



Women's Flat Track Derby Association

2012 Media Kit



About WFTDA

The Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) is the international governing body for the sport of women's flat track roller derby, and a membership organization for leagues to collaborate and network. The WFTDA sets standards for rules, seasons, and safety, and determines guidelines for the national and international athletic competitions of member leagues. There are currently 160 WFTDA member leagues and 87 leagues in the WFTDA Apprentice Program.

The WFTDA, a tax-exempt organization, is governed by a five-member, volunteer Board of Directors and managed by an Executive Director and other professional staff.

Mission

Founded in 2004, the WFTDA promotes and fosters the sport of women's flat track roller derby by facilitating the development of athletic ability, sportswomanship, and goodwill among member leagues.

The governing philosophy of the WFTDA is "by the skaters, for the skaters." Female skaters are primary owners, managers, and/or operators of each member league and of the association. Operational tasks include setting standards for rules, seasons, and safety, and determining guidelines for the national and international athletic competitions of member leagues.

All WFTDA member leagues have a voice in the decision-making process, and agree to comply with the governing body's policies.



History of the WFTDA

The Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) began as the United Leagues Coalition (ULC) in 2004, consisting of a handful of flat track roller derby leagues, each owned and operated by skaters sharing the singular, driving compulsion to re-imagine roller derby as a modern sport.

In 2005, 30 flat track roller derby leagues were represented at the historic first meeting of the ULC, with the goal of developing the guiding principles and aspirations of the organization. Following that meeting, the ULC voted to change its name to the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) to reflect the organization's goals.

WFTDA opened its doors to new members in September 2006 and has since welcomed dozens of new member leagues into the association.

Major WFTDA milestones:

- 2006: WFTDA creates East and West competitive regions and develops a quarterly ranking system, used for tournament qualification and seeding.
- September 2008: WFTDA begins offering liability and excess medical insurance to its member leagues.
- 2009: To accommodate growth in membership, the WFTDA expands into four competitive regions and expands its playoff system to include 40 leagues competing in four regional playoffs and one championship tournament.
- January 2009: WFTDA accepts its first international member, Montreal Roller Derby
- June 2009: WFTDA hires its first paid staff members, the Executive Director and Insurance Administrator
- July 2009: WFTDA launches the WFTDA Apprentice Program to build prospective WFTDA member leagues into successful full members.
- June 2010: WFTDA accepts its first full member from Europe, the London Rollergirls, and forms Canada and Europe regions.
- December 2011: WFTDA accepts its first full member league in Australia, Victorian Roller Derby League
- 2012: The launch of WFTDA.tv, an online channel that offers live coverage of WFTDA tournaments and select competitions leading up to the fall tournaments.



Roller Derby by the Numbers

Women's flat-track roller derby has grown explosively over the past decade, spreading throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and numerous other countries:

- Women's flat track roller derby leagues in 2001: 1
- Women's flat track roller derby leagues in 2005: 50
- Women's flat track roller derby leagues in 2012: 1,100 and counting
- WFTDA Member Leagues: 160, in the U.S., Canada and U.K. and Australia
- WFTDA-affiliated Apprentice Leagues: 87, in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Who plays roller derby?

According to skater responses to the WFTDA's 2012 demographic survey:

- 59% of skaters are 25 to 34 years old
- 84% have at least some post-secondary education; 24% have graduate degrees
- 30% of responding skaters have children under 18
- 37% of skaters are married

Who watches roller derby?

According to fan responses to the 2012 demographic survey:

- 61% of fans are female
- 38% of fans are ages 25-34; 41% are 35-54
- 84% of fans have at least some college education; 22% have graduate degrees
- 27% have children under 18 in their household



A brief history of roller derby

The term “roller derby” dates to the 1920s, originally used to describe roller skate races. In the late 1930s, Leo Seltzer’s touring competition, Transcontinental Roller Derby, began to evolve from a marathon skating race on a raised track to a more physical competition emphasizing skater collisions and falls. This became the foundation of the team sport that still exists today: two teams of five skaters who score points by passing members of the opposing team. Both men and women competed in roller derby from its inception.

Seltzer’s roller derby events drew increasingly large audiences once the sport began to be televised in the late 1940s. In the early 1960s, after Leo Seltzer transferred his business to his son, Jerry, competing roller derby franchises emerged, some of which emphasized theatrics more than sport. As popularity dwindled, Jerry Seltzer shut down his Roller Derby organization in 1973.

There were several short-lived attempts to revive versions of the old sport in the 1980s and 1990s, including RollerGames, which featured a figure-8 shaped banked track and stunts like alligator pits. Some versions of roller derby, including RollerGames, included staged action and storylines, similar to professional wrestling leagues.

