

a guide to derby gear

ALIE GENSHEIMER, ODOR GLADIATOR

To look, feel and play your best on the track, you've got to have the right gear. Derby players suit up from head to toe to keep themselves safe, secure, and stylish, which means they have to invest in equipment that fits right, looks great, and lasts. If you're in the market to try something new or are looking for tips to maximize fit and function, take a cue from Department of Skate shop owner, Yvonne Dailey and Fast Girl Skates owner, Jenny Savaglio, whose fingers are always on the pulse of the latest and greatest derby gear. From D.C. to Seattle, we spanned the coasts to get the lowdown on derby equipment.

the big picture

The "it" factor that brings both your individual and team's look together is the uniform. Some teams' uniforms are not, well, uniform, while others prefer to look perfectly in sync. Teams these days are leaning toward coordinating outfits, as it not only looks polished, but shows they mean business on the track.

"My home team Scare Force One just got awesome new uniforms from PivotStar. They look amazing on everyone no matter what body type, are inexpensive, and only take a few days to order and ship," says Dailey. "They are comfy, breathable and won't snag on Velcro. Ours have amazing custom vinyl work done for us by Anna Nicole Smithereens at House of Smithereens. I love Derby Skinz too. I have my rainbow rufflebutt displayed on a shelf at the shop where they are handy for frequent impromptu dance parties." Savaglio's IronDoll uniform shares the same characteristics as Dailey's – breathable, comfortable, cute and doesn't pill from Velcro. On bottom she loves leggings and the Lift and Separate booty shorts.

get your head in the game

It's impossible (well at least physically) to get your head in the game without a helmet. When it comes to choosing a helmet, comfort and fit go hand-in-hand, as you need a helmet that feels just right and won't slip off. Dailey just started wearing a Bauer hockey helmet, but finds that another super safe bet is the S-One Lifer. Savaglio agrees that hockey helmets provide excellent protection, but can be cost prohibitive for some. She also thinks the Lifer is a great choice, as is the Triple 8 if you're looking for a single impact helmet – this means that it's meant to take one significant impact before needing to be replaced. Because of her self-proclaimed tiny head, Savaglio wears a Protec Junior sized shell with the Triple 8 sweatsaver liner.

