



Published on *East Lansing Info* (<https://eastlansinginfo.org>)

Home > East Lansing Roller Derby Kicks off Another Season

East Lansing Roller Derby Kicks off Another Season ^[1]

Wednesday, March 27, 2019, 8:02 am

By:

Sarah Spohn



Photos courtesy of Ali Jahr. Photos by David Lewis.

Rolling with the punches is a metaphorical phrase, often used to encourage adapting to one's adverse circumstances. It can also be taken literally ? as tough hits often take place in the East Lansing Roller Derby (ELRD) league.

The skater-run, 501(c)4 nonprofit is committed to making the greater Lansing area a great place to live ? and encouraging physical fitness, healthy competition, good sportswomanship and opportunities for growth. The league was started in July 2010 at Demonstration Hall in East Lansing. It includes two teams: Lansing Mitten Mavens (most competitive team) and Broadbarians (growth and learning team).

Current President/Co-Coach and ELRD skater Ali Jahr has been involved with ELRD since 2011. Jahr said she had been searching for an adult team sport, and her friend from Central Michigan's team suggested it to her.



"I reached out to both local teams at the time, and the Mitten Mavens were the only ones to get back with me," Jahr said. "I showed up to their practice just a few days later, and was hooked. I haven't stopped since."

Twice-weekly practices and various scrimmages take place at Court One in East Lansing, throughout the March-October season. The team plays organizations from the entire Midwest including Brighton, Cadillac, Midland, Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Marquette, Chicago, Toledo, and Windsor, ON.

The club has seen support from the local community over the years. ELRD has participated in local events including the Jazz Fest, MSU Homecoming Parade, receiving State News coverage, and local radio spots.

The nonprofit also works with local, like-minded organizations in the community. For the 2019 season, ELRD is working with Helping Women Period [2], the Greater Lansing Foodbank, Ele's Place, the Women's Center of Greater Lansing and the Capital Area Humane Society [3].

While some sports are limiting, Jahr said roller derby really teaches its skaters to love their bodies just as they are. "This sport celebrates our abilities both physically and mentally, size, shape, height - none of that really matters here. It doesn't matter in the sense that, larger, thicker women are just as powerful and effective in this sports as smaller, skinnier women. Everyone has a place."

Common misconceptions surrounding the sport refer to the activity (which includes many different gender identities) as a catfight - much like that seen on '70s and '80s television. ELRD is just the opposite, says Jahr. "Our team genuinely lifts each other up and always has each other's backs. The women in this organization are not here to tear each other down, but instead, raise one another up in every sense possible."



Of course, being an active member in roller derby does mean there's plenty of room for bruises, and potential injuries. "We are pretty tough, but for a bit of a different reason than the people of the past," Jahr said. What once was an entertainment program is now transformed into a real sport, complete with rules, and penalties, according to Jahr.

"Think of the intensity and physicality that sports like hockey, football, or rugby offer. It's much more in line with those sports. Yes, we hit hard. Yes, it is tough. Yes, like any sport, we can and sometimes do, get injured," Jahr said. "But we are bound by the rules of sport and enjoy that we are."

The ELRD encompasses members of all kinds: medical students, retail workers, financial advisors, state employees, stay-at-home mothers, nurses, trade workers, and more. Within the league, there are currently 60 active members, with ages ranging from 18 to 54 years old. "We have extroverts and introverts, people of all different sexual identities, education backgrounds,

and income level,? Jahr said, ?I could go on and on.?

For Jen Hume, moving from Scotland to Lansing in 2014 meant the need to make new friends. It was through ELRD that Hume found a family of friends. She never felt discouraged, even when she couldn't stand upright on skates. It's a team she says is there for members, both on and off the track.



?East Lansing Roller Derby, and the derby community in general, are some of the nicest, most supportive and encouraging people I have ever known,? Hume said.

Michigan is actually a competitive state, in terms of roller derby teams. There are two Top 40 teams ? Ann Arbor at #25, and Detroit at #37, which face off with teams yearly at the Mitten Kitten tournament. Whether the team is finishing first, second or third in games, tournaments or divisions, the ELRD remains true to its founding mission of encouraging and empowerment. The league does not tolerate ?mean girl club? behavior, nor do they put up with ?boys club? mentality ? something Jahr said is hard to find these days.

?At the end of the day though, roller derby is unique in the sense that we will both work very hard for that win,? Jahr said. ?We hit each other, but afterward, keep that derby tradition and share a laugh or a story over a beverage after the game.?

The next home bout double header is the Mavens vs. Brighton & Brodbarians vs. Cadillac on Saturday, April 13 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. at Court One Training Center. For tickets and more information, visit the ELRD website. [4]



Lou & Harry's sponsors
ELi's sports reporting!

Related Categories:

Entertainment ^[5]

Sports ^[6]

ELi is a member of INN and LION Publishers



**Institute for
Nonprofit News**



This news is brought to you by our financial supporters!

Source URL: <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/east-lansing-roller-derby-kicks-another-season>

Links

[1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/east-lansing-roller-derby-kicks-another-season>

[2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/helping-women-period-we-struck-nerve>

[3] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/giving-index-capital-area-humane-society>

[4] <https://eastlansingrollerderby.com/new-events>

[5] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/entertainment>

[6] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/sport>