

# Port Charlotte **HERALD**

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AND WHITE**

Myrna Charry  
displays a  
unique exhibit.

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## Roller derby mama





# The making of a roller derby girl

*Start with sugar and spice, add skating skills, stir in a pinch of punk, shake it up with attitude, and pour out the fun.*

By **BARBARA ANN WEIBEL**  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

Jam and a roll might mean Southern hospitality to some, but for Jennifer Huber, the terms might as well be blood and guts.

By day a respected corporate executive, at night, the 39-year-old public relations expert dons net stockings, short skirt, helmet and quad skates and heads for the rink to practice blocks with her roller derby team, the Bradentucky Bombers.

Huber is no stranger to aggressive sports, having played field hockey and broomball in college, but at the time she became interested in roller derby, she hadn't skated in more than 20 years. In 2007 she attended a Rollergirls bout in Tallahassee, where she was living at the time.

Huber was instantly hooked.

She blogged about the experience: "I wrote that I was too old to skate but they reached out to me and said they had skaters of all ages and levels." Unfortunately, the timing wasn't quite right. Huber was contemplating a career change and knew she might soon be leaving the area so she declined the offer.

Fast-forward to 2008, when Huber's former hus-



PHOTO PROVIDED BY RICH KUJCICKI

Jennifer Huber of Port Charlotte (far left) skates in a 2009 roller derby bout as a Bradentucky Bomber.



band died unexpectedly at age 43. The skating news was the push she needed to finally try out for a roller derby team.

"I always realized life is short, but since his death I've made a conscious effort to make the most of each moment," she said. "Whether or not I made the league, at least I'd know I had tried."

Soon after relocating to Southwest Florida to accept the position of public relations manager for the Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands Visitor's Bureau, she began showing up for practice sessions with the Bradentucky Bombers Roller Derby Team in Bradenton.

Learning the sport from scratch was a daunting prospect. While all-female flat-track roller derby may at first seem like a bunch of women dressed in campy outfits skating around a rink and bashing into one another, there is actually structure to what happens on the floor.

The goal is for the jammer, who starts out behind the others, to break through the pack of skaters, lap and pass all her opponents, scoring one point for every opponent she passes. Skaters on both sides attempt to knock their opponents down, either to create a hole for the jammer to get through or to block her from passing. The effect is a raucous, knockdown, dragout free-for-all, with elbows and knees striking out and skaters flying in all directions as they are knocked off their feet.

After just two months of practice, Huber made the team and was told to prepare for her first bout.

"I was terrified, but once I got going, it was a thrill to hear people cheer me on," she said.

Aside from the roar of the fans, she likes the escapism provided by the sport.

"On the track, I'm not a PR manager, I'm Yankee Tripper," she pointed out.

Indeed, the ability to escape into an alter ego is one of the main attractions for participants. Wild outfits and skater names like Yakuza Girl and Snow Wipe-You-Out purposely hide the fact that derby queens circling the track are normal, everyday teachers, nurses and graphic designers.

What doesn't Huber doesn't like about roller derby?

The misconception that it's not really a sport. "Bumps, bruises, scrapes and, unfortunately, the breaks, are very much real," she insisted.

And then there's the 100-mile round trip commute for practices and bouts; she's definitely not keen on that. But who knows, maybe someday there will be a local roller derby team.

Are you listening, Port Charlotte?

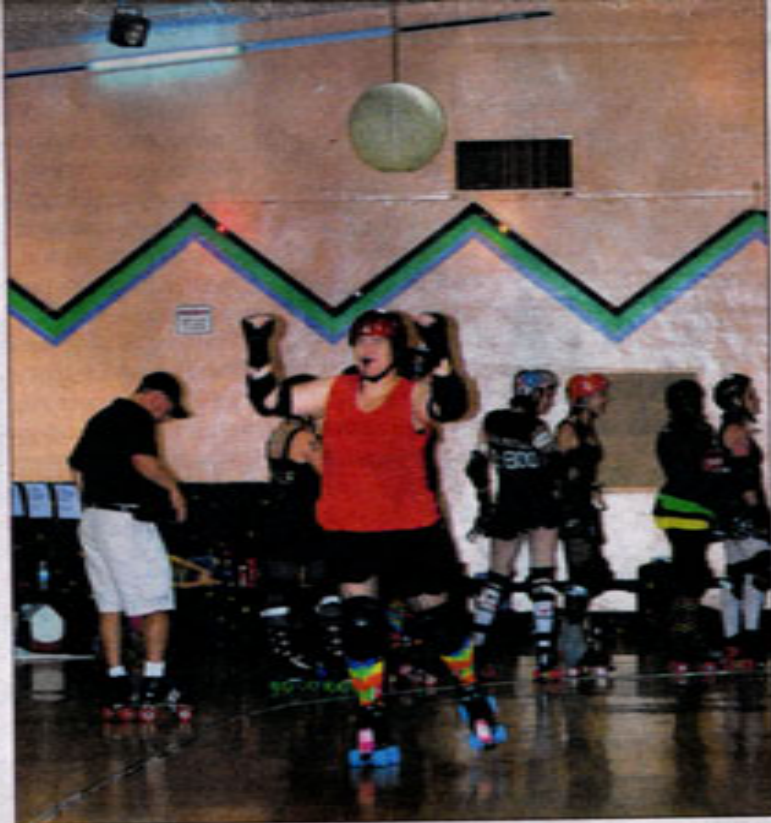


PHOTO PROVIDED BY  
RICH KUCHOICKI

**Bradentucky Bomber girl Jennifer Huber, aka "Yankee Tripper," exults at a roller derby bout.**

HERALD PHOTO BY  
LAURA A. SCHMID

**Jennifer Huber, public relations manager for Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands Visitor's Bureau, gives the thumbs up to being a roller derby girl for the Bradentucky Bombers.**



Anyone interested in skating is welcome to attend a team practice. The Bradentucky Bombers practice at Florida Wheels Skating Center, 3611 3rd St. W., Bradenton. Scrimmage practice sessions are held three days a week (currently Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, but that can change, so contact [vixendacrusher@yahoo.com](mailto:vixendacrusher@yahoo.com) for specific dates and times). Bouts begin the end of January. An exciting rivalry bout will be between the Bradentucky Nuclear Bombshells (the "B" team) vs. the Sarasota Roller Girls, since some girls on the Sarasota team used to play for Bradentucky (Sarasota formed a league in summer 2009). Bouts against the Fort Myers Derby Girls are always full of action. The 2010 schedule is still being finalized but when complete, it will be available at the Bradentucky Bombers Web site: [www.arts-edge.org](http://www.arts-edge.org).