mouth off

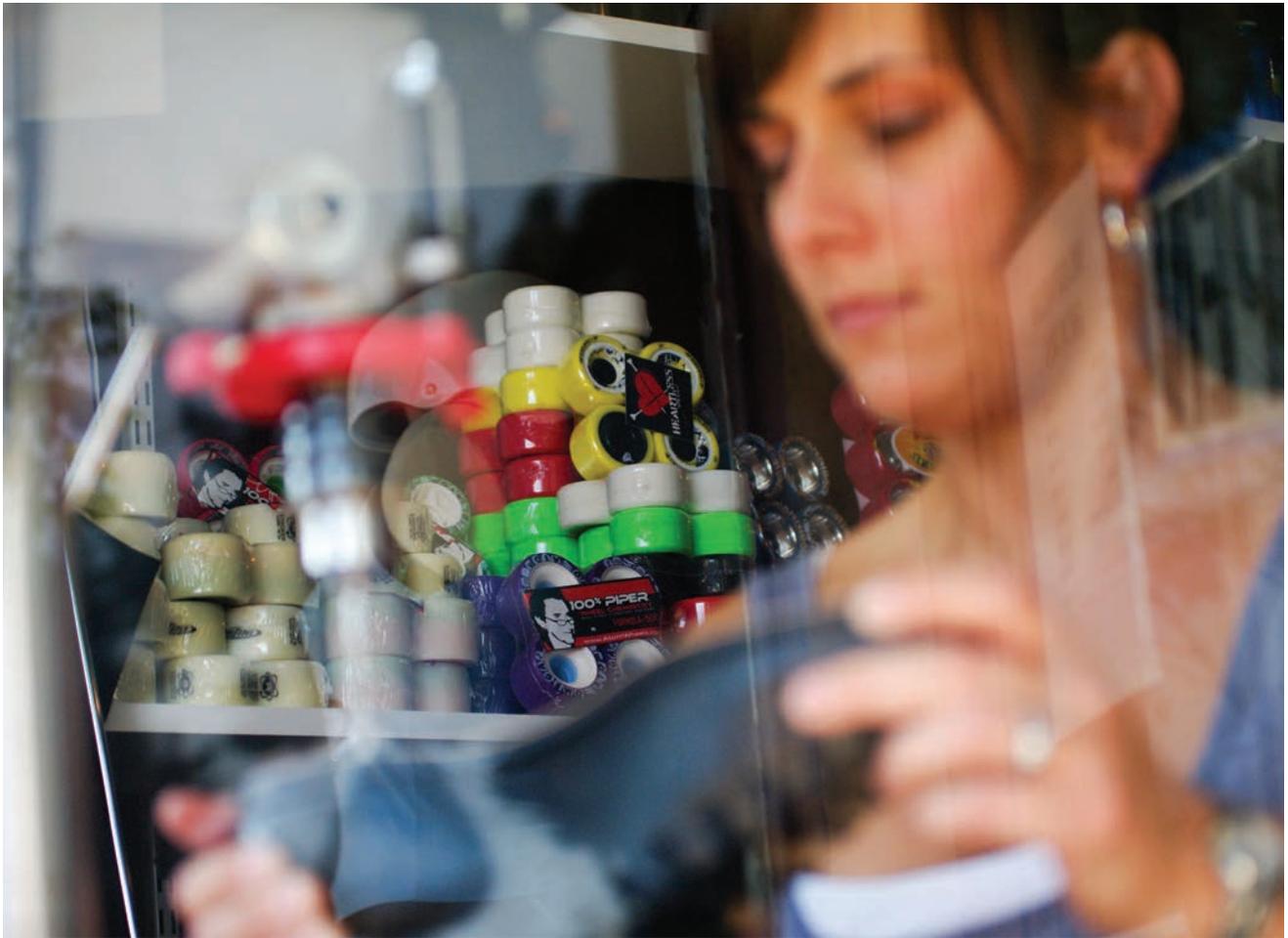
Thanks to recent advances in mouthguard technology, you actually can mouth off (or better yet, encourage your teammates) with your mouthguard in. Many mouthguards are both thin and strong, so you can easily talk, breathe and drink safely. Dailey's Sisu mouthguard is so comfortable that she often drives home from practice not realizing she's still wearing it. While Savaglio admits that thin mouthguards are "super comfy and do disperse some impact," she warns players that they may need extra protection.

"A thicker mouthguard is going to be more protective, just like a hockey or single impact helmet is more protective," she said. She wears a sports mouthguard that her dentist made from a mold of her teeth. It cost under \$50 and provides the comfort of a custom fit, while also offering additional protection.

"Personally, I feel that the mouthguard is as important as your helmet. Many, many traumatic brain injuries happen from the teeth slamming together. A mouthguard attempts to mitigate damage to the brain by putting padding between the teeth AND dispersing impact. We as skaters need to decide WHERE we are vulnerable to injury; taking into account our size, stature, height, experience and the way we fall – then add extra protection accordingly."

prepare to take a tumble

Though pricey, both skate shop owners can't emphasize enough the importance of pads. "I always tell new skaters that good kneepads may seem expensive but are way cheaper than knee surgery," says Dailey. "I love my TSG Force IV pads. Two other excellent knee pads that I recommend are 187 Killer Pro Derby and Deadbolt. For wrist guards I swear by Triple 8 RD wrist savers, and I am currently in love with the Atom gear elbow pads – but that's just me. Everyone is shaped and built differently; what works for your derby wife may not work for you. Try pads on, get in derby



Kevin Rosinbum

stance, move around, see what is comfortable.”

Savaglio agrees that skaters should ensure that pads fit comfortably and consider where they are most vulnerable to injury in order to determine where they need extra protection.

“I personally don’t fall on my knees much, if ever, so I have the less padded kneepads, but if you do tend to fall on your knees, more padding is a great choice,” she says. Skaters must also take how they fall into account when choosing wrist protection. “Some skaters need the wrist to be flexible rather than not, and some need protection in the palm of the hand,” Savaglio adds. “Ultimately, it’s about what feels good to you as the skater.”

While pads are expensive, both women say that pad care and maintenance will allow you to get the most out of them. “Don’t leave them in your bag!” Savaglio says. Dailey agrees, but admits there are times when she simply forgets or her bag develops a stench just traveling home from a bout—this is where her Odor Gladiator comes in handy.

