



# PAINTBALLER

Text by Rich Telford & Photography by Romain Manière







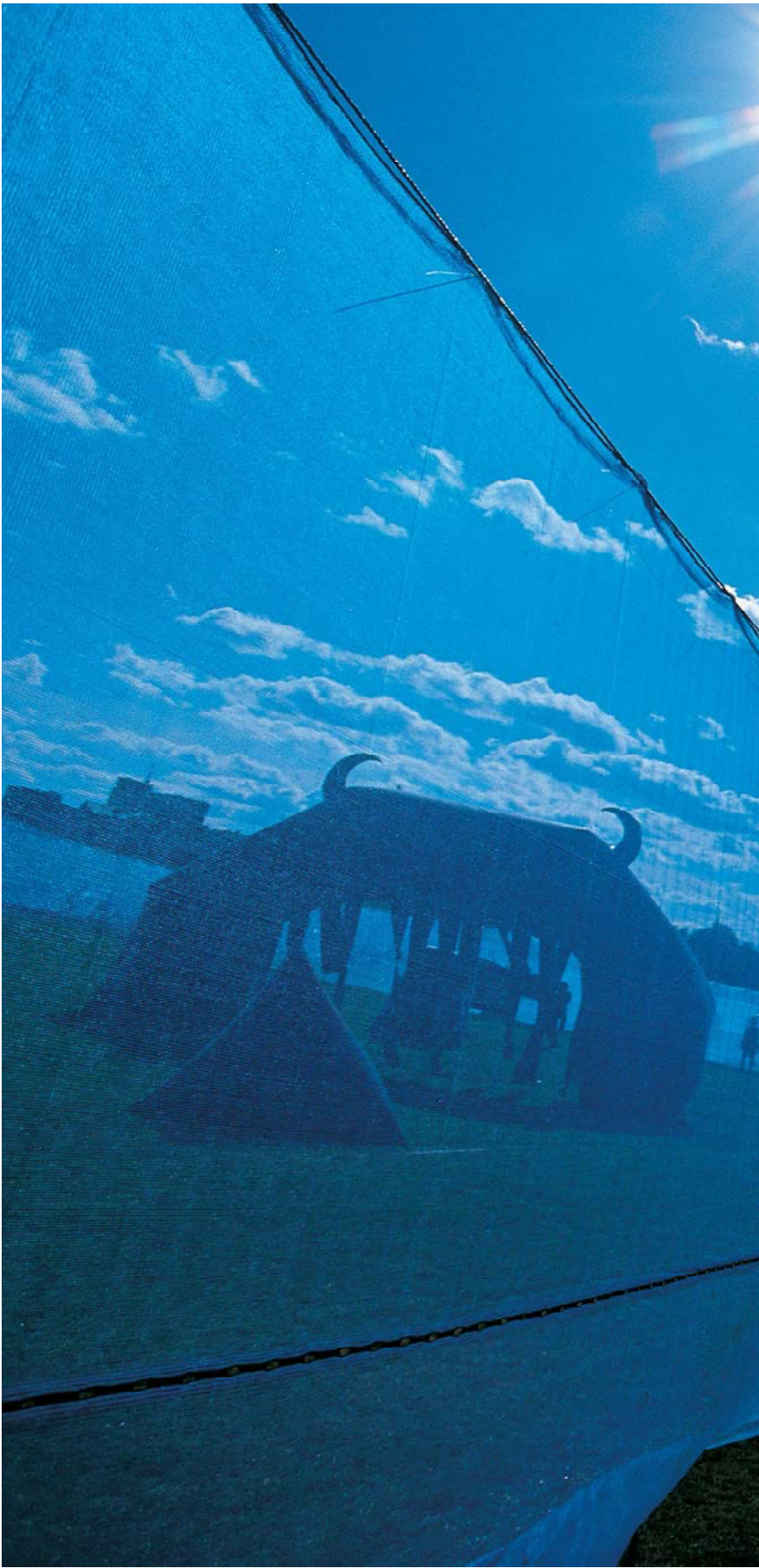
# **PAINTBALLER**

Photography by Romain MANIERE & Texte by Ritch TELFORD  
With participation of Fabien CUVILIEZ

