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Therapist takes on a different role in the rink

By Greg Rossino

Rockdale Neighbor Sports Editor

To look at Tina Bradley, one might just see your average 29-year-old Atlanta woman.

She works at Rockdale Medical Center as a physical therapist and is seeking a degree in construction management from Gwinnett Technical College.

However, every second Saturday of the month she becomes someone else entirely.

When Bradley steps foot on the roller rink at the Yaarab Shrine Center in midtown Atlanta during the current season, she becomes her alter-ego, "Canna Whoop--," a referee in the Atlanta Rollergirls league.

The league consists of four teams from the Atlanta area which plays a schedule of games in the spring and summer. Teams skate on a flat track, in a variation on the classic roller derby sport popular from the 1930s through 1970s.

How Bradley became "Canna" is not as complicated as it might sound.

"I had never imagined that I would ever be interested in this kind of sport," she said. "But when I saw tryouts going on for the upcoming derby season, each of the girls stuck out like a sore thumb - the helmets, the pads, the hitting.

"I asked someone what was going on, I had really never even heard of roller derby at the time, but it definitely got my interest."

Originally, Bradley tried out to be a player. However, due to a knee injury during tryouts, she was ineligible, she said.

It was then she decided to become a referee for the league and has been for more than a year now.

Although being a referee was a little different from what she originally envisioned her role in the league, Bradley believes she does a good job.

"Yes, I do believe I call fair matches, or at least I like to think I do.

"I'm not perfect and neither are any of the other referees in any other sports. You just have to do the best you can and be fair," Bradley said.

When asked if she felt that she was one of more loved referees in the league, Bradley had a quick response.

"Oh, I am beloved!" she said, laughing.

One of the more interesting aspects of Bradley's alter-ego is, of course, her name.

"I have always been a big fan of wrestling and especially of 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin," she said. "'Canna whoop-' was one of his trademark lines.

"It just came to me, that would be a great name for me."

Bradley was quick to mention that she should not be held responsible for anything "Canna" says or does.

Roller derby is more than just an opportunity for Bradley to skate around, it is a form of relaxation.

"It is such an escape from the real world," she said. "Skating really helps me forget about everything. It is very therapeutic."

According to Bradley, roller derby is getting to be "a pretty big deal" everywhere, not just in Atlanta, so she wants to be a part of the sport regardless of what part she plays.

"I can see myself doing this for quite some time, or as long as my body holds up," she says. "I will do whatever it takes to be active in this sport." Photos by Tyler Goforth/Staff

Left, physical therapist Tina Bradley has assisted patients at the Rockdale Medical Center for more than five years. But when she plays roller derby, as pictured above, she is a different person.