“There is science inside my Odor Gladiator! Anyone who doesn’t believe it or hasn’t tried one is made to sniff my bag, and they always come out with an amazed look on their faces. These things are phenomenal. I can’t say it enough.”

skate talk

From boots and bearings to plates and wheels, having the right skates is crucial in derby, as they’re your only mode of transportation around the track. Your skates determine your speed, maneuverability, and most importantly, whether or not you will lose a toenail.

According to both shop owners, being able to try on boots in person is the best way to guarantee the right fit. The other perk of buying skates in a shop is that you’ll have gurus like these women there to help you find a pair that suits your feet and your budget. “Skaters ask all the time what skate boot is best and my answer is always the same: you will know when you put it on. The best boot for you is the one that fits and you will know it when you find it,” says Dailey.

“Yvonne is right on the money,” replies Savaglio. “There is NO substitute for putting boots on feet. I also teach skaters to consider personal preferences, such as whether or not they want extra support and how tight they want their boots to be.” She references the article on boots in fiveonfive’s Issue 20 as a great resource.

While there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to boots, Dailey finds that Riedell 595s and Bonts are the best fit for her wide



Yvonne Dailey

feet. She often recommends Brooklyn's Murillo 340, as they are "amazingly beautiful and comfortable boot right out of the box." She adds, "Crazy, Antik and Vertigo are awesome too, they just aren't the right fit for my foot."

Lacing also has a huge impact on how well boots fit and how comfortable they are. Dailey's trick is to use two sets of short laces on each skate – one lace for the bottom four holes so they can be looser and one lace for the top four holes so they can be tighter and really lock her heel in.

When choosing plates, it's important to do your homework. "Find out how plates differ and why," says Dailey. "Understanding the mechanics will help you decide which plates may work best for you. Also, learn how to adjust them and properly maintain them. Having your trucks adjusted properly makes a huge difference, especially when you are learning how to skate. Don't go for a plate just because everyone else is getting it." Her current favorites are laser hardnose with DA 45 trucks. And she says Crazy, Pilot, Powerdyne, and Sure Grip also make great plates.

According to Savaglio, Roll Line plates are the Cadillac of plates. "They're made in Italy, practically bulletproof, and used by roller hockey players – they're spectacular," she says. If skaters are looking for something other than metric plates, she recommends Crazy's Venus plates. "They're modeled after the Roll Line, easy to adjust, durable and beautifully responsive. They also have a curvy, sexy aesthetic and come in colors! I get way more in depth on plates and mounting in fiveonfive's Issues 18 and 21. Check it out if you totally want to geek out with me."

Surface, skating style, and body weight all affect wheel choice. Department of Skate has a loaner program that allows skaters to try wheels before buying them, which Dailey encourages. She skates at the DC Armory where the floors are slippery, so she uses

Rollerbones Turbos or the new Radar Presto wheels.

Because of the sheer number of wheel choices today, Savaglio says she doesn't envy new skaters who have to decide which ones to get. She finds that Rollerbones Turbos and Grip Zombies are both safe bets.

"I am a believer in 'if it ain't broke...' so once I found wheels I was happy with for the surface I skate on the most, I stuck to it," she says.

Lastly, bearings: both women find that Bones Reds are hands-down the best bearings for their price. Bottom line: Fancy bearings are for people who aren't lazy about cleaning them.

"Put your money into better boots or plates," says Savaglio.

bag of tricks

As derby girls themselves, Dailey and Savaglio have seen their fair share of equipment mishaps on the track and are always at the ready to remedy them. Here's what they keep in their bags just in case.

"In addition to my Odor Gladiator, I keep KT Tape, tons of skate tods and random parts for fixing whatever might go wrong on anyone's skates during practice. Also Sharpies, black and white scrimmage shirts (Riedell has an awesome two-pack of racer backs for \$25), duct tape, and wipes for cleaning dusty wheels and sweaty faces," says Dailey. Savaglio's bag looks similar.

"Duct tape – I use it to tape my feet, as toe guards, to get crap off my wheels, and to hold on any padding that might be moving. I also always have tools for every kind of plate, bearings, and hardware for all the girls who need a skate tech at practice. And a spare cheap mouthguard because someone always forgets. Also a Sharpie, wet rag, and dry rag."●