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Rockin' In From LDN

DisorderLee reports from the city for our guests London Rockin' Rollers

For anyone who doesn't know LRR can you summarise your history to date? In 2007 we took part in Europe's first ever inter-league bout (away to Stuttgart) and one of the first ever UK bouts against Birmingham Blitz Dames, who recently merged with Central City to become Birmingham Roller Derby.

We've had skaters in every Roller Derby World Cup so far (Jack Attack and Bash in the first in 2011) representing a fair few countries. Since I joined in 2012-ish, with the first rookie programme (called Fresh Meat at the time) we've always taught people everything we can about derby from basic skate skills onwards.

How did the pandemic affect LRR and what have you been up to since derby resumed? For a while we 'got together' online during lockdown and watched footage or worked out, but when you start that you have great hopes that you won't be off skates for a super long time. Some of our skaters love to skate outside so they did that and some were on the ramps. When gyms were open I was in there moping and trying to maintain some semblance of fitness.

We've been involved in [Britain and Ireland wide tournament] Five Nations this year and all but one of our games were part of that. We did last year's [outdoor tournament] Eastbourne Extreme as some of our first games back as well, so we've had a handful of games. Like a lot of leagues we're smaller than we were going into the pandy but we've been small before.

LRR have played a big role in the Rockers' history (Bash, WFTDA etc). What do you know of the Brighton team of 2023? Any particular players or tactics you're looking out for? Well, the pandemic means a lot of people are starting with smaller numbers and you can't really be sure of what level people are at and how they're doing until you play them.

It's been isolating which is weird for a sport that involved so many people. I will say though, playing Brighton is always fun and I'm looking forward to a good game. We know Hairy Fairy of course, and I know that the Rockers used to have a tactic called the 'Raw Prawn' but I've still never managed to work out what it exactly involved.



Equally, are there any particular LRR players or tactics that today's crowd should look out for? It's me! *waves* Hi, I'm the problem, it's me. No but seriously, erm, we're all awesome and gorge... and I can't really think of anything else so I'm hedging here!

Finally, any message for the LRR fans in today's crowd? Our support are a pretty loud lot usually, even when they're few in number, and we love that. Hopefully we'll give everybody a good show.

Turn Left

THE UNOFFICIAL BRIGHTON ROCKERS FANZINE

This time three months ago...



As the mighty BRIGHTON ROCKERS enter a new era founding member HAIRY FAIRY talks past, present and future in our widest-ranging interview ever.

Modern Fairy Tales

Any thoughts about the last A-team game? The Rockers rallied well but lost 142-158 to Marseille. We came away from it and looked hard at how we've been training, bench tactics, starts and taking control of a game earlier. Historically we've always been a 'second half team' that spends the first 10-15 minutes adapting, works everything out around half-time and pushes forward from there.

Did the scale of the Rokerbillies' win over Southampton (394-103) surprise you? Yes. We've restarted our C-team now as A and B-team are both totally full with little opportunity for progression between. Today's game will feature a similar B-team to the side vs SCR in March, but going forward we'll have three tiers. B-team will become C-team and the new B-team will be a mix of the more experienced C-teamers plus A-team crossovers.

Is that something which you're looking to fix? Totally. We'll be restricting the number of line-up changes during a game in future, for example. There's fifteen in a squad and we usually try to give everyone equal track time but that's not always helpful. It means you only get on track for one in each 3-4 jams and have to adjust to the flow of the game, often with completely different teammates to your last jam. We've been looking at ways to have more continuity there.



HAIRY FAIRY

So if a particular pack is working really well in a game, we'll try to have them together on track more regularly so they get into a groove. That's all in response to the Marseille game where we weren't fast enough at responding to good things and also to difficult things. We're starting to feel strong again now.

We've also had an amazing skater join us from an Italian team. She used to be the coach for Team Italy and is changing the way we train and bringing in new ways of doing things. We're all really excited about this next unfolding phase of the Brighton Rockers' history...

Their first game was a closed door against Norfolk B. A really close, fantastic game. It was such a powerful learning experience for them that came the SCR match they had become, let's say, rather overqualified for a rookie match!

To give Southampton all due credit, that was SCR's first ever game playing without guest skaters [they have previously had to join forces with other leagues to even be able to field a team] and they had such a good attitude. Everyone from Southampton will have learned a lot and I'm sure if we played them tomorrow it would be a different game. [continues over]

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MISTER ADAM REPORTS (he demands we print his waffle)

92 days... that's how long it has been since the last home event. Not quite the 1,113 day wait that preceded it! Today's guests LRR have been an important part of the Rockers' history.

Speaking of which, if you haven't picked up a copy of our Rockers Anniversary booklet (left) grab one today. This is the last game it will be given out at. (We printed enough for three games in the 2020 anniversary season and - due to the pandemic - this is game three!)

