



... HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In the beginning, just being present at any kind of an event was enough to provide entertainment. The public were amazed that flying was possible with these bright pieces of cloth.

But, at some point, the public grew accustomed to this little wonder and as in the normal nature of things, started to demand more action. After the 'Wing Over' came spectacular spiral dives, exiting the manoeuvre as close as possible to the ground. Courageous pilots soon enjoyed shocking onlookers with wild canopy deformations.

After only a few years of pioneering work, media reports started to take an interest in the top pilot's achievements, as well as the accidents which had previously interested them. The gliding performance of the first paragliders was way below that of hang gliders of that time. So the original media interest was in flights in the high mountains and portraits of professional show pilots. The list of pioneers is long: Jaen Marc Bovin, Andy Hediger, Sebastian Bourquin (alias Rambo), Andre Bucher, Toni Bender, Christoph Kirsch, Gianni Faé, David Perathoner just to mention a few.

Legendary acro films were made such as 'Duel In The Clouds', 'Angel Hunt' and 'Flamenco Dune'. The first event dedicated to acro flying was 'Adrenalina' at Lake Garda. This was followed by unofficial European and World Championships and displays at the Saint Hilaire Festival and many other smaller, but well visited local flying shows.

Markus Gründhammer, Mike Küng, Stefan Mast, André Bucher, Christian Amon and David Perathoner shook up the paragliding scene in the mid nineties: manoeuvres such as 'Heaven'd'Hell', Full Stalls flown in reverse, Inversions and flights with one riser unhooked carried risk and sensation to the extremes.

Andi Hediger amazed onlookers with ground spirals and almost vertical loops. He used lead weights attached to his legs to increase the dynamics of his Paratech P6 and perfected his posture.

Paragliding aerobatics really came of age at the end of the nineties with Felix and Raul Rodriguez, their SAT-team and the birth of SAT.

A NEW ERA STARTED WITH THE BIRTH OF SAT'S ...

The SAT and all the follow-up manoeuvres introduced not only a previously unknown dynamic to acro flying, but seemingly challenged the laws of gravity and aerodynamics.

And so it came to be: Red Bull became a major sponsor, the Acro World Cup was founded and the first official World Championship in paragliding aerobatics took place in 2006. Vertigo, Acroaria, Acrolac, Vertigo Voss, Paranoia Acrobatiix and Adrenalina became permanent fixtures on the calendar of the world elite. Professionals such as Mike Küng, The Renegades, Against the Grain and members of the SAT-Team were invited to events around the globe.

IN 2005 ACRO FLYING HAS A NEW DIMENSION ...

Today with acro booming more and more, 'normal' pilots become fascinated with the idea of flying freestyle manoeuvres. Despite the legal situation, acro courses, where interested students could learn SAT, Full Stall, Helicopter and Asymmetric Spirals, started to appear.

Since then the paraglider manufacturers have ventured to officially produce acro and freestyle

wings and to sell them as such to the general public. Interest in these wings is enormous. Specialist acro wings have been designed and developed for the top athletes, who have now access to high quality equipment.

Today talented up and coming pilots can find plenty of literature, video clips and instruction in the internet so that they can quickly improve and become real competition for their idols.

Anyone who came away from that first Acro World Championships thinking they had seen all the possible manoeuvres was very wrong. Back then, after each manoeuvre there was a short break as the pilots allowed the wing to stabilise before attempting the next trick.

Now professional pilots seem to smoothly flow from one manoeuvre to another: dropping into a Helico from a SAT and vice versa. Or even Rhythmic SAT to SAT which gently mutates into a Tumbling, eventually becoming an Infinite Tumbling, which then without a pause and apparently guided by a magic hand is then finally steered into a Helico.

In 2007 everybody was talking about Infinite Tumbling. Nobody could imagine a more extreme manoeuvre. No way!: Samba, Misty Tumbling and Infinity over a SAT exited on the opposite side clearly show that the pilots are still full of imagination.

Some of the most impressive developments have been in the combination of manoeuvres such as SAT-to-Helico, ... everything to Helico ...

Most professionals in the acro scene come (even today) from France, Spain and South America. Closely followed by Austria and Switzerland.

- FAI Paragliding Aerobatics**
Nations ranking 2007-12-01
- 1 France
 - 2 Spain
 - 3 Switzerland
 - 4 Austria
 - 5 Hungary
 - 6 Norway
 - 7 Brazil
 - 8 Argentina
 - 9 Germany
 - 10 Italy



- FAI Paragliding Aerobatics**
Overall pilots ranking 2006-09-01
- 1 Raul Rodriguez (Spain)
 - 2 Félix Rodriguez (Spain)
 - 3 Antoine Montant (France)
 - 4 Michael Knipping (Germany)
 - 5 Horacio Llorens (Spain)
 - 6 Hans Prunarety (France)
 - 7 Renato Lopes (Brazil)
 - 8 Hernán Pitocco (Argentina)
 - 9 Pal Takats (Hungary)
 - 10 Guillaume Chatain (France)

