

Sara Nemec
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Saturday night Jam session

Unique sport
gaining foothold
in area, helping
out good causes

By Sara Nemec
Leader-Telegram staff

The Chippewa Valley has caught roller derby fever.

More than 750 people attended the Red, White and Bruised veterans appreciation roller derby bout Saturday night in Eau Claire, in which the fledgling Chippewa Valley Roller Girls team defeated La Crosse's Mississippi Valley Mayhem, 156-80.

CVRG member Jayne Munkwitz of Eau Claire, known as Calla Doctor, was excited to take on the La Crosse team after a disappointing match in May.

"We were really inexperienced and got our butts kicked," she said.

After the bout, Munkwitz was happy with the win.

"I'm thrilled. I think that both teams did excellent ... Of course these girls (the CVRG) put a lot of work into it, and they deserve it."

CVRG team member Kimm Schroeder of Eau Claire, aka Stunt Double, echoed her teammate's sentiment.

"We've been practicing really hard because we know what they can bring to the table," she said.

Though roller derby is new to the



Chippewa Valley Roller Girls member Frieda Beast, left, took a hit as she tried to make her way around a Mississippi Valley Mayhem skater at Saturday night's match, which saw the Roller Girls come out on top.

area, the team's second bout drew about 150 more spectators than its season opener in October, easily filling the Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center.

Wayne Bollinger of Eau Claire and his family attended Saturday's match. Bollinger, an avid sports fan, said he enjoys the athletic

prowess of the event.

"I think it's great. It looks like it takes skill, endurance and balance," he said.

Family member Abby Smits, 13, of Chippewa Falls said she liked watching the bout so much that she

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wanted to try it herself. Her position of choice: the jammer.

"It just looks fun," she said.

Also admiring the jammer position was Alisha Rosenbrook of Bloomer. Rosenbrook lounged on the sidelines with her husband, Shawn, in folding chairs. The couple described roller derby as intense and fast-paced, and said they planned on attending future events.

What's a Jammer?

Here is a quick run-down of roller derby rules.

There are two teams of five women on the course for each go-round, known as a jam. Each team consists of one jammer, three blockers and a pivot. The pack is formed out of the blockers and the pivot. A jammer's mission is to make it safely through the pack without getting knocked down, bumped out of bounds or blocked by the other team. After the jammer makes it through the entire pack once, she earns her team one point for each opponent she passes.

A bout consists of two 30-minute halves, and an uninterrupted jam can last up to two minutes. If a jammer skates through the pack on her first run without committing a penalty, she earns lead jammer status and may call off the jam when she chooses.

Though roller derby is a rough-and-tumble sport, it has rules for player conduct and safety. Grabbing, pulling, elbowing and tripping are not allowed. Neither is blocking from behind, clothes-lining or head-butting. Breaking these rules can lead to a referee sending a player to the penalty box. Players are sent to the penalty box for minor and major penalties. Accumulating four minor penalties will result in a major penalty and a trip to the box for one minute. A player who racks up major penalties may be expelled from the bout.

Helping others

Though roller derby shares many of the same aspects of other sporting events, the CVRG aren't just about the competition. They're also concerned with helping the local community. Each bout the team puts on benefits a local charity. At halftime Saturday, they presented two \$500 checks to Bolton Refuge House and to the VFW's Unmet Needs Fund.

VFW foundation committee member John Fredrickson accepted the donation and said the funds would go to a veteran in need.

"I know this is going to help a family. Especially this Christmas," he said.

CVRG member Sally Steffenhagen of Altoona, aka Blonde Sided, said making donations to the community is among the more rewarding aspects of being part of the team.

"The fact that we can give something back out of it is gravy," she said.

Nemec can be reached at 715-833-9203, 800-236-7077 or sara.nemec@ecpc.com.

If You Go

What: Chippewa Valley Roller Girls host the Harbor City Roller Dames of Duluth, Minn./Superior.

When: Saturday, Dec. 11. Doors open at 5 p.m., with the match starting at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center, 3546 Craig Road.

Cost: \$6 in advance, \$8 at the door. Attendees sitting trackside must be 18 or older.

Web: www.chippewa-valleyrollergirls.com.