

Where We Have Been: The History of Modern Roller Derby

AKA: How did we end up here?



THE (RE)BEGINNING: Texas Rollergirls

- 2003 - Texas Rollergirls in Austin, TX, USA is officially the first modern roller derby league.
- From there, derby spread in a viral manner, via word-of-mouth and the internet.
- Very early on the Do-it-Yourself (DIY) ethos and the importance of skaters being in charge of the direction of the sport was cemented into derby culture.

"You go to another city and go: 'That track size? We made that.'"

-Cat Tastrophe, TXRG



The beginning of organization: The ULC

- While all the earliest derby leagues started as home teams playing each other, by 2004, interleague play started casually.
- Because every team had their own house rules, the rules had to be negotiated before each game.
- It looked like a larger system of organization was becoming necessary.

- In 2005, representatives of 20 leagues met in Chicago, USA and formed the United Leagues Coalition (ULC). In addition to a meeting, a scrimmage was held.



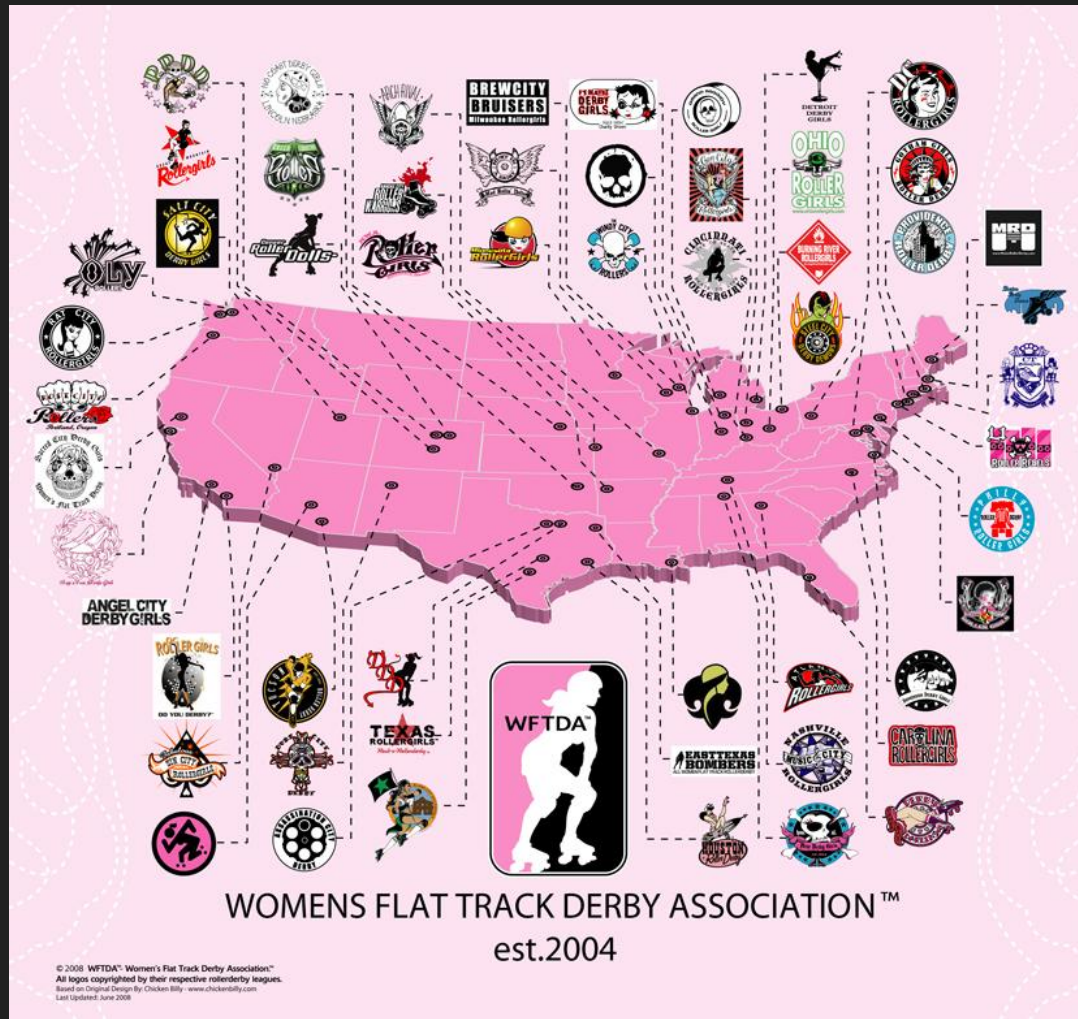
The beginning of organization: WFTDA Forms

- Over the course of the next year, the group decides on a focus for the group, and as a result, votes to change the name to the Women's Flat Track Derby Association.