*For Arnaud Suty*

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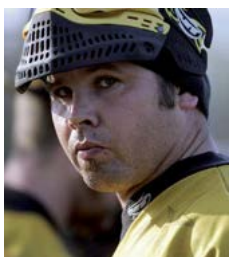






# P R E F A C E

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Sometimes I forget that paintball is such a young sport, only somewhere around 30 years old, yet somehow, I feel like it has been a huge part of our lives for as long as I can remember

and I can't imagine life without it. In the time we have shared, the industry has become almost like a very large family. This is a family that includes players, coaches, vendors, spectators, and photographers, even referees and of course many more I am probably forgetting. This family spans across the world and we all share a common passion for this sport and from this common passion, respect, companionship and trust for

one another have grown. We often only see each other four or five times a year, but when we do, it's as if we hadn't spent any time apart. We have been through so many crazy, humorous and often emotional times together; we have traveled the world and competed with and against each other. At times, we have had very heated moments on the field, but off the field we have shared a handshake, a hug and a laugh. I have met some of the best people I could ever hope to know through paintball. Paintball players and enthusiasts are some of the most real, down-to-earth and giving people that you will ever meet. A paintball player will literally give you the jersey off of his back after spending all weekend trying to beat you on the field.

Some of the coolest and most dedicated people behind the scenes in paintball are the photographers

and writers. Paintball photographers, no matter how large (or small) of a media outfit they are a part of, are key in helping the sport and industry grow. So much of paintball is visual and full of passion and the photographers are the ones who are capturing it and sharing it with the world. They are the ones who are exposing paintball to the world and future players. Whether it is a large magazine or a small website, the photographs are what touch people and share the event with people who could not be there or help people to relive the moment. The photographers are always there but seemingly appear to not be there at all. You will never find them in your way and, at least on the field, you will never even see them or know they were there until you see the shot they took of you. They catch you at your best, and worst, times but you trust them not to show the world your darkest moments.

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The photographers go out on the field with a bunch of guys that are trying to shoot each other so they get shot and riddled with paintballs. As a player, I get shot once and I get to go to the dead box and I do this with adrenaline flowing to dull the pain, they are out there, feeling each and every shot that hits them, without the pain-relieving adrenaline. Photographers usually stay on the field for the entire event and get shot over and over again until they finally get the pictures they want. When they do get off the field, it's not too long before they turn right around and go back out there. They do this over and over again, regardless of the amount of times they are shot, regardless of the conditions they have to endure. Capturing the moment and getting unbelievable shots is their main motivation with little to no concern for their own safety or comfort. Just comparing the amount of time the

average player is on the field to the hours the average paintball photographer is on the field, most players just couldn't do it.

I remember meeting a couple of guys years ago, I had seen them here and there, I had seen their work and I knew how talented they were but I had never met them properly. At events you meet so many people that it gets difficult to remember whom, what and when but I still remember meeting Romain and Fabien. They were super cool. They didn't speak much English and my French was even worse. Yet somehow, we were able to talk to each other and get to know each other with a little help from a mutual friend, Sam. Little did I know at the time, we would get to know each other quite well and work together for years to come. They both worked with "Facefull", one of the most renowned and

respected magazines to have existed in paintball. They were able to capture the beauty and heart of the sport and do so in a unique, creative fashion.

I couldn't have more respect for the photographers that shoot paintball. The photos in this book convey what no words could. They capture those candid moments in time and provide a history from the last twenty years in paintball. This is a timeline, in pictures, of the birth and growth of our sport from its humble beginnings to its crash and burn fall and then the rebuilding again. This is what paintball was and will be again, raw and unscripted. This is paintball as it really happened, no sponsors, no fans, just real, down-to-earth paintball. Sometimes it's great, sometimes it's terrible but it is what it is and this is its visual story. •

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A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a tree canopy. The leaves are a mix of green and brown, indicating autumn. Several bright red fruits, possibly cherries or small apples, are visible among the leaves. In the bottom right corner, there is a glass containing a pink liquid with a splash of pink paint or dye on its surface. The word "STORY" is written in white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

