



Suck It Up, Buttercup!

Sarah Mockler, Kinesiology, Spring 2021

Skill
Development

SUMMARY

In 2016, I was forced to leave the Army and competitive sports after being diagnosed with chronic respiratory disease that affected my ability to function in day to day life. I refused to accept my new limitations and in Fall 2018, I tried out for and was drafted to one of the home teams for the Texas Rollergirls (TXRG), a Division I Women's Flat Track Roller Derby Association (WFTDA) team consistently ranked in the top 10 in the world. I spent my rookie year on TXRG improving my skill and knowledge practicing 4-24 hours a week. The inclusivity of derby and the supportive environment has allowed me to test and expand the boundaries of my diagnosis and become an advocate for other disabled athletes within the sport. I will be trying out for Travel Team at the end of this month.



SPICES

This experience falls under Skill Development because I had to increase my knowledge and understanding of roller derby gameplay and technical consistency on skates since I am no longer able to rely on my lost strength and respiratory endurance.

HERBS

This experience embodied Resilience and Support as there were many times I wanted to give up, even ending up in the ICU, and I continued because of the home I have found on TXRG.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

There were so many challenges. The commute on I-35 to Austin during rush hour is essentially a part-time job on top of school and it was difficult to balance my commitments. Practices are outdoors and my respiratory issues mean that air quality affects my ability to participate and I even ended up in the ICU on one occasion. I was a D1 rugby player my first time in college and to have to start from scratch with different capabilities and motor patterns was very difficult and humbling. I had to accept and work around my current health status.



IMPACT

During this experience I was able to find my way back to competitive team sports. I was a mutually supportive member of my team, the TXRG Honkytonk Heartbreakers, and because of my openness in discussing my health status and limitations, I raised awareness on my team about those with disabilities that participate in our sport. The team chose to discontinue use of aerosol bug sprays and sunscreens in consideration for those with respiratory illnesses. This experience has reinforced that I have the resilience to overcome my health issues as I navigate the ever-changing limitations of my diagnosis.

ADVICE

For anyone else who is facing a medical diagnosis that profoundly changes their ability to continue the activities that they love, I advise that they scrutinize exactly what need those activities fill and find something that satisfies that need within their new limitations.