In the early 2000s, modern women’s roller derby got its start in Austin, Texas. Starting with the Texas Rollergirls, these new leagues formed as businesses run by the athletes themselves. The flat track version of the sport spread like wildfire in subsequent years, as the ability to mark track boundaries on a skating rink floor or other venues, rather than building and storing a large banked track, made it possible to play the game just about anywhere. By 2011, there were nearly 500 flat track roller derby leagues worldwide.



Frequently asked questions

What is flat track roller derby?

Flat track roller derby is a fast-paced contact team sport that requires speed, strategy, and athleticism. The flat track version of the sport evolved in 2001, and has quickly grown to encompass hundreds of leagues worldwide. This is in large part due to the ease of setting up a flat track--it can be done on any flat surface that is suitable for skating, such as skating rinks, basketball courts and parking lots. This greatly reduces the capital needed to start up a roller derby league, and allows small groups of people to get a fledgling league off the ground. The DIY spirit that drives the sport allows roller derby leagues to create their own unique identities and adapt their structures to reflect their local communities.

How do you play?

Each team fields up to five skaters per two-minute playing segment, called a “jam.” Blockers play both offensive and defensive roles in a defined “pack” on the oval track. Jammers score points for their team by lapping opposing players. Skaters may be penalized for committing foul. Teams skate short while they have one or more players serving a penalty. A team's full lineup for a jam consists of one Pivot, three Blockers and one Jammer:

- Pivot - The pivot blocker wears a helmet cover with a stripe on it. She generally serves as the leader of her teammates playing in that jam. The pivot is the only blocker who can switch into the jammer position during a jam, through the star pass maneuver.
- Blocker - The other three blockers do not wear helmet covers. Blockers may play offense and defense at any given time and frequently switch between offensive and defensive tasks. The rules do not differentiate the remaining three blocking positions from one another; however, teams may differentiate between the positions for strategic purposes.
- Jammer - The jammer wears a helmet cover with a star on it. She lines up at the second starting line and begins play at the second start whistle. The jammer's goal is to pass opposing blockers and emerge from the pack as quickly as possible. If she is the first of the two jammers to escape the pack without committing any penalties, she gains the strategic advantage of being able to stop the jam at any time by placing her hands on her hips. Once a jammer laps the pack, she begins scoring one point for every opposing blocker she passes legally. She can continue to lap the pack for additional scoring passes for the duration of the jam.



Why don't jammers score on the first pass?

The first pass is used to establish "lead jammer." Lead jammer is the first jammer to make it through the pack by passing her opponents legally and in bounds. The lead jammer gains the strategic power to end the two-minute jam early. The lead jammer is not always the first jammer out, and it is possible to have no lead jammer if both skaters commit a foul while trying to clear the pack. If there is no lead, the jam lasts the full two minutes.

I bet skaters throw a lot of elbows, right?

Not unless a skater wants to spend some quality time in the penalty box! There are plenty of legal ways to send an opponent flying into the third row but, to keep the game play safe and competitive, there are rules governing how and when players can make contact with each other. Throwing elbows, pushing or tripping opposing skaters, and "clothes-lining" opponents by linking arms with your teammate are among the prohibited actions that can earn skaters a minute in the penalty box. Like other sports, more serious offenses like fighting or intentional tripping can get a skater kicked out of the game.

Read the full rules of the game at wftda.com/rules

Why do skaters have nicknames?

Roller derby nicknames are a tradition that grew up with the modern version of the sport. Some teams and individual skaters choose to skate under their given names. Most new skaters view earning their derby names as an important rite of passage to indicate that they are full members of their league. Derby names are creative and fun and can either be tough or just plain funny. As amateur athletes, some skaters also prefer the relative anonymity of a derby nickname.

What is a WFTDA- sanctioned bout?

A WFTDA- sanctioned bout is a regulation match played between the chartered, or "all-star," teams from two different member leagues. These matches are reviewed by WFTDA games officials before they are granted sanctioning, and the results of the bout count towards the leagues' rankings. Due to differences in league structures, most WFTDA leagues also play non-sanctioned matches either between local home teams (members of the same league playing against one another), or between junior varsity "B" teams of less-experienced skaters from different leagues.

A regulation WFTDA bout consists of two 30-minute periods with a halftime break. One bout generally takes around 1 ½ to 2 hours, depending on the number of timeouts or other interruptions in play.



Latest news

View the most recent WFTDA press releases and recent coverage of the WFTDA and member leagues in our online media center: <http://wftda.com/media>.

Contacts

Still have questions? Contact us for more information about the Women's Flat Track Derby Association or to arrange an interview.

Kali Schumitz
Public Relations Manager
press@wftda.com

Juliana Gonzales
Executive Director
512-587-1859
juliana@wftda.com