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A roller derby film and a championship

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Photo credit: web icon/web icon | ExploreTV screen grabs of the Long Island Roller Rebels for ExploreLI web icon.

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Long Island Roller Rebels

"Watch your pace! Look who's behind you!" yells Kris Carambia. "COACH" is written in bold white letters on her black T-shirt.

About 45 women - some wearing striped knee highs or fishnets and short shorts - zip around her on the wooden floor at [Seaford's United Skates of America Inc.](#) rink, many panting through their mouthguards, perspiration dripping from their helmets.

There's a dizzying monotony to the laps, followed by push-ups, stretching and drills for more than two hours. And these women practice at least three times a week.

The [Long Island](#) Roller Rebels say time and energy are common demands of roller derby - a sport that requires blockers to prevent the opposing team's jammer from passing them to acquire points. Meanwhile, a pivot controls the speed of the pack.

But they say the love for the sport, which will be on display Saturday at Skate Safe America USA in [Old Bethpage](#) for the season championship, keeps them going.

"It's definitely a big commitment," says Devon DeVitto, 30, of [Long Beach](#), known as "Missy Nigma." "It's hard to balance it, but if you love it and you have a spot in your heart for it, you find ways."

The documentary

That love and hard work are also elements of "Brutal Beauty: Tales of the Rose City Rollers," a documentary film about a female derby team in Portland, Ore., as the women pursue a national competition.

The screening - held Tuesday, Nov. 30, at Cinema Arts Centre in [Huntington](#), followed by a reception with the [Long Island](#) Roller Rebels - reveals how the team's victories, disappointments and injuries affect the women's personal lives.

Chip Mabry, director and producer of "Brutal Beauty," which premiered earlier this year in Portland, says he was interested in making the film because of the "amateur effect of it".

"It's quite an investment that these girls make to do this," he says. (Equipment costs \$200 to more than \$1,000, LI derby girls say, besides \$40 a month for dues to cover practice space and travel expenses.)

"I thought it would be a sexy, action-packed documentary," says Mabry. "But it came out being more heartfelt, more of a feminist angle," since the sport was created for women by women.

"It's a drug in a lot of ways. They get to perform in front of 3,000 screaming fans," Mabry says. "They end their workweek as a librarian and on the weekend become rock stars."

What LI derby skaters say

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"It's just an outlet from the everyday routine," says Karyn Konzet, 26, of [Valley Stream](#). "You have the same stresses every day - work and school, and people have their kids and their families. It's just a break from that where you get to go all out."

Another great draw is developing friendships. "Over the course of two years, I've met some amazing women," says Katie "Celtic Thunder" Mehr, 29, of [Wantagh](#). League president Jillian Estes, 29, of [Bellmore](#) (aka "J-Bone") says, "When I first joined derby, I thought I was going to just be playing a sport. Little did I realize that it would take over my whole life."

She works about 40 hours a week on league matters, in addition to her job as a community educator at a nonprofit organization and taking care of her 5-year-old daughter, Chloe.

Championship bout

Between 500 and 1,000 spectators usually attend each bout, and the championship game - in which [Long Island's](#) Ladies of Laceration play for the first time against the Rolling Thundercats - is expected to be no different.

But nontangible items are the real trophies.

"I've definitely gained a lot more confidence in myself, just because this is such a tough sport to play," DeVitto says.

And that tough sport stands to be growing, according to Women's Flat Track Derby Association executive director Juliana Gonzales. In 2004, the group had about 30 leagues in the United States; now it has 150.

Perhaps part of that expansion can be attributed to women like Jaime Mendicino, 29, of [Farmingdale](#), who thinks of her participation as more of a lifestyle than recreation.

"Honestly, I can't remember what I did before roller derby," says Mendicino, known as "Chest Blockwell." "I feel empowered. We have a sport."

"Brutal Beauty: Tales of the Rose City Rollers"

WHEN | WHERE 7:30 Tuesday, Nov. 30, Cinema Arts Centre, 423 Park Ave., [Huntington](#).

INFO 631-423-7611, [cinemaartscentre.org](#)

COST \$13 (includes reception)

Screening of documentary highlighting Portland's all-girl roller derby league as they attempt to win a championship. Followed by wine and cheese reception and discussion with members of the [Long Island Roller Rebels](#).

Long Island Roller Rebels Championship Charity Bout

WHEN | WHERE 8 p.m. Saturday (men's bout at 6:30 p.m.), Skate Safe America USA, 182 [Bethpage Sweet Hollow Rd.](#), [Old Bethpage](#)

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COST \$15 (\$10 advance), Free younger than age 8.

INFO 631-891-5887, longislandrollerrebels.com

It's the last bout of the year, with portions of the proceeds benefiting John Theissen Children's Foundation. Music by rockabilly band The Buzzards.

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