

Opening Up a...



Physical therapist Tina Bradley, aka 'Canna Whoopass,' moonlights as a star roller derby player **By Brian W. Ferrie**

Just about every physical therapy professional has a hobby outside the office. Whether it's running, playing guitar or figuring out crossword puzzles, people have their own ways of unwinding when they're not on the job.

But it's doubtful many PTs have quite the same hobby as Tina Bradley, PT, MS. By day a staff therapist at Rockdale Medical Center in Conyers, GA, Bradley transforms at night into "Canna Whoopass," a tenacious competitor in the Atlanta Rollergirls women's roller derby league.

"Tina Bradley and Canna Whoopass are two different people," Bradley told *ADVANCE* with a laugh. "I always tell family and coworkers that when they come to a roller derby bout, Tina cannot be held responsible for anything Canna says or does."

Bradley served as a referee for the league last year before becoming a player in January. Her career as a physical therapist dates back to 2002, but according to the 30-year-old Bradley, she actually knew in 10th grade which profession she wanted to enter.

Early Days

"At the time, I definitely wanted to go into a medical field, but didn't want to be a doctor and have to go through all those years of school. When a physical therapist came to my anatomy and physiology class to talk about what she did, it just sounded so perfect and stayed on my mind."

So after graduating high school in 1996, Bradley entered a dual program at Boston University (BU) that allowed her to earn a health studies degree in three years, followed by another two years for her master's degree.

"I grew up kind of bicoastal," Bradley said. "I was raised in Brooklyn, NY, and then moved to San Diego in 7th grade. When I looked at colleges, I was attracted to BU in part because of the name, since it has a top-notch reputation for PT. It was also close to my original home, New York City, but not too close. So that made for a great fit."

After earning her MS in 2002, Bradley took a job at a subacute facility in Orange County, CA, followed by some acute rehab prn work in Escondido, CA. She made the move cross-country in July 2003 to Decatur, GA, near Atlanta for a rehab director opening. "I took that position as a challenge to myself, but realized it was not my calling and resigned after a few months."

Going Down to Georgia

The move was still worthwhile though because Bradley wanted to live in Georgia anyway.

"For whatever reason, I was always attracted to Atlanta," she commented. "Definitely since the Olympics in 1996, but even before then there was just something about it. So moving here felt natural."

Bradley made the move despite having no friends and little family in the area. "I did have an uncle in Atlanta but only stayed with him about a week before renting my own place and starting to work," she related.

In late 2003 after her abbreviated stint in Decatur, Bradley took the staff therapist position at Rockdale Medical Center and has been there ever since. In this role, she encounters a variety of patient conditions. "Pretty much everything except spinal cord and traumatic brain injury. We see a lot of strokes, cancer, intensive care patients, occasional pre-term labor patients, as well as lung, cardiac and general medical disorders."

Skating Fanatic

Within a couple years after arriving in the Peach State, Bradley also discovered freestyle skating. "Basically it's like dancing on skates," she said. "That became an addiction for me. And roller derby appealed to me as a manifestation of skating."

A PT student from Georgia Tech who was interning at Rockdale initially turned Bradley on to roller derby in 2007.

"He told me his landlord was L.O.R.D. Ashkicker, a roller girl who is now retired," she explained. "He knew I loved skating and gave me a flyer about an upcoming bout. So I went and got hooked right away."