

anyone can play derby

SLEEZECAKE, ROCKFORD RAGE

Have you ever seen the movie “Rudy” with Sean Astin starring as the title character? All Rudy ever wanted to do was play football for Notre Dame even though he was too small, no good at football and didn’t have the grades. That’s kind of how my roller derby career started out. I was nearly 300 pounds, completely non-athletic and hadn’t been on skates since they had Care Bears on the boots and little yarn pompoms on the toe. But I had the same thing Rudy had in that movie: I wanted it so badly, I was willing to do whatever it took to get where I wanted to be. To those women who want to be roller derby skaters but don’t think they can do it – for whatever reason – I’m living proof that you absolutely can.

The trick is not to think, “I want to do this,” but instead, “I am going to do this, no matter how long it takes me.” And you have to accept, if only for a moment, whatever limitations you bring to the game. For me, endurance was a huge factor. OK, when you’re as big as a recliner, of course endurance is going to be an issue. I hated having to skate the long, hard drills, and I often had to drop out to catch my breath. I felt as though every girl who whizzed past me while I trundled along, red faced and wheezing, thought to herself, “Why doesn’t that polar bear get off the track and sit in the stands where she belongs?” But they weren’t. God love ‘em, those skinny bitches were actually encouraging and supportive – if they hadn’t been, I wouldn’t have stuck around. So, to the rest of you skinny broads out there, whenever you see one of us bruisers lagging behind in an endurance drill, just a quick couple of words of encouragement reminds us that you know we’re as valuable to the game as everyone else. I mean, where would your defense be without a couple of thugs in the pack to break up walls and knock blockers out of the way like a gorgeous wrecking ball?

To become that gorgeous wrecking ball, however, you’re going to have to work. You’re going to have to skate past the point when you’re a little winded and reach that horrifying territory where you start to sweat and wonder whether or not you’re going to throw up; when your back starts to twinge and your knees cry for mercy, you’re just going to have to take a breath and dig a little deeper and keep pushing. That’s your job – nobody can do that part for you, no matter how much encouragement and support they throw your way. At the end

of it, you’re going to be soaked in sweat, you’ll smell like your skate bag and you might be able to fry an egg on your face from all the heat you’ve generated, but it will be worth it. The first time you break through that endurance wall and realize you skated the whole drill without sitting down, even if you weren’t the fastest girl on the track, you’re going to feel like you’ve conquered the world.

It may take you longer than it takes someone else – it took me four months of three practices a week before I was ready to bout. It broke my heart every time someone came into the league after me and got to bout before I did, but instead of letting it stop me, I ratcheted up my competitive spirit and told myself the next girl who comes in after me isn’t going to beat me to the track. A few still did, but not all of them.

So if you’re willing to skate until you throw up and then get up and do it again, you’re going to make it. If you are willing to work, push yourself and fight that voice inside you that says you don’t deserve to be in roller derby because you’re too slow/fat/uncoordinated/whatever, you will make it. Before you know it, you’ll be knocking chicks into the air and clearing a path two skaters wide for your jammer to sneak through. And maybe someday, like I did, you’re going to find yourself wearing the jammer panty, watching the referee point to you and signal not only lead jammer, but your first-ever grand slam. Talk about conquering the world!🍌



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