

The Spirit of Central Oregon

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APRIL 2007

ROLLERDOLLS

Sweet by day ... wicked by night: Central Oregon's roller derby league

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SHAKE, RATTLE

Mild mannered by day but tough roller-derby queens by night, the members of the Lava City Roller Dolls muscle and perform their way around the roller rink

Name: Raeann Hrivnak

Team: 12 Gauge Rage

Award: Worst Injured

Alias: Rae Rae

Age: 30

Profession: Member service specialist at a credit union

Favorite thing about being on the team:

"The friends I've made ... and the fans."

AND ROLLERDOLLS

by KATRINA HAYS

photography by TOM AND TASHA OWEN



Name: Brianna Biscoe

Team: 12 Gauge Rage

Award: Brazen Broad

Age: 28

Profession: Former Marine Sgt./mommy
of two and full-time student

**Favorite thing about being on the
team:** "I love
all the friends I've made. My children love it, too!"

A band pounded hard rock music from guitars and drums as women flashed past me on roller skates. They came out of the darkness shaking their butts and bouncing to the music's beat. They threw candy to the audience and flexed their muscles and skated into the roller derby rink at Bend's Central Oregon Indoor Sports Center. The '70s were back again, but they were updated with tattoos and kinky stockings and a pink Mohawk.

When the competition started, mellow Rose Makena, head pastry chef at Broken Top by day, became a snarling Thorn, slamming fearlessly into girls twice her girth. Jammer Snowstorm, or personal trainer Melany Snow, flew through the clots of blockers so seamlessly that she seemed untouched by the scuffle—the "C-Ya" on the back of her skirt an affront to those left behind. The mighty Gunner, whose known as Claudia Cordiero at Jeld-Wen, effortlessly shoving lesser mortals out-of-bounds with her hips and shoulders, raised her arms and shook her fists at the crowd, and they roared with approval.

Two women in the audience looked to the rink, where Gunner threw a voluminous hip-check that sent Thorn sliding out of the rink on her side. "I think that gal had her outflanked," one of the women said to her companion, taking a swig of beer. They both laughed gleefully. "Wish I could do that!" one said to the other, whooping.

It's back! Like dodge ball and Wiffleball, the retro sport of roller derby has undergone a recent explosion of grass-roots popularity across the nation, and Bend's own Lava City Roller Dolls is a slam-bam group of girls on skates, ready to shake their booties and emote on the rink.

Name: Erin Schmidt

Team: Nerve Agents

Award: Best Blocker

Alias: Buxom Booty

Age: 31

Profession: Medical assistant

Favorite things about being on

the team: "I get to put

my skates on again! I put them

away when I was 12, and I got to

dust them off and start to use

them again at 30. It

was an out-of-body

experience."



Roller derby is an easy game to understand. Each team has five players on the rink at one time. One skater for each team, the jammer, must skate through a pack of four blockers within two minutes to score points, receiving a point for each opposing blocker passed. The team with the most points at the end of three 20-minute periods, wins.

Roller derby is a hybrid of athleticism, exhibitionism, sportsmanship and spectacle. Its competitions, or bouts, provide the audience with a stimulating spectacle of bright lights, pounding music and flashy costumes, plus physical displays of grace, power, team spirit and rivalry. And these days roller derby is played for the most part by women.