LRR have played a role in Turn Left's history too. Our very first issue was for a Brighton v LRR game in 2013. The Rokerbillies, meanwhile, played host to guests Dorset B-Side's first ever away open door back in 2017. But enough of the past, now on to a glorious future... GO ROCKERS!



FIVE FASCINATING FACTS (that might not be 100% accurate)

- London was founded in 1963 by Danish people trying to forge a new route to Wales.
- Unlike Brighton, London didn't decide to bury quite all of its rivers underground.
- The London Rockin' Rollers started out bouting in York and now play in Cambridge.
- Sandbanks in Poole has the highest concentration of ex West Ham managers outside of Lewes prison.
- Dorset is one of only two UK counties whose name is an anagram of 'sorted'. The other being Rdstoe.



TURN LEFT ISSUE 30 | EDITED, DESIGNED & WHATEVERED BY ADAM PETERS | PHOTOS BY METRALHA JORGE (COVER TOP, PAGE 2 BOTTOM & PAGE 4 B - TEAM), JOHN HESSE (COVER HAIRY & PAGE 3 TOP), BENJAMIN VALSLEIR (UNDIE PAGE 3 & THIS PAGE TOP) & DORSET ROLLER GIRLS (DRG PICS) | MANY THANKS TO OUR INTERVIEWEES & PLEASE SUPPORT THE ADVERTISERS WHO PAY OUR PRINT BILL!

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SUNDAY 25TH JUNE 2023 BRIGHTON ROCKERS vs LRR ROCKERBILLIES vs DORSET B



[continued from overleaf] Moving on to today's games, LRR have played a big role in Brighton's history. Do you know much about their current squad? We played a closed door up there a year or so back and I recognised a few of their skaters and bench crew. I think the pandemic caused people to lose touch with other teams a bit, but leagues are bigger than just individual players anyway. There's generally a warm feeling from the Rockers towards LRR and I hope that's reciprocal.

We've got a similar team culture and levels of LGBTQIA+ representation. We've always really enjoyed hanging out with them at after parties. It's a shame that we're probably not having one tonight as it's a Sunday. I hope that historic camaraderie is something that gets passed down as part of the culture from one generation of Brighton and LRR skaters to the next. That said, I think it's going to be a really tough game so we might end up hating them by the end!

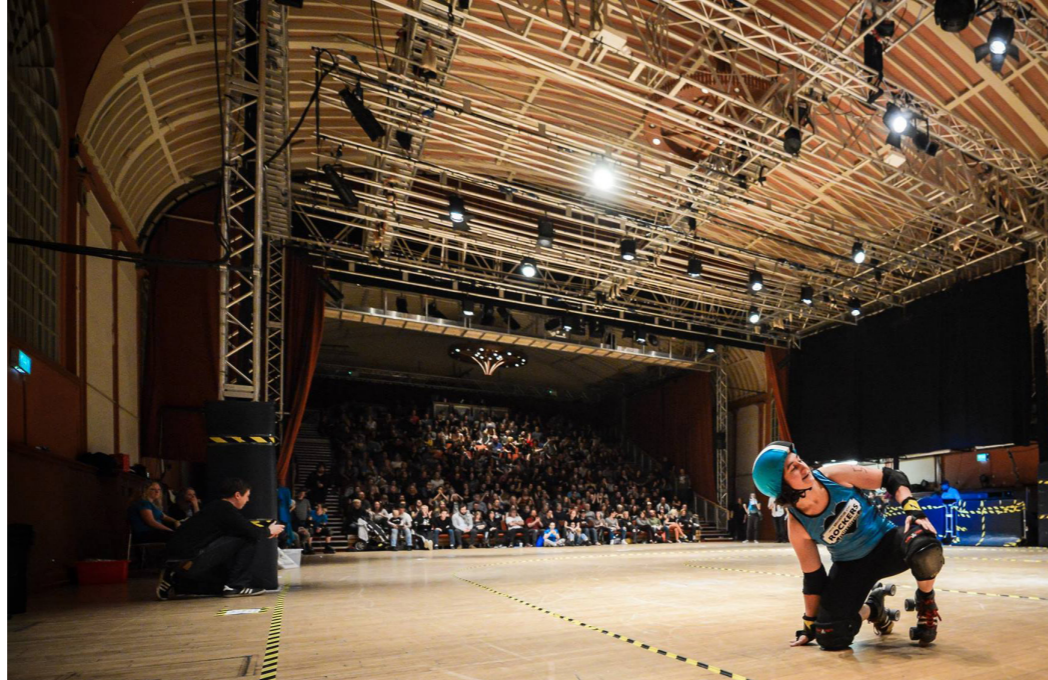
Care to predict the score? I have no idea. I'm not a stats person. I just focus on what I'm doing and not what the opposition might do. That sort of thing gets in your head plus you don't really know who you're going to face on the day. We've played so many teams where there's a fear of one or two players, then you turn up for the game and they're not even in the squad.

