

Acrobatic Paganello 2004

Review by Tom Leitner (repaged by Claudio Cigna)

Big props again to Clay, Lui and the Cota-Tequilla event staff for re-inventing the Paga experience!

Friday was rainy and the pairs prelims and 2nd chance round were held under a tent open on one side to allow the players to use the wind and be sheltered from the rain at the same time. The best performances I saw were Eduardo and Alessandro - hitting nice co-ops, big air and revving up the crowd. Paul and Reto shredded, and Clay played awesome. Once the 6 teams made it to the Disco the rest had a 2nd chance for the final spot in the disco...Lui thought it was a good idea to give the players another chance to polish their competition skills by having another round of play, an idea started by the Swedish players aka 'B-Final'.

It was a fierce battle and it came down to execution under challenging conditions - Andrea and Antonio, Mark and Matteo and newcomers Fabio and Stefano all performed well. But 9 months after learning to delay Fabbio and Stefano pulled off the upset by hitting nice co-ops and playing to the crowd.

On Saturday the co-op Semi saw 14 year old Israeli jamming sensation Lusti perform - he was a crowd favorite all weekend in the countless jam sessions on the beach and 'red carpet' (now red plastic playing surface). It was also great to see the lone femme-jammer Hila jam with Paolo from Rome local Rimini prodigy Luca. Other highlights were watching newcomers Fabio and Stefano hookup with fellow sinistra (counter) jammer Gregory from Amsterdam. Jan from Denmark and Iwan from Amsterdam complimented the Beast in co-op with their clock brushing skills and big air catches.

ANDREA MEOLA- ANTONIO PICCIONI - DORI YANIV were fun to watch all weekend. Andrea is in the early running with Eduardo and Fabbio and others for most improved and Antonio, a award winning marathon runner from Milan fired up the crowd with big air and high energy. Dori may have been the busiest man at Paganello, when he wasn't jamming he was holding freestyle clinics and networking with countless ultimate players interested in freestyle. There were dozens of new players that didn't compete, all together there must have been about 70 + jammers - and only 6 from the US!

In the Disco the late start time seemed to hurt the teams concentration a bit and nobody really hit big time but the crowd was psyched and the biggest energy show of the year was again an unbelievable thrill. (I'll leave all the details about the parties to your imagination!)

On Sunday the sun was out again and the freestyle at times sizzled! Only 4 teams made it the finals in each division and in the Co-op Reto, Paul and Gary were the winners with a nicely choreographed, multi-disc routine.

Congrats to Reto and Gary for their first Paganello wins, this may have also been Reto's first win and for Gary his first since winning the Worlds in '95!

Taking 2nd was me, Clay and Pipo - we had some great moments but a few too many drops. In 3rd place was Mark Regalbuti teaming with Roma shredders Alessandro and Eduardo. Mark infused his years of experience into their routine giving the Romans some needed mentoring in choreography and approach to tournament play - bravo Maro and the Romans! Filling in for Clay on Ciakka Uakka was Matteo and he played his usual solid game which fit in well with Lorenzo's turn-over body roll work and 'Style-Nando's' "too sexy" moves.

In the Open Pairs the wind was a little better and it seemed to make a big difference. All 4 teams had 3 or fewer drops in the final and in the end Clay and Tommy (me) took the title. Not only the freestylers but the ultimate players and even the Mayor were excited for Clay - this was his first win at Paganello and he earned it!

Clay hit big combo after big combo and helped fire up his partner to push the boundaries hitting 2 '10' combos. 2nd place went to Paul and Reto - they had a really creative and fun routine combining acrobatic and technical moves to the music. 3rd place went to wind jammers Pipo and the Beast and Alessandro and Eduardo finished 4th. It was an awesome way to end Paganello with all the teams in the Open Pairs finals hitting with very few drops. At the awards ceremony Mark Regalbuti and Steve Hays (Buti and the Beast) were acknowledged for their contributions to the sport...Mark had generously helped Italian players compete at the FPA Worlds last year, and the Beast had travelled to Italy to help mentor Fabio and Stefano in Trieste.

The Spirit of the Game award, voted by the players, was awarded to Fabbio, his web site freeskyler.com has helped spread the jam and his love for the game is catching....