STORY







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WHO HASN'T DREAMT OF BEING A HERO, OF SAVING THE WORLD, OR OF LEADING THEIR TROOPS TO VICTORY ? SUCH SCENARIOS ABOUND IN THE EXPANDING WORLD OF VIDEO GAMES, BUT THEY REMAIN VIRTUAL, ON A SCREEN, AND ARE LIVED BY PROXY IN A MICROCHIP UNIVERSE. YET THERE EXISTS AN ALTERNATIVE, AN ENDLESS TREASURE-TROVE OF ADVENTURE, WHERE OUR MINDS HARNESS BOTH THE POWER OF IMAGINATION AND REALITY, WHERE OUR HEARTS START POUNDING IN ANTICIPATION AS OUR BODIES ARE OVERWHELMED BY ADRENALINE. PAINTBALL LETS YOU ENTER THIS UNIVERSE, BECOME THE HUNTER—OR THE HUNTED—IN SITUATIONS THAT FEW EXPERIENCE. A POSSIBLE THREAT AND YET NOTHING MORE THAN CHILD'S PLAY.

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Over the span of 25 years, and across the world, « paintball » has become synonymous with this exciting universe. This sport, which only barely existed in 1980, has joined the ranks of other adrenaline sports as ubiquitous as skateboarding, rollerblading, or surfing. Far gone is the time when telling people you played paintball always triggered the same response: « paint what » ? Sometimes they believed you were a pinball champion. You then had to start rambling for 30 minutes, explaining what the sport was about, to inevitably get the same response : « Right, you play war. » However, paintball has greatly evolved during the past decade, game formats have changed, the small screen has got involved, and above all, an increasing number of people now play paintball. During those years, the sport has managed to find its way into the media, often not glamorized- it's true- but nevertheless always intriguing. First reserved for hobbyists, paintball has finally reached mass appeal. Today, when the word "paintball" is mentioned in conversation, the answer is always enthusiastic: "That's awesome. My friend plays every weekend." Paintball is now one of the world's many 'alternative' sports.

Who would have thought that this survival game, which was born deep in the forests of the Eastern US, is now played in the bright lights of stadiums, and is the dedicated weekend activity of millions of people across the world. We aim to bring you a brief overview of the sport's origins, its basic rules and its main personalities and key players.

For paintball to exist, the equipment, the actual 'paint gun', first had to be invented. The key to paintball is in its name : a ball full of paint. Without this little gelatin sphere, which bursts when it hits its target—leaving a small stain of paint—; the game would have never been invented.

The small paint pellet needs to be fired from a marker (the common term for a 'paint gun'), whatever its design. What would a paintball be without a marker, a pump marker, semi or fully automatic electropneumatic marker, or even a sling?

The legend goes that paintball came out of the woods, but few know that this is literally where it was first used, in the deep forest. Where trees are inaccessible. For many years, lumberjacks used paintballs to mark trees—the ones too hard to reach but destined to be cut down. They used the simplest and first type of marker ever invented. Few players today even know of its existence: the Nelspot. The Nelspot 707 was invented in 1970 by a company called Sheridan. Its caliber was already of 0.68, a number that would stay with paintball for most of its history. The marker wasn't fancy and looked pretty much like a handgun. The gas used to propel the ball was stocked in 12 gram cartridges, the same used to carbonate water or make whipped cream. This

cartridge gave the marker an autonomy of around 10 paintballs.

The Nelspot fired colored balls in gelatin shells. RP Scherer was the company entrusted with manufacturing these fragile and brittle projectiles. We say fragile for two reasons. The first is that they have to be protected from humidity and don't fare well in either hot or cold temperatures. The second is that their shells have to be brittle enough to break on target, allowing the paint to spread in a fraction of a second. So yes, paintballs and markers already existed, but the sport... that still had to be invented.

It came about as an idea amongst a group of friends. They wanted to find a way to test people's ability to survive in extreme environments and situations. City slickers versus country boys. Long before reality TV shows like Survivor, people would be faced with the most extreme missions. This strange idea developed into a number of challenges, but it was on seeing a Nelspot 707 that the real game was born.

## THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATURE

This invention could have remained buried in the woods if it hadn't been for a couple of visionaries—kidults might be more appropriate—Charles Gaines and Bob Guersney, who were the first to fire a marker at each other in 1981.

