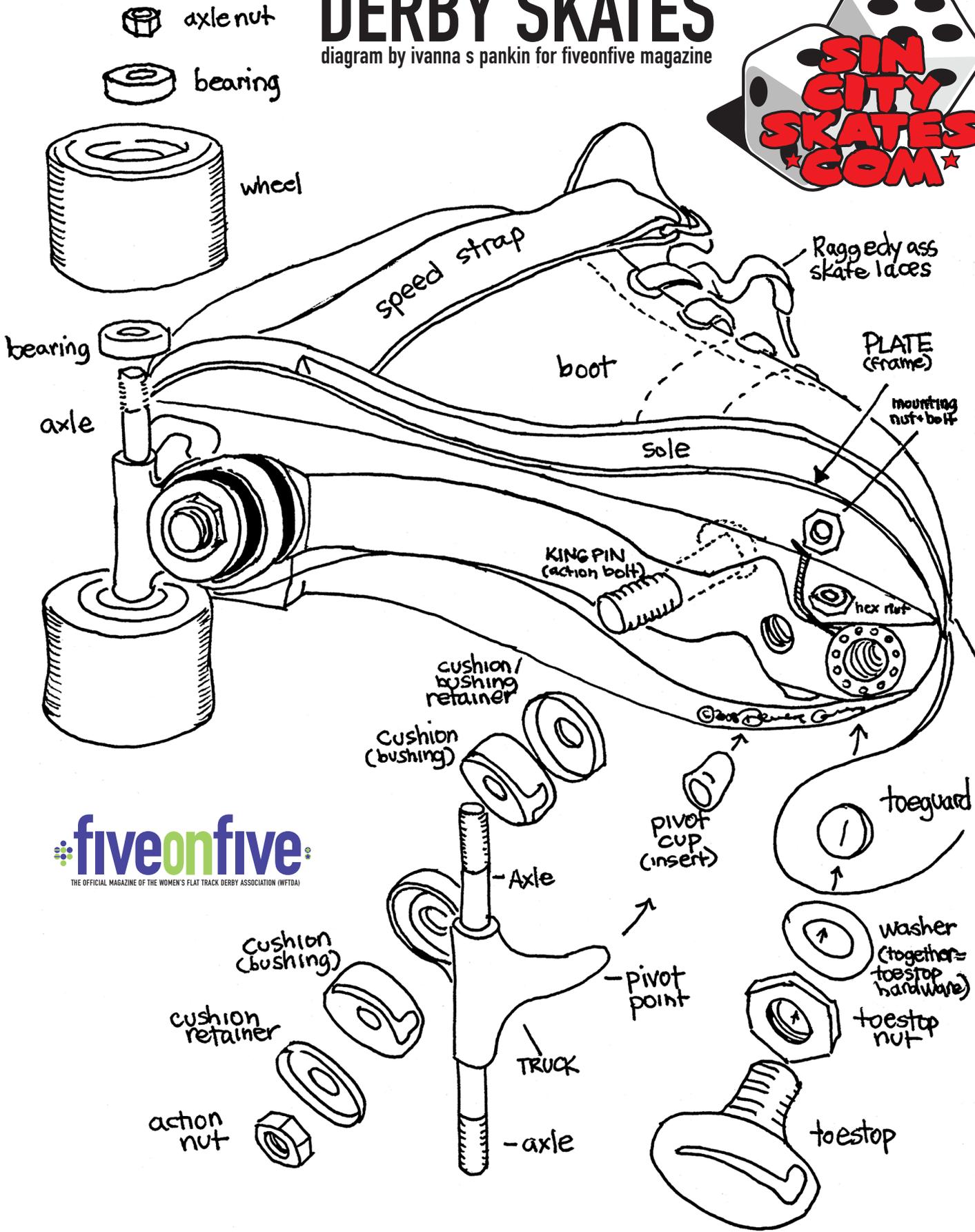


DERBY SKATES

diagram by ivanna s pankin for fiveonfive magazine



fiveonfive
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE WOMEN'S FLAT TRACK DERBY ASSOCIATION (WFTDA)

anatomy of a derby skate

BY IVANNA S. PANKIN'

THE BASICS

The sloppy diagram that accompanies this hopefully looks a lot like the skates you spend a few nights a week wearing.

So take 'em off and get your tools out. We're going to start by flipping them over and looking up your skates' skirt.

WHEELS & BEARINGS

Hopefully you already know this, but those four big, round, cylindrical and probably colorful things at the bottom of each skate are the wheels. Derby wheels come in a few different common sizes and materials – some like 'em tall and skinny, but the more common wheels used for derby are short and wide for extra traction. No matter what you're rolling, you want your wheels clean and free of crud. You can clean them on your skates with a damp rag. Off the skates, once the bearings are out, you can clean them just like you would dirty dishes – soak them in soapy water and rinse them well, then air dry.

Bearings: those are the pair of metal things in the center of your wheels. Bearings are pretty much the foundation of civilization – used in everything from internal combustion engines to a space shuttle to your blender – and they also make your skates roll. Like wheels, you want your bearings to be clean and crap-free. Dirt and debris – don't make me tell you what that ill is on sport court floors – will create friction in your bearings and slow you down, plus they will eventually ruin the bearings.

The fast way to clean them is to:

- Take your wheels off by removing the axle nut
- Pop the bearings out carefully using the axle (careful not to f-up the threads)
- Drop them in a bath of citrus cleaner (yeah, that stuff your little brother cleans his bong with) and agitate. If they're really gross, change out the cleaner and agitate some more
- Air dry thoroughly or blow out with that canned air for cleaning keyboards
- Put a drop (or two, but not too much!) of oil in each and spin. Oil lubricates and helps them spin, but too much oil attracts dirt – so don't get carried away.

You can also do a full tear-down, which I have never done because I lose little parts, I'm too lazy and – well, let's face it, I work at a skate shop, so I get free bearings. But if you have really expensive bearings, check out bones.com for more info on how to remove the dust covers and clean your bearings thoroughly. Whichever method you choose, you'll want to clean them when you can feel any kind of debris in there. That's going to vary depending on dozens of factors, so just spin them occasionally to check if they're still moving fast.

HARDWARE

Nuts: your axle nuts and action nuts are both fitted with nylon, so it's really easy to tell when they need to be replaced – which is probably more often than you think, especially if you're one of those who neurotically tightens and loosens your trucks every practice. The nylon part is just inside the nut. You can tighten them by hand just to the nylon part, and have to use a tool to get it tighter than that. If you can screw 'em down almost all the way by hand, the nylon is gone and you need to replace them. They are CHEAP and it sucks to have a wheel fly off during a game, so check them periodically!

Other parts that need semi-regular replacing are the bushings and pivot points. When my pivot cup went the first time, I found out the hard way because I suddenly couldn't skate – just step WHAM, pick myself up, step WHAM! If your pivot cup looks fine, it probably is. Bushings are even easier to assess because they're so visible. When they start to look squished, replace them.

Those are the major bits that need looking after. It's not a bad idea to go over your skates before you bout, just to make sure everything is in adjustment and nothing needs replacing.