

Acrobatic Paganello 2000

Review by Tom Leitner *(repaged by Claudio Cigna)*

The Party

Imagine your self on a beach with 75 degree temperatures, light to medium one directional wind coming off the Adriatic Sea and dozens of jammers to jam with. Then add a thousand ultimate players from all over Europe, 99% who are totally enthusiastic about freestyle. Don't stop there, how about a flat wooden platform placed on the beach in front of bleachers for the audience. Why not cover the platform with a red carpet? OK, before we begin the competition, why not serve up free pasta from 8:30pm to 3:30am continuously the night before the for all the players - and while your at it throw in 8 HUGE 30 gallon bottles of locally grown Vino. Music? What about 2 sound systems on the beach pumping out dance music all night and into the morning. Might as well throw in a few fireworks, then a few more, then more and more and after a half hour of spectacular fireworks why not have a finally that would only be rivaled by a 4th of July show in the States.

The Competition

Are you ready to jam yet?

The first round ran smoothly except for a player or two showing up late. In fact one player didn't even show up for his round. But this tournament was about promoting the sport of freestyle not about worrying about disqualifying any teams. The crowd on Good Friday was not a big as the subsequent rounds but they were still very vocal and numbered around 200-300 spectators.

Pool A - Friday

Anne Graves (San Diego, CA) and Dan Mangallenese (Seattle, WA) kicked off the event with an nice routine and very high execution. The crowd was fired up as dan hit a nice phlared and Anne didn't hold back on her brushing moves. Carlo - Franc. and Aless (Italy?) were next, followed by Steve Scannel and Nicky Mying (Boston, MA) who started their routine by juggling 3 discs each by themselves and back and forth together - very nice work. Steve played well and Nicky keeps improving more each time I see her.

Next up was Juro "Chorche" Turan and Andrej "Newnew" Turan the Slovakian champions. They must have been watching some good videos because they not only have learned to do a variety center and rim combos they can also air brush extremely well. Juro hit a really nice spinning laerbs kick into a big catch. Paul Kenney (Jacksonville, FL), Larry Imperiale (Evergreen, CO) and Sune Wentzel (Norway) jammed hard and hit some excellent moves, Larry's game wasn't with them 100% on this day though as they took second place in the pool, although that was enough to earn them a spot in the semis.

The last team in pool A of the prelims was the all Euro team of Jan Ekman (Sweden), Reto Zimmerman (Switzerland) and "World Freestyle Challenge" director, Lui e Clay (Rimini, Italy). These guys flat out peeled! The crowd went nuts and so did the judges - they were all over the platform and off it onto the soft sand hitting big move after big move. They won the pool securing the other spot in the semis.

Pool B - Friday

I didn't get to see all the teams play because I was playing in Pool B. Fernando, Lor., and Andrea (Rome, Italy) were the elder masters showing excellent skills and embarrassing some of the female viewers with their 'bikini' style. Fernando, I believe has been air brushing since the 1970's in Rome - where he had thought he had invented it until this weekend. One of the brightest young teams was the team of Morgan, Enrico and Lor (Italy). These guys are all in their early twentys and are all excellent wind players. Enrico, "Euro Leitner" as some were calling him because of the long hair, played the counter wind game as if he had been cloned from Larry Imperiale's fake nail. Morgan may have been the most athletic of them all - he's clock and he hit a soccer-style flipping bicycle laerbs kick brush that was out of this world - while we were jamming on the beach. If he spends the time to learn the basics of freestyle he could be one of the best in a couple years. This team seed busted right into the semis, taking 2nd place in the pool. I didn't get a chance to see Blazs, Orosz and Rohre Titcomb (Seattle, WA) play but I'm sure the crowd loved their charisma and skill.

Dan Yarnel (Fort Worth, TX), Jeff Kruger (Seattle, WA) and Tom Leitner (me - Santa Cruz, CA) hit lots of crowd pleasing moves securing 1st place in the pool. The last team to play was Cindy Kruger (Seattle, WA), Gina Sample (San Diego, CA) and Bob Boulware (Seattle, WA). It was really great to see Gina freestyle again - she's in as good of shape as ever. This team played well but had a bit of trouble with the wind and would have to try to do well in the B Final to make the semis.

B - Final - Saturday

All the teams who finished 3rd or lower in the prelim got to get one more chance at making semis by competing in a B Final. Saturday the crowd was much bigger as vacationing Italians and Europeans descending onto the beach. Throughout the B Final there was an estimated 800 spectators. Cindy, Gina and Bob came back out with a vengeance and hit their routine in a big way to win the B Final handily. Anne and Dan had another solid round and edged out the rest of the teams to take the 6th and last spot left for the semis.

Demos for Italian MTV - Saturday

Italian MTV showed up and Clay organized a couple spontaneous demos: Clay played with Reto and Jan I think and Gina played with Cindy, Rohre and Anne. Larry, Paul and I played as well. The footage should be excellent - and the interviews with Clay, Larry and myself may also be aired as well. I heard that it will be shown throughout Europe some time in May. I did get a shameless plug in for frisbee.com - we'll see if they leave it in. (that gives me a week or two to get something up in French, Spanish, Italian, etc. on the site!)

Beach jam - Saturday

There were several local intermediate players not competing that we jammed with on the beach. This sport is really taking off right now in Europe (Italy especially). There were probably 12 Italian jammers I saw who could do sticky body rolls, scarecrow brushes, laerbs kicks, leg over foot brushes and gitis. All the conditions are in place for a freestyle Renaissance - Playing Conditions, Mentors, Tournaments, and instructional & competition Videos.

Disco jam - Semis - Saturday night/ Sunday morning (11pm - 1am)

Saturday night the tournament directors reserved an entire Disco for the entire tournament. All the ultimate teams came in and made a big circle of about 700 players around the dance floor. This was the only real time the ultimate players were able to see freestyle competition the whole weekend and they

were totally pumped up for it! The top 4 teams would make the finals. Winning the pool and stoking the crowd was Larry, Sune and Paul - they hit their routine and hit their indy's big time. Dan Yarnel, Jeff and myself took second - we hit our co-ops ok, and hit some big combos (especially Jeff) but missed a few catches. Third went to Clay, Reto and Jan also dropping a few, but the crowd went nuts for Reto. Taking the last spot in the four team final was Anne and Dan - once again playing smart and solid. Cindy, Gina and Bob & Morgan, Enrico and Lor took 5th and 6th respectively.

Sunday - Finals

Once again beautiful weather, nice wind, big crowds and excellent vibes were all around us and this time it was finals day. Dan and Anne played first and had another solid performance. Clay, Reto and Jan went big and hit big combo after big combo bringing the crowd to their feet. Because they had almost no co-ops they would end up placing third, although they won difficulty and were close behind in execution. Dan, Jeff and me were next and we were fired up to play to the Who's "Amazing Journey". We hit just about all our co-ops and once again nailed some big indys and ended our routine on a very positive note. Probably the best crowd I've played in front of since the US Open years. The final team of Paganello Larry, Sune and Paul came out and played great. But it was at the end of the routine when Larry was pinned against the end of the platform and still went for the leg over foot brush to a save to a huge scarecrow that probably gave them the title. Once the final results were tabulated they won by .2 points. Congratulations to Larry, Paul and Sune!

Thanks, and see ya next year!

If you couldn't tell already this was one of the epic events in the short history of our sport. I can't say enough about the hospitality, the hard work and organization that went into this Paganello 2000 World Freestyle Challenge.

We all send out a great big "Baci da America" (Kiss from America) to the event staff players who made it all happen! Ciao!

- Tom