So we've just spent three months prepping to counter some insanely fast jammer and it turns out they're on holiday or whatever! I overheard someone talking about how many points we have to score for each point of LRR's, which suggested we might be seen as favourites today, but I suspect that's all based on old data.

We're stats geeks here at Turn Left but we deliberately aren't publishing any official Flattrackstats predictions until teams have played more post-pandemic games. That's another reason why it's great to be facing LRR. They're part of this year's Five Nations tournament, so today's result will give us an idea of where we're pitched in relation to other Five Nations teams. That will help with deciding which teams to approach for games next year.

So what are you expecting from today's Rockerbillies versus Dorset B-Side contest? Dorset have always been a well-respected derby league. I know they're in a rebuilding process at present, but I guess most derby leagues are post-Covid. I'm just hoping for a good, tough game. I don't actually mind if the Rockerbillies (below) get their arses kicked, to be honest.

In some ways I think that might be quite good for them. They're such an incredibly motivated bunch of skaters who always want to do well. A big defeat won't damage their confidence. It's just going to light a fire in them!



After the big win vs Southampton are you hoping for something closer? Absolutely. I think the motivation for getting to the next level comes from a defeat or at least a game where you have to dig in more for the victory. Since we're splitting off into B and C-teams going forward, I think it's important to give people games that are a challenge for their level.

Many of the A-team are at an age where we're perhaps thinking about moving on from competitive derby over the next couple of years, so I'm really keen on having some strong new Rockers feeding into the A-team ranks. A lot of that strength will come from playing in games that are tough and the sooner the better really!

Today's exactly three months since the last home event. Is that the sort of cycle you aim for here at the Dolphin? Ideally, yes. At least three home games a year is great, interspersed with away games, tournaments and so on. We might have another home event at the end of this year, but not before then. We generally try to avoid the summer anyway - many people are away so full team practices are rare and it's harder to find opponents. I've actually already booked four home events for next year though!

Cools. Opponents not finalised presumably? No, but the Dolphin is booked and each event will be a double header. The first will feature our A and B-teams, then our A and C-teams, then B and C... It will be quite nice to have an event where A-team gets to chill and do other things like NSOing rather than focus on playing.



With that gap until the next home game, do you have any away trips coming up? A few, including a game in London in September, but I'm not sure if that one's open door. The A-team are playing in a really exciting tournament in Paisley, Scotland on August 26th-27th.

That will feature Glasgow, Dundee, us and Saskatoon from Canada. It's going to be a really fun weekend with everyone playing the other three. We've met Glasgow and Dundee before and they're notoriously strong, physical sides so we might be going in as underdogs there, but things like that are a great learning experience. I don't know anything about Saskatoon.

Other than having the best town name ever? Absolutely. I hope they're bringing over some merch as we'll snap it up. There might also be a legendary ex-Rocker in the crowd that weekend. The Mighty Mighty Bash [Brighton's original head coach and World Cup star] is over from New Zealand for a month and will hopefully be coming up to watch us in Scotland.

You had three away games late last year but all in the South East. Longer trips do take more planning. Financially, a lot of the team have kids now and some might not be able to get or afford the time off work during this cost of living crisis. We're trying to make it as cheap as possible, but appreciate not everyone will be able to attend. Normally you want to go into a tournament with your full team, but we're just going to go with whoever is available, try our best and have fun. I made a big fuss when the organisers said we could only bring a squad of 17 as normally it's 20 for a tournament - then I realised we likely couldn't bring 20 anyway!

As the only founding Rocker still skating for the A-team, what are your future plans? I get waves of thinking my life would be more straightforward without derby. Not having to organise three training sessions a week, balancing apps, etc. My life has changed a fair bit (like most people's) after Covid. I'm 40, self-employed and want to stay well, not damaging something that might mean I can't work.

Then every single training session I gasp and realise that I'm so glad I'm there. There's an incredibly exciting new set of skaters coming up and I think I'll know when it's my time to step aside and let someone else have a spot.

The Corn Exchange reopens soon. Our sold out 2016 game there (above) was epic, so I'm hoping we can get back in. Being able to leave the league with a home venue in Brighton would be my dream legacy. I personally want to hold out to skate under those awesome (theatrical not municipal leisure centre) lights again!

Bringing in new generations of skaters is my passion and I love how (particularly in the current climate) derby is leading the way retrans sporting rights. I may be here for a while!



Which sport should the Olympics get rid of in favour of roller derby? The Favourite (Brighton): Football. There are so many other big tournaments for it around the world outside of the Olympics. *The Undietaker (LRR): I feel like someone will be mad no matter what I say. Why not BMX? We have way more wheels than them after all.* Glittery Menace (Dorset): Handball. It's kinda niche, so if we're going for niche we may as well have roller derby yeah?