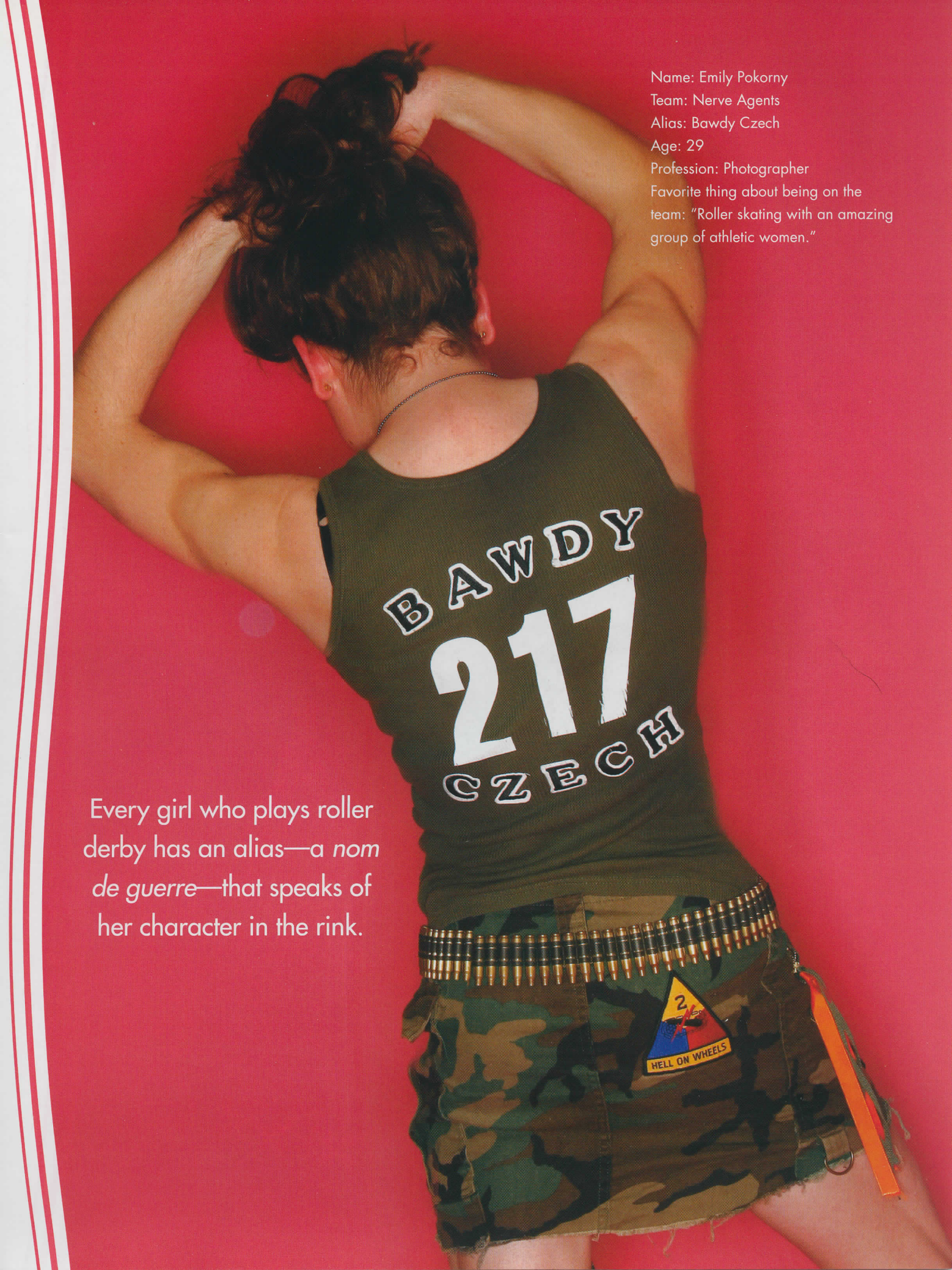
"In here, I'm La Rita Loca. Out there, I'm Michele," said Michele Dungan, 39, a small, woman with calm eyes and a sweet smile, who works in the legal profession.

Every girl who plays roller derby has an alias—a *nom de guerre*—that speaks of her character in the rink. Those characters are often very far removed from the public faces these skaters wear outside the rink. The names (Dame Deviant, Bawdy Czech, Mean Satine, Va Voom) don't refer to the daytime librarian, restaurateur or nurse, rather they are the alter egos rolling in with skates, helmets and mouth guards at the ready.

"I'll take off my skates, walk out to my car and think, 'What just happened? Who was that in there?'" said Dungan with a laugh. "You know, I don't even know most of the girls' real names."

Roller derby skaters never refer to themselves as women. It's all about the "girls."


The Lava City Roller Dolls is a flat-track roller derby league made up of about 30 women who are divided into three teams. The teams—Moulin Bruise, Nerve Agents and 12 Gauge Rage—each have 10 to 15 skaters and a strong team identity. Moulin Bruise skaters, for instance, sport electric-blue corsets and ruffled cancan-style panties. The Nerve Agents are outfitted in camouflage and neon-orange headbands underneath their helmets, while 12 Gauge Rage deck themselves out as whiskey-drinkin', gun-totin' mammas with cut-off jeans



Name: Emily Pokorny
Team: Nerve Agents
Alias: Bawdy Czech
Age: 29
Profession: Photographer
Favorite thing about being on the team: "Roller skating with an amazing group of athletic women."

Every girl who plays roller derby has an alias—a *nom de guerre*—that speaks of her character in the rink.

Like its 1970s ancestor, roller derby is a balance between brutal athleticism and tongue-in-cheek theatrics.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a green and brown camouflage tank top and a matching skirt, poses against a red background. She has her fists clenched and is smiling broadly. She wears a black dog tag on a chain around her neck and a belt with a row of black and gold bullets. Three gold stars are visible on the lower right of her skirt. Orange and red ribbons are tied around the waist of her skirt.

Name: Dusty Mink
Team: Nerve Agents
Award: Most Dedicated
Alias: Psy-Clone, Team Captain
Age: 31
Profession: Personal trainer
Favorite thing about being on the team:
"Breathing new life into a vintage sport, being part of a team and finding the athlete in myself and each other."

and sleeveless flannel shirts.