They decided to organize the first game of paintball. The approach was very different from today's game, played on turf fields hiding behind inflated obstacles. The word 'stock class' means little to today's player, who navigates the vibrant industry that paintball has become. However back in 1981, there was no prior knowledge of the terrain, no inflatable obstacles, no fans... The organizers chose a forest as their first paintball field. Twelve men participated in this challenge. Who would survive? Who would be able to meet the objectives faster than the other? Each man was playing for himself, on some 100 acre-terrain, paintball marker in hand, and protected by a face mask that would give a modern-day paintball insurer a heart attack. Eliminating the opponents wasn't the primary objective. Twelve flags were hung at various key locations on the area. Grabbing all 12 flags won the game. Paintball—the sport—was born.

It soon became clear for Guersney and Gaines that a game that drew on such raw instincts would be appealing. A sure way to fire up adrenaline in a few seconds. Hunt or be hunted, as if your life depended on it. Guersney brought this idea to market that same year. The national survival game was born. He fully committed himself to this project, which did not go unnoticed, and even garnered some media coverage. The





BIGFOOT - Quebec - 2010



CAMP MASTER - Paris - 1995



buzz created around this game pushed him to further develop the game. From letters to frantic phone calls, the game was spreading through the entire country.

Yet paintball only began as an industry when Guersney first met Nelspot representatives. He managed to negotiate an exclusive distribution deal for paintball.

As in most new ventures, business was slow on the upstart, sales were stagnant and Guersney's investors—despite them being first and foremost his friends—became restless. His main problem was a lack of visibility, there simply were not enough fields dedicated to the sport. How can you develop an activity without dedicated areas to practice it? He changed strategy. No paintball fields? Then let's create fields. He offered a package deal to open fields across the country, a perfect beginner's kit. The plan worked. Some 350 pioneers believed in the project, in the national survival game, and turned paintball into a full time job.

Some of these pioneers marked the sport's history forever. Debra Dion Krischke worked as the main PR for the National Survival Game (NSG). She organized the famous International Amateur Open, and still owns a site called "Three River Paintball! Jerry Brown created the Orlando World Cup—paintball's key international tournament and launched professional teams like Ground Zero or New York Extreme, a paintball media baron. Many others would follow in their footsteps.

Twenty-five years later, there are thousands of paintball fields on the planet. The sport is played on all continents, with more than 2500 in the US and hundreds in South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Paintball was also marked as one of the most innovative and active industries in the world. Many entrepreneurs imposed their vision on this young sport. Companies and field owners transformed paintball. From the internationally-renowned fields—Hollywoods Sport, SC Village, or Bigfoot paintball—to the industry leaders like Dye, Tippmann, or WDP. All would change paintball for the better, making it more visible, more intense, and more appealing than ever.

PMI was the first company to start ordering large quantities of paintballs. Its CEOs Jeff Perlmutter and David Freeman had seen the sport's great potential and knew full well that without paintballs, there was no sport. They started the distribution of paintball products in the fast-growing rental field market. Their main product was paintballs, to which they soon added a wide range of equipment. They brought out markers, of course, with the famous PGP, and later the PMI I, II, and III in semi - auto. They later released the Piranha marker and a wide range paintball-related equipment. They also were the first to structure the sport in paintball leagues. With these leagues came the first great paintball teams, the All Americans, Farside, the Florida Terminators. They moved paintball development abroad with, for instance, Paul Wilson and Steven Baldwin in the UK who hosted the famous Mayhem Master, for a long time the only major European paintball tournament.

With paintball's fast expansion came new markets, and, with them, new brands. One company, Brass Eagle, did a lot for paintball by making paintball products available in large distribution outlets like Walmart. Founded in 1985 by Aldo Perrone, Brass Eagle knew that the sport could only grow if goods were easy to find and easy to purchase. It became the norm to find entire isles of paintball products in the sports section of large superstores, right between boating gear and fishing rods.