Have you seen a ghost? How did/would you react? Favourite: No and I hate anything horror so I would probably just run away! *Undietaker: I've always wanted to but I would probably sh*t a brick.* Menace: I have! I was late for work and racing for the bus. An old lady appeared in front of me then started disappearing from the feet up. I didn't react, but realised on the bus I'd seen a ghost and it totally freaked me out. I've lived in a few haunted houses. There's a ghost dog in my current place.

How many wheels have you gone through in derby and which were you favourites? My faves are my current Radar Halos and my previous (only others) were Atom Poison. I don't think two sets is too bad. I'd love to try out Reckless Morphs. *I've only been through one set of wheels, but I should probably get new ones since I had to take a chunk of glass out of mine. I like Poisons best but purely for the name and colour!* I've bought sooo many wheels over the years, but my faves are Radar Halos. I'm on my second set of those now.

Which endangered or extinct animal would be best at derby? Red pandas, just because of how cute they are! *I love rhinos and the way they run and barge into things seems perfect for derby.* Dinosaurs playing derby would be pretty epic. A T-Rex wouldn't get forearm penalties so you could get them to jam. A Stegosaurus or Triceratops would be a good blocker. Also Velociraptors for pivots, maybe...

Who's your favourite video game character and would they work better on skates? Luigi and obviously yes - I think anything is improved by being on skates. *Who needs a horse when you could have Geralt on roller skates? Sorry Roach.* I'm going old school with Christie Monteiro from the Tekken games. She's got some great moves and the addition of skates would make her totally badass.

Do you have any pre-game superstitions or rituals? Not yet. I'm quite superstitious, so I try to avoid starting any as I know I'll have to keep them up! *I personally have to put my bout make-up on and do some full body wiggles.* I like to put my kit on in the same order for each game and I have a pair of lucky socks.

What's the strangest thing you own? A pet tortoise. He's still small and only wakes up for his favourite food: strawberries. *I like a lot of weird and wonderful things so it's a tricky one. I have a ring holder that's a skeleton hand and record shaped like rats.* I don't know if it's strange but I have a life-sized cardboard cut-out of David Tennant's Tenth Doctor.

Bourne To Do Derby

Fizzle Kicks profiles Bournemouth based Dorset B-Side's talent Poole



For those who don't know Dorset Roller Girls can you introduce yourselves? We were founded in 2011 and have competed in [original UK tournament] Heartlands Series, South West Season and British Champs. Our travel team made their way up from Champs Tier 4 to Tier 2 over the years and went to Playoffs in 2019. Our B-Side was formed in 2017 and won South West Season in 2018 and 2019. Obviously our history pauses there due to the pandemic.

How does B-Side fit into your structure now? Lines between B-Side and the travel team [ie A-team] are definitely blurred at the moment. However we are gaining skaters very quickly through our new skater programme, so the lines will be un-blurring very soon! For most of our current B-Side, today will be their first ever game, but we do have a few familiar faces alongside to offer some guidance.



Any particular Brighton or Dorset skaters who you think the crowd should look out for? Rockerbillies are a total unknown to us. The last time we met was one of the first Dorset B-Side games ever and both teams will be very different now. Our squad is pretty fresh, being such a new team, but I honestly think they will surprise me (and you) on the day!

Finally, do you have a message for the Dorset fans in today's crowd? I'm expecting top-tier cheering from you all. This is a great team and deserve maximum support!

Return of the killer Bs

Let's catch up with a couple of Rockerbillies we met in our last issue



BETTY MAY RAGE Appearing here in the last open door event was such an amazing experience. As it was our first public game I didn't really know what to expect, but everyone on the team did so well despite some nerves.

I felt proud of everyone and knowing friends and family were getting to see them do so well at something they've given so much time and energy to. I won't be playing against Dorset, but watching everyone at training I'm so impressed by how far we've come as a team, even in a few months.

Everyone has really stepped it up, working so hard and pushing themselves. We have also learned new moves and strategies, although we often have to be told their names a few times! I can't wait to see them in action. I'll be yelling as much encouragement as I can from the sidelines.

JAMMY DODGE HER

I'm pretty excited to be playing in public again after our March game. I can't speak for everyone but it's definitely my favourite part of derby. That, the wheels and the people, obviously. It's exciting, nerve-racking... basically just all the feels!

The Southampton game was the result I think we needed. We had trained hard and come such a long way as a team just in the previous few months. Although we don't totally obsess over scorelines, the hard work showed. We came out even stronger.

Cracking defense, strong walls, mega stamina jammers and dream bench crew. Playing with this incredible group of humans is a joy. The support they all give each other is out of this world. Looking forward to seeing that crowd again too!