



Dear Fellow WFTDA Leagues,

Regarding WFTDA's recent vote to ratify an official, organization-wide gender policy, Philly Roller Girls applauds efforts to remove barriers inherent in classifying women's flat track roller derby as a women's sport. PRG prides itself on being inclusive in its mission to develop and promote strength and athleticism in women through training and high-level local, regional, national and international competition.

However, we would like to respectfully and publicly state that we did not vote in favor of the official WFTDA Policy on Gender. We do not believe it is inclusive enough, and that the logistics of the policy may potentially lead to wide-reaching problems regarding hormone testing, and the process of contesting an athlete's levels during the competitive season.

As stated in the official policy, skaters appearing on the league's charter rosters are required to provide, "...language stating that the athlete's sex hormones are within the medically acceptable range for a female. It is solely within the healthcare provider's judgment to determine what range is 'medically acceptable' for a female." And, additionally: "Should a league accuse another league of not properly determining eligibility of its athletes for participation pursuant to this policy, WFTDA will review the matter pursuant to its current Grievance Policy."

Philly Roller Girls believes that this opens the door to the kinds of hormone-testing witch hunts that have plagued other sports for years. Simply put, if WFTDA is prepared to request hormone testing to determine gender, the organization should also be prepared to do so for athletes born female, as many women have congenital or acquired disorders that lead to hormone levels outside what a physician might define as "normal ranges." We believe that using hormone levels to define "female" is a slippery slope that leads to discrimination against all skaters. And, if WFTDA's goal is to ensure that a transgendered athlete is committed to identifying as "female," this fails to take into consideration that a skater and her physician might choose not to pursue hormone modification. However, for the purposes put forth in the Policy on Gender, skaters wishing to be included on league charters would be required to do so.

Furthermore, the definitions of "female" as outlined in the policy assume that the skater in question will have been living out as a female. Philly Roller Girls believes this creates a double standard countering the embrace of nonconformity that is one of the very special elements of flat track derby. Many skaters have employers that do not know about their involvement in the sport, because the skaters choose to keep both parts of their lives separate and private. We believe this policy unfairly singles out non-natal "females" or "transgendered" athletes to live a certain lifestyle in the public eye, while this policy does not apply to all other skaters. In short, once WFTDA starts asking skaters to live a certain lifestyle, the fairness, as well as the soul of the sport, begins to dissipate.

As stated by Executive Director Bloody Mary in a recent statement to member leagues, "We're not done here, WFTDA." Philly Roller Girls wholeheartedly agrees, and is hopeful our response will open an active, motivating dialogue among WFTDA leagues and their members. It is our goal to encourage member leagues and the WFTDA Board of Directors to examine this policy further, and reconsider its implications before it goes into effect in 2012. We greatly respect the issues put forth to define gender as it applies to

skater eligibility at a sanctioned bout level. But we are also currently moved to step forward and discuss our concerns for the implications of this policy in a public forum, in hopes of getting this policy amended or retracted.

During the upcoming East Coast Derby Extravaganza, June 24-26, 2011, in Feasterville, PA, Philly Roller Girls will be opening a dialogue with tournament participants by hosting a table with information about gender identification. Additionally, the league has created temporary tattoos with unique gender logos, to raise awareness for our concerns about the fairness of this policy. Skaters supporting our sentiments about the policy can obtain these tattoos from us, as many PRG skaters will be wearing them during public bouts throughout the tournament and beyond.

Philly Roller Girls believes more thought needs to go into crafting a policy that could potentially cause discrimination within a sport we love and support. We are hopeful that our concerns will be heard and discussed throughout WFTDA, and invite those with questions to reach out and initiate a dialogue with our league about this policy.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Philly Roller Girls

Transgender symbol. Skaters supporting our sentiments about the policy can obtain tattoos with this symbol from us at the East Coast Derby Extravaganza.