Markers have, since the first Nelspot 707, considerably improved. In the past 25

years, manufacturers have kept innovating with new systems and new designs; some successful, others less. The first real technical innovations came from a brand called Tippmann, which started manufacturing paintball markers in 1986. The company changed the sport entirely, introducing full auto and CO2 screw-in tanks. They were the first to significantly increase markers' rate of fire. Since its inception, Tippmann has always been synonymous with innovation and reliability. This reputation was many years in the making, thanks to the creation of some of the most famous markers in the sport's history- the SL 68, but also the 98 model, the most reliable rental marker ever created.

Another key leader was Tom Kaye and a little company called Airgun Design, which also brought its share of patents to the table. With a few designs in hand, Kaye and his team started working on a semi - automatic marker that would be both reliable and fast: The Automag. The marker immediately garnered a large fan base and soon became the reference in terms of semi automatic technology. Its integrated regulator—which, as its name suggests, regulates incoming pressure—was a major development in the use of compressed air. The Automag regulator was perfectly adapted to this function, letting the marker operate with a high pressure tank. Kaye had found a high pressure cylinder already used in the industry and created a small revolution in paintball propulsing technology. Easy to use and providing greater autonomy, compressed air had all the right attributes to become the norm, though some paintball sites took time to make the costly change to their facilities. Airgun Design quickly conquered the UK market, collaborating with another company, The Kingman group, which marked the history of paintball, in both technology and on the field.

With its key product, the Spyder, the Kingman group made semi automatic markers accessible to the wider public. The company spread its web by marketing a simple but sturdy design (with its full metal body) at a good price. The Spyder was declined in a number of different versions, with a full accessory line. Kingman introduced an easy, cheap way to get into the sport, and then evolved overtime to higher-end markers. a recipe for success.

Smart Parts, a company launched in Pennsylvania by two brothers, Adam and William Gardner, was the first company to tackle the market of tournament paintball. The two brothers played in one of the top professional teams of the time, the All Americans, to which we'll come back to later. Smart Parts started by marketing very technologically sound and precise equipment for the ever more demanding ranks of competitive players. The famous All American barrel topped all other barrels in the industry. The Shocker, whose design was dubbed 'square' at the time, was one of the most accurate markers on the market. The company's motto— 'equipment counts' —had never held truer.

Dye is another success story for what started as a paintball barrel manufacturer and then went on to redefine high-end equipment. Its creator, Dave Youngblood—who had already made his mark with his team, the Ironmen—brought his personal genius to a fast-growing industry. Youngblood knew that surrounding himself with some of the most visible personalities of the sport would be beneficial. The brand, extremely active in competitive paintball, continues to sponsor some of the best teams in the sport and key players like Oliver Lang, the highest paid professional paintball player in the world.

Across the Atlantic, only a few European brands managed to make their mark on what had become a global market. Two UK brands marked the global industry. Paintball Eclipse revolutionized paintball technology by perfecting electronic grip frames. These were used to change anything, from the rate of fire to trigger responsiveness. The

other brand WDP, with its rockstar attitude incarnates British pop paintball at its best. With a very aggressive marketing campaign, its main product, the Angel, was one of the most competitive markers of the time. The company remains as visionary today as it always has been.

Another brand, key to paintball's success and its foray into stadiums, was a company called Adrenaline Games, which manufactured the inflatable obstacles that bring strategy to the game. The company let players leave the classic wooded terrain to create challenging scenarios on any open area.

Finally, this brief overview would not be complete without mentioning the second most essential piece of equipment: the goggle. Paintball could not have evolved without ensuring players' safety. Who would let their children play paintball with basic workman's glasses that constantly fog or scratch? Knowing full well that without adequate face protection, the industry—and the sport—would not develop, several brands became specialized in manufacturing the best goggles on the market. Of all these, one comes to mind: JT. Started by John Gregory, who was at the time manufacturing motocross equipment, the company soon became the reference in terms of paintball goggles. JT Racing, as it was then known, took a few years to overtake its main rival, a brand called Scott. From there, the company also played a key role in changing paintball attire, turning the regular camo sweatshirt into full-on technical equipment, padded pants, vented jerseys, and gloves to give the entire sport a giant makeover.

With the development of the industry came the development of paintball media, from print magazines to websites, video feeds, and even TV shows, which all ensured the sport had its superstars. A huge number of players and paintball addicts the world over came together to create an active community. Online, hundreds of thousands of people were strong-buzzing with the latest results, equipment reviews, and juicy gossip.

As for television, it was regarded for years as the sport's holy grail. In fact, the sport changed entirely to adapt to TV's ruthless format. New fields, new stadiums, and even a new game format—X-Ball—were all a part of it. X-Ball changed paintball from a one game adventure to 'scoring points' to win, and giving a two minute break between points to get ready for the next game, refill their markers, wipe the hits, etc.

From a simple hobby, paintball became—in a very short space of time—a highly competitive sport, with a strong industry, mind-boggling technology, and a full media spectrum. Groups of weekend players became teams, playing areas became paintball parks, and sunday games became tournament events, with cash prizes and all the glory that comes with it. These events then became structured and organized into leagues—some being international—to determine the best team in the world. But let's not get ahead of ourselves, if paintball started in the woods, then that's where the competition truly began. ●







MAYHEM MASTERS - London - 1995



# WOODS

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In the early days, paintball tournaments were organized on many different kinds of terrain. More than any other sport, paintball creates the need to challenge the other team, to outbrave one's opponent and, with this in mind, all sorts of terrain have been used, from the most beautiful forest to the most desolate wasteland.

Back in the day, there weren't any accepted guidelines. Yet it was not rare to have tournaments boasting over 150 teams. Before becoming what it is today, the game had a long road to follow. The bumpy path that went from the deepest recesses of the forest to the clean lawns of the stadiums was fraught with pitfalls. It is only in the last few years that paintball tournaments have started to look like real sporting events. Before the advent of the Air ball fields, paintball tournaments were more akin to military maneuver than to sporting competitions. Being part of a tournament in the 80's and 90's was an unforgettable experience, an epic journey.

Before tournaments settled into stadiums and their comfortable furnishings, they mainly took place in the forest or any other more or less natural, more or less fitted out, empty space. These spaces were called 'speed ball' - unobstructed terrain, set up with all sorts of obstacles, pallets, tires and walls and, occasionally, the carcass of an old car.

Even if all sorts of scenarios to play paintball - attack-defense, escort - can be imagined, the game scenario in a competition is usually the same. There are 2 teams of 3, 5, 7 or 10 players (even as many as 12) confronting each other with the objective of capturing the opposing team's flag and bringing it back to base. This takes place in a games field ranging from half a football pitch to a shopping mall parking lot.

Years ago, when you arrived for the first time at a site to participate in an event, you never knew what you were going to find regarding the structures or the actual playing field. Wooded terrain directly depends on its environment. Tournaments took place all over the United States, all over the world - even at that time - so players discovered a number of different styles, going from Las Vegas desert to pine forest, stopping in luxuriant Florida with its snakes, mosquitoes and fire ants along the way.

You can't play a heavily wooded field in the same way you would a sup'airball field. The landscape, the vegetation and even the time of year are all important components in reading the terrain and coming up with a strategy.

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ULIS OPEN - Paris - 1993





HELLWOOD(FR) - Camp Masters - 1996

You read the landscape to start with. Few forests exist as flat as a football pitch, and the more the site is hilly, the more interesting it is to play. Playing fields on hilly landscapes offer real strategic opportunities, with key positions and move possibilities for which there is no match in terms of distance covered on the Air ball fields of today. Playing in the woods offered great freedom of movement to the players and a the variety of situations to encounter. If modern paintball is like chess then woods paintball is more like 'beggar-my-neighbour'.

The size of the field was not a constant either. It was not rare to play 5 against 5 on a 10 man terrain and vice versa. During this whole period ( ie80's and 90's) the most prestigious division was the 10man game. The sites were therefore more adapted to that category. It was in the 10man game that the biggest teams were born, many of which are still playing today and have been quite capable of adapting to the radical changes in terrain. Names like Ironmen, All Americans, and Aftershock spring to mind.



IRONMEN (US) - Mayhem Master London -1995





AVALANCHE "Chris Lasoia" (US) - World cup Orlando -1997





PREDATORS (UK) - Olm Bush London - 1994





STORM (UK) - Ulis Open Paris - 1994



The infrastructures were also very unpredictable. Usually the selected sites offered relatively good set ups for sites in the middle of the wilderness. However, it did occasionally happen that the tent was too small for everyone to fit in or worse, we had no tent at all and we would end up in the rain squelching around in the mud for three days. Car rental agencies had no trouble recognizing paintballers' rentals, from the outside and from the inside...

