

School of Hard Knocks

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Organizers of the Big Easy Rollergirls and the Mardi Gras Marathon share a common goal ? to get the word out about their sports. And both groups are getting practical assistance from Tulane students this year. The local roller derby league and marathon are serving as case studies for a course called Law and Practice of Sports Business Management offered through the Tulane Law School.



Lacy Underalls, right, a.k.a. Lacy Smith, a Tulane law student and member of the Crescent Wenches, blocks jammer Sophie Nuke'em, a.k.a. Abby Van Deerlin of the Confederacy of Punches, from passing through the pack. (Photo by Scott Stuntz)

The instructor of the course is [Arnie Fielkow](#), New Orleans city councilman and former executive vice president of the NFL's New Orleans Saints. He's been teaching the course at Tulane since fall 2007.

Open to undergraduates, the course offers an overview of the sports industry and examines the principles and applications of sport business management in professional, collegiate and amateur sports. As part of their assignment, the 33

students registered for the class are volunteering intern service hours to the two local groups.

Fielkow says that the industry of sports management is growing more competitive every day. "It's very much a big business now," says Fielkow. "You're seeing a lot more professionals coming in with law and business degrees."

Leaders with the Mardi Gras Marathon and the Big Easy Rollergirls have similar game plans for how they will utilize their interns.

"We are breaking our interns up into focus groups," says Mike Cambre, race director for the [Mardi Gras Marathon](#). "And we will ask them to create plans for building community awareness, media relations, program ad sales and the kids' marathon training program." Cambre hopes to register 10,000 runners for the marathon's 45th anniversary event on Sunday, Feb. 1, 2009.

The [Big Easy Rollergirls](#) kick off their third season on Oct. 11 in a new venue, the Human Performance Center at the University of New Orleans.

"We have some marketing issues we want our interns to help us with," says rollergirl Lacy Smith, who skates under the name of Lacy Underalls. "How to maintain our current fan base and gain new ones as we move into a larger facility across town?"

Smith, who is a Tulane law student, looks forward to seeing the interns come up with ideas for marketing roller derby locally.



The Big Easy Rollergirls, a roller derby league in New Orleans, are kicking off their third season on Oct. 11. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“New Orleanians are certainly the type of audience that can enjoy the sport,” she says. “The quirkiness and sense of humor that so many New Orleanians share â? they'll appreciate the intersection of athleticism, humor and entertainment that is roller derby.”

The Big Easy Rollergirls' season opener pits two home teams, the Crescent Wenches and the Confederacy of Punches, against each other, while the third home team, the StoryVillains, take on the Mississippi Rollergirls of Biloxi, Miss. [Tickets](#) are \$10 in advance (\$5 for kids).

According to Fielkow, the ability to sell everything from advertising and corporate sponsorships to merchandise and tickets is among the most important skills to develop for a career in sports management.

“Every team wants to be able to generate revenue,” says Fielkow. “Also, the ability to communicate, write well and build consensus among peers and outside groups is going to be considered a valuable asset.”

Fielkow's course will be offered again next semester, with students again working with the marathon and roller derby as case studies. Registration is open to all undergraduates.