined the derby world at age 42. "My husband took me on a date night to watch Charm City Skate and I knew I wanted to give it a try. He bought me all of my gear for Mother's Day." Robey, who also serves as the league's secretary and trainer, loves the empowerment of the sport. "It's an amazing sport. You have women of all different sizes, ages, skill sets. You become very self-aware and it's a very all-inclusive sport."

SMRD takes their passion into the community as well. Each year the team selects a new charity and hosts several fundraisers and donates the proceeds to the charity. SMRD members want to serve as role models in their community.

Right now, there are 24 members of SMRD, but they're always looking for more. The next Derby 101 starts Jan. 9. Each class is six weeks long. Can't skate? Don't worry. Experience is preferred but not required. Think you're too out of shape or too old? The median age of the team is 38 and there are at least three grandmothers on the team. The minimum age requirement is 18.

Harris encourages women to give it a try, "It's better than therapy! You get the workout, the aggression out, you get the endorphins and the thrill of a contact sport."

If you're interested in learning more about the team, you can visit their website at www.somdrollerderby.org. If you're interested in working with SMRD for charitable and community involvement, you can email pr@somdrollerderby.org.

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