Like its 1970s ancestor, roller derby is a balance between brutal athleticism and tongue-in-cheek theatrics. The bottom line is that the girls are athletes and actresses in a crude sort of way.

The audience is as much a part of the show as the skaters. At a recent bout between the Nerve Agents and Moulin Bruise, the sports center was transformed from a bright, soft-blue practice area to a darkened arena. The sold-out audience bordered the tight competition oval on its sides, sitting close enough so that skaters thrown down or shoved out of the rink came perilously close to sliding into the spectators.

"You search your whole life for girls you can trust, who have your back," said Mighty Muff (Chrissy Kinslow, 37, who works at Hutch's Bicycle Store). "Since I've started doing derby, I've found a bunch of powerful women that I just love. I tell you, we inspire each other."

Moulin Bruise led through most of the bout but were overcome by the Nerve Agents in the final minutes.

The Dolls have league practices at the Central Oregon Indoor Sports Center and invited me to skate with them. I expected to slide around a skating rink while showing off my balance and grace. (I am a Nordic skate-skier and accustomed to going fast while balanced on top of a two-inch-wide ski.) I also had Jim Croce's song "Roller Derby Queen" running through my head. "She's my big blonde bomber, my heavy-handed Hackensack mama," I hummed as I laced up low, four-wheeled speed skates and put on kneepads, wrist guards, elbow guards and a helmet.

A vague memory of watching late-night TV roller derby as a kid left me with an impression of the sport being a type of rolling WWF for chicks—tacky and boring, with huge, sweaty women bashing into each other in absurd antics on roller skates.

The indoor sports center holds a big,

Name: Chrissy Kinslow

Team: Moulin Bruise

Award: Crowd Favorite/Best Pivot

Alias: Mighty Muff/Captain

Age: 37

Profession: Artist/Bicycle Guru

Favorite thing about being on the team:

"I love anything on wheels—if it rolls, I roll.
I heart Moulin Bruise."





Name: Rose Makena

Alias: Thorn

Age: 29

Profession: Pastry Chef

Favorite thing about being on the team: "Being able to totally get away with being physical, outrageous, loud, sexy and fun—while I'm getting a work out."

powder-blue skating rink surrounded by Plexiglas. Husbands and boyfriends watched the skaters as they sped around the rink. Babies snoozed in car seats on the bleachers, and small children threw balls back and forth. The light was bright and, as I watched, Coach BeeP! (Jonathan Beutler, 34, an emergency psychiatric nurse at St. Charles Medical Center) blew a whistle. The crowd of 22 skaters smoothly switched to moving in the opposite direction, some skating backward, some bent over in a classic speed-skating pose, lap after lap. They were moving really, really fast, the quickest skaters lapping the obvious beginners.

As I stood up rather shakily from the bench, Psy-Clone zipped over to me with flushed red cheeks and freckles, and a long blonde ponytail tossed over one shoulder. Psy-Clone, or Dusty Mink, 31, started the Lava City Roller Dolls along with fiancé Beutler just last year.

"We had friends in Portland who have a league," Mink said, as she paused from gulping down water. "I got a group of friends together here and started asking if they would do roller derby with me. They said 'yes,' and we started to practice and pull our own league together. It's just really taken off."

The Dolls have skaters ranging in age from 18 to 43. The league also welcomes women who have never skated and have no idea what the sport of roller derby really is.

As I found out the evening when the Dolls invited me to skate with them, roller-derby skills include not only skating, but also falling and getting up fast, jumping, balancing on one foot, skating shoulder-to-shoulder, shoving and having people grab you and slingshot you around and ahead of them. (It takes about three months to get completely comfortable with all the maneuvers needed to skate in a roller-derby bout.)