Each paintball site has its local team and there is a great advantage in playing at 'home'. Wooded games fields have their own specificities and each one is unique. Bunkers are often made out of piles of fallen branches or other irregular materials and offer varying levels of cover. When playing, it was best to know the palette you were throwing yourself under, since it was not unusual for them to let the paint pellets through. At times, it was even possible to out a player by just shooting at the holes in his cover or if there weren't any holes you could sometimes make one by repeatedly shooting the same spot. On hilly terrain, the shooting angles to think of are far more complex. Shots can come not only from left or right but also from above or below depending on the landscape. The 'palettes' had very variable sizes going from suitcase size to car size. Additionally, it was not unusual to find a big puddle just where you were supposed to jump and slide. Some saw mud as more of an advantage than an inconvenience even if they then had to spend the rest of the day drenched to the bone and looking like a moose. Indeed, a muddy puddle is the best place to lose a couple of paint shots taken while on the way to find cover. It also has to be said that the refs are a lot less fussyh on the paintcheck when you are covered in the brown stuff.

Walking the field could last hours for certain teams. Each tree, each angle, each hole had to be scrutinized and analyzed. There were occasionally up to 5 fields and more to walk and since most paintball games are won - or lost - in the first 5 minutes, its best to plan those minutes well.

Paintcheck... There's a word I had completely forgotten about before writing these lines. That refereeing expression stayed back in the woods, completely out of place in the much faster artificial terrain games. Asking for a Paintcheck is asking for a referee to check if a particular player has been hit (e.g. has paint on him/her). There were few referees on the field back in the day and they could not cover all of the players, which is why during the game the players would call for a paintcheck, asking the ref to check an opponent they thought had been shot. If the ref was not quick in doing so the impact paint had a high chance of disappearing. The paintcheck procedure was simple: once the player was identified, the ref would go to him/her and declare him/her neutral.

Being neutral meant that all shots, game plays, moves, charges in the players direction had to stop during the ref's inspection. Having someone declared neutral froze all of the moves. Players had to wait for the verdict before being allowed to pick up their actions and advances where they had left off. However, it was still possible to shoot at players who were not neutral. Once the paintcheck was complete, the ref would declare the player hit and out or would put him/her back in the game. When a player was put back in the game,



ALL AMERICAN (US) - Camp Master Paris - 1996



ALL AMERICAN (US) - Camp Masters Paris - 1996



PREDATORS (UK) - French Cup Marseille - 1995







IRONMEN (US) "Arnaud Suty" - Camp Master Paris - 1996



WOLVERINE (FR) - Marseille - 1995



BANDZAI BANDITS (UK) - NPPS London - 1996



TOM KEY (US) - Ullis Open Paris - 1994



CHOCKWAVE (UK) "Robo" - NPPS London - 1994



IRREDUCTIBLES (FR) - Ullis Open Paris - 1994





HELLWOOD (FR) - Camp Masters Paris - 1996



JOY DIVISION (SE) - joy masters Suede - 1997



IRONMEN (US) " Dave Young Blood " - Camp Master Paris - 1996



PREDATORS (UK) " Marcus Davis " - Toulouse - 1995





BUSHWAKERS (US) - Toulouse - 1995

they were given time to resume their position. The ref would shout 'clean', release the player and get out of the way of the tons of pellets that were going to rain on the opponent. This procedure was very logical, it made a lot of sense to immobilize a player, inspect him/her thoroughly and then release him/her back into the game.

The reality of the method was actually a lot more complicated to apply. Imagine trying to freeze the action of a 10 on 10 game when a paintcheck is called for on a middle player. The situation would take a school like turn of events, with the checked player telling the ref, too busy searching for paint marks to look up, that another player had moved. The ref then had to call on another ref to come over and get the player to go back to his/her original position. This was feasible if only one player had moved but imagine it when 4 or 5 paintballers did this at the same time. It's next to impossible to put them back in their place. Certain teams, in fact, used this technique very effectively to confuse and disorganize the game.