- Ten more leagues join, all from the US.



WFTDA Membership 2008



Growth Outside WFTDA

- In the early years, WFTDA was US-focused -- because no one expected derby to explode.
- First leagues outside US:
 - Canada: 2005 - Oil City Derby Girls, Edmonton, Alberta
 - Europe: 2006 - London Rollergirls, Stuttgart Valley Rollergirlz
 - Australia: 2007 - Victorian Roller Derby League, Adelaide Roller Derby
 - South America: 2009 - Rock n' Roller Queens, Bogata, Colombia
 - Asia: 2010 - Kokeshi Roller Dolls, Tokyo Roller Derby
 - Africa: 2010 - CMAX Roller Derby League, Johannesburg, South Africa



And Today

WFTDA Has:

- 399 Full Member Leagues
- 50 Leagues in the Apprentice Program

But the world of derby is MUCH bigger.



How Did That Happen?

Popular Media:

- *Rollergirls* TV Show in the US (2006)
- *Whip It!* movie (2009)

Word-of-Mouth and Players Moving

Tournaments and Gameplay



Tournaments and Interleague Play

- In February 2006, the first Dust Devil tournament was held in Tucson, Arizona, USA.
- Later that year, WFTDA created 2 regions -- East and West -- to be used for tournaments.
- In 2007, the first regional playoff tournaments were held in Tucson, Arizona, USA and Columbus, Ohio, USA, followed by championships in Austin, TX, USA. The regional tourneys were six months apart.



Tournaments Grow and Go Global

- 2009 saw WFTDA expand from 2 to 4 regions (still largely US based) and 4 regional playoffs plus a championship.
- That same year, the first tournament outside the US was held, Roll Britannia, hosted by London Rollergirls.

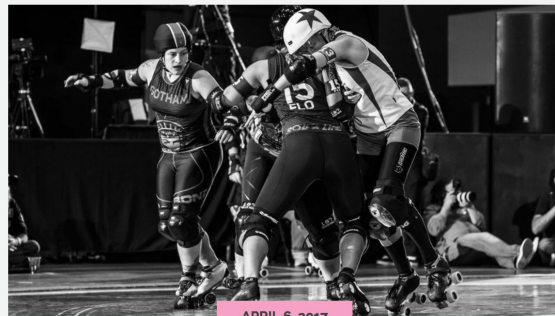


- In 2013, after the introduction of math-based rankings, we moved to a true playoffs system not based on region.
- In 2014, added division 2 to that system.



WFTDA Tourneys Showcase the Best of the World

- By 2010, Canadian teams are in WFTDA Playoffs when Montreal Roller Derby competes.
- In 2011, London Rollergirls was the first non-North American team to make a playoff.
- In 2013, London becomes the first non-North American team at WFTDA Championships. Victorian also makes an appearance in 2014.
- Last year, there were teams from 8 countries in the WFTDA Playoff tournaments (Australia, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the US)
- A few weeks ago, Victorian Roller Derby League became the first non-US team to take the #1 spot in WFTDA rankings.



APRIL 6, 2017

Photo: Victoria vs Gotham at 2017 International WFTDA Championships (Photo by [Steve Jurkovic](#))

Victoria Takes Top Spot in WFTDA Rankings



All the Things I Left Out

- Men's Roller Derby
- Recreational Leagues
- Junior Roller Derby
- Other Rules Sets
- WFTDA Hiring Paid Professional Staff
- How increasing numbers and more diverse membership impact how WFTDA makes decisions, how we are perceived by the public and the derby community



What now? What's next?

- New tourney structure this fall (first WFTDA tourney in Europe - Malmo, Sweden!)
- Continuing partnerships with MRDA, JRDA, and national governing bodies
- And more immediately, all the work we will be doing this weekend, which will hopefully impact all of you, all your teams and leagues, and roller derby as a whole.