Name: Christine Huber

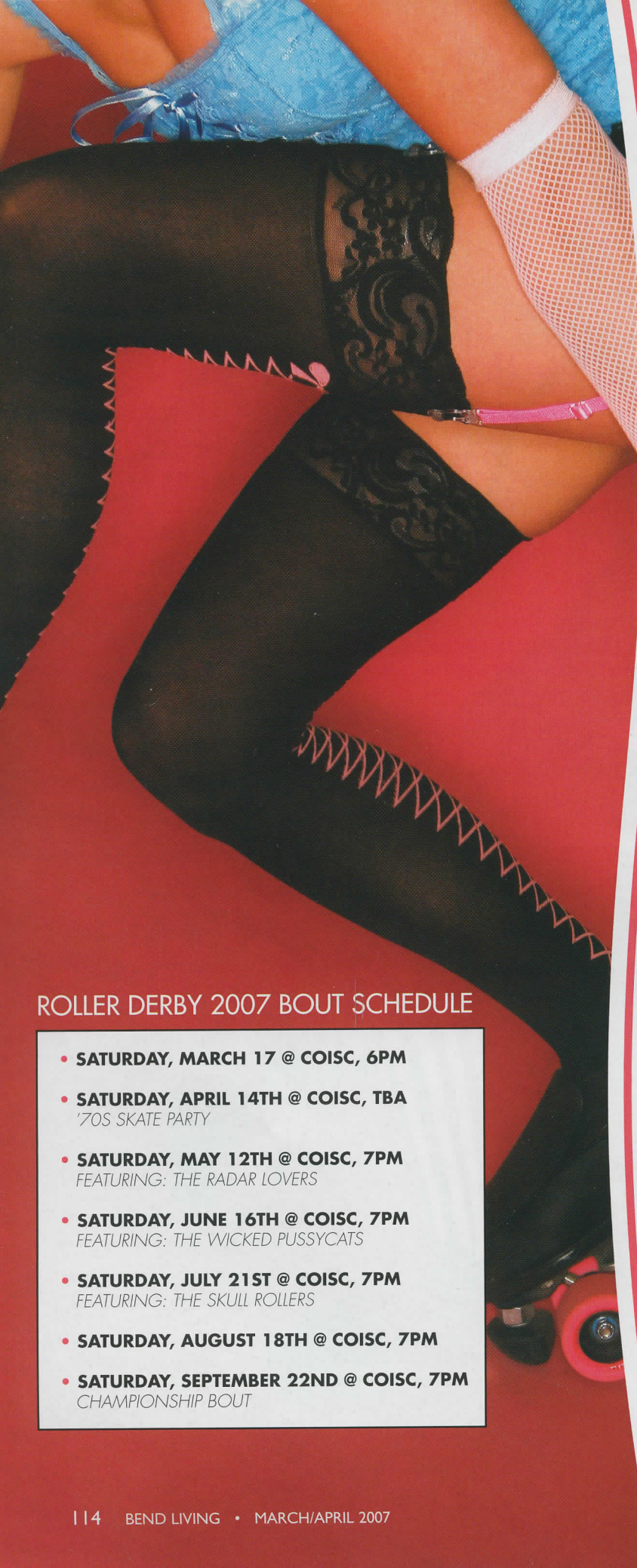
Team: Moulin Bruise

Alias: Stinker Bell

Age: 30

Profession: Artist


Favorite thing about
being on the team: "Skating with so many awe-
some women."



ROLLER DERBY 2007 BOUT SCHEDULE

- **SATURDAY, MARCH 17 @ COISC, 6PM**
- **SATURDAY, APRIL 14TH @ COISC, TBA**
'70S SKATE PARTY
- **SATURDAY, MAY 12TH @ COISC, 7PM**
FEATURING: THE RADAR LOVERS
- **SATURDAY, JUNE 16TH @ COISC, 7PM**
FEATURING: THE WICKED PUSSYCATS
- **SATURDAY, JULY 21ST @ COISC, 7PM**
FEATURING: THE SKULL ROLLERS
- **SATURDAY, AUGUST 18TH @ COISC, 7PM**
- **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22ND @ COISC, 7PM**
CHAMPIONSHIP BOUT

I eased onto the rink, feeling wobbly and unsure. I slowly skated around the track, wondering where my grace and balance had gone. While I staggered around the edges, the girls divided themselves into teams and started practicing their game skills in a tight formation in the center of the competition oval.

With every vulnerable stride I took, my regard for the sport of roller derby grew. The oval was a circle of trust, where Mighty Muff once said, your teammate's got your back. And if your teammate's not watching your back in the Lava City Roller Dolls league, you can bet that all the beer-imbibing audience members will be watching the rest of your backside ... until you land on it. 

Regular contributor Katrina Hays has written about chefs, ghosts and triathletes in recent issues of BEND LIVING.

INFO

Lava City Roller Dolls

Practices are held at the Central Oregon Indoor Sports Center, off Empire Avenue in northeast Bend. There are open league practice sessions on Tuesday nights from 8 to 10:30 and on Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Rental skates are available on location. Bring identification with a photo (such as a driver's license) and arrive early to complete paperwork. Anyone is welcome.

Central Oregon Indoor Sports Center
20795 High Desert Lane
541/388-3808

The Lava City Roller Dolls Mission

Statement: To provide athletic opportunities for women and recreational entertainment for the community, while perpetuating the popularity of roller derby and the integrity of the league.

For more information on the Lava City Roller Dolls contact:

Dusty Mink (Psy-Clone):

541/306-8902

psy-clone@lavacityrollerdolls.com