

# ***Acrobatic Paganello 2006***

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

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The 2006 Paganello Freestyle Challenge is history.

28 Open Pairs teams and 18 co-op teams competed, jammed and partied 'til the break of dawn in Rimini, Italy. The Italian players came from Lecce, Rome, Pescara, Trieste, Vicenza, Torino, Milano, Bolgna and Rimini. But players also came from as far as America, China, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, Tunisia and Germany as well. There was the customary Thursday night jams during the Opening party inside the big tent, the huge fireworks display with the full moon in the background, and the free vino and pasta for all 1,600+ disc athletes in atten'dance'.

Friday afternoon the first rounds took place and with so many Open Pairs teams we decided to use the alternating pool system where 2 pools play at the same time and 2 sets of judges are used to judge, which leaves no lag time in between teams. The top 4 teams from each pool would make it to the semi-final at the Saturday night 'disco' party and the other 18 teams would get a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance to make the semis in a 'b-final'. It was a really great idea to give the new players a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance since many were competing in front of an audience for the first time.

Some highlights of the pairs prelims were Rimini locals Andrea Dini and Luca Medri taking 2nd in the their pool with a score of 67, and the young players from near Milan Valerio Occorsio and Giovanni Coppo making the semis by tying for 3rd with the Lecce jammers Ramon Galliani and Carlo Perrone. They were joined by the other members of the Lecce gang when Angelo Mancarella and Cristina Nicolardi made the cut as well. But maybe the biggest suprise were the youngsters Claudio Cigna and Riccardo Bovicelli who made the cut as well.

The 'B-final' was an awesome battle as 13 teams battled for only 2 spots. The young boys from Trieste Marco & Davide Sanna played very well and were happy to take 6th. Paolo Magni and Danilo Torzolini showed they had what it takes to make the cut with a very nice routine but a few late drops opened the door and the Hungarian team of Balazs Major and Gergo Nemeth (14 and 16 years old) who stepped up and hit enough moves to sneak into the semis by placing 2nd in the pool. Another big suprise was Silvia Caruso and Andrea Rimatori who played awesome and ended up winning the B-final.

On Saturday the wind was stronger was coming from behind the grandstand where people were sitting to watch the freestyle. This made it very difficult for teams as the winds would gust from different directions. The open co-op round began around 2pm which was nice since many players had joined the Torino posse playing 'speed flow' until 3 or 4 am at the Friday night party.

Some highlights from pool A was watching the '14 and under' jam of Ale Collera', and Marco & Davide Sanna, a crowd favorite. It was also a treat to see the latest graduates from the 'Nando Frisbee School' in Rome, Simone Italiano, Nicolo' D'ardia and Stefano Bellucci play - the 18 and 19 year olds have all been playing for less than 2 years and are improving fast. The top 2 spots in the pool taken by the teams of Reto Zimmerman, Clay Collera' and Tom Leitner(me) - Reto played unbelievably well - and Luca Medri, Fernando

Botrugno and Mauro Mercuri. That left 4 teams battling for the 3rd and final spot in the finals. In the end the teams of Paolo Magni, Danilo Torzolini and Giovanni Coppo, and Angelo Mancarella, Ramon Galliani and Carlo Perrone had tied for 5th only .2 behind Matteo Gaddoni, Riccardo Bovicelli and Claudio Cigna which meant the Roman team of Luca Mazzuccato, Andrea Rimatori & Claudio Massaro had done a better job surviving the tough winds and had made it to the finals.

In pool B the wind again took its toll on the players but Titcomb brothers Xthen, Zahlen & Vehro fired up the crowd dressed in dinner coats and ties. Xthen and Zelino now live in Beijing, China and Vehro in Chicago. They hit some incredible big air moves but an error proved costly as one of the boys mistakenly threw the disc to his father, John during the routine - they ended up missing the finals by only .2 points. But the family was still in high spirits as usual, the boys had given all the freestylers beautiful new t-shirts from their new company [www.fiveultimate.com](http://www.fiveultimate.com), with a picture of 'Zelino' from the Nike commercial. Edging them out and making the finals was the team of Danny Cameranesi and the Hungarian boys Balazs Major and Gergo Nemeth. Danny was a big help even though he couldn't speak Hungarian he was able to communicate using the disc and the boys got the message - 'catch that gitis!'

The Saturday night 'disco' round started earlier than usual this year at 9:30 pm as the Ultimate players were just arriving to the party – most dressed in 'ethnic stereotype' costumes which was the theme of the party. The first team under the big tent were the Hungarians Balazs & Gergo with the Hungarian ultimate team acting as a cheering section. A crowd favorite all weekend the boys responded by hitting most of their co-ops and several big air catches. After all the teams had played in was clear that the youngsters Valerio Occorsio and Giovanni Coppo had handled the pressure the best to take 3rd place and make it to the finals along with favorites Clay & Fabio who took 2<sup>nd</sup> and totally rocked the tent and Reto and Danny who played phenomally well especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of their routine. This would have left the Hungarians tied for 4th place with Fernando & Mauro just out of the finals....but with a little coaxing from me and Clay, Lui decided to take 4 teams from each pool instead of 3 much to the delight of Balazs and Gergo and the Romans.

In the 2nd pool the young phenoms Claudio Cigna and Riccardo Bovicelli showed their hein, spontaneous jam outside Lord Nelson Pub Friday night was not a fluke, these guys are for real. They recovered from a few drops to hit huge gitis' and bad attitudes making the finals with a 4th place finish. Ramon Galliani and Carlo Perrone from Lecce played superbly and took 3rd. I didn't see Piccio and Andrea Meola play as I was warming up but I could hardly concentrate as the crowds screams were so loud, they must have shredded! Lorenzo Apriani - who had just flown in from Brazil on Thursday morning might have still had some Ronald McDonald makeup on but he was ready and fired up to play and we survived some early drops to hit a few big combos and win the pool edging Piccio and Andrea by less than 4 points. The great thing about having the Semifinals at the party is when you're done playing you can begin partying -immediately!

The finals began at 3pm allowing the players some recovery time from the night before. The winds were light and were coming from a better direction and it was sunny and about 75 degrees - as was the case most of the weekend.

The crowd for the finals was the biggest ever with about 700 people in a big circle around the red carpet at any time and probably 3,000 plus over the course of the day.

I wasn't able to see all the teams play but in the Co-op final Andrea Meola, Piccio and Fabio scored 65.6 to challenge Reto, Clay and I for the title, we hit our opening but had a few drops on our first indys but recovered by hitting some big combos and finishing strong - the judges gave us 66.8 and awarded us the title.

In 3rd place with 54.5 was Nando, Mauro and Luca Medri who played well all weekend. Danny C and the Hungarians ended up 4th!

The play in the Open pairs final was even better with 8 of the 9 teams scoring 59 or higher. Congrats to Valerio Occorsio and Giovanni Coppo for taking 4th place - out of 28 teams! And to all the finals jammers for putting on such a great show for the crowd.

It was great to see so many young players at such a high level, I believe there were 14 players under 20 (4 who made the finals) including 5 players who were 14 or younger. There was also talk about adding a mixed division with the improvement of Silvia, Cristina, Sara and Eleonora.

Italian Nation TV Channel 5 covered the event as did Cable sports channel SkyTV as well as several other TV and Newspaper services.

Lastly, I can't say enough about the awesome spirit shown by everybody this weekend, it was really great to see all the encouragement for the new players young and old, lets ride this wave all the way to Berlin, Rome and beyond.

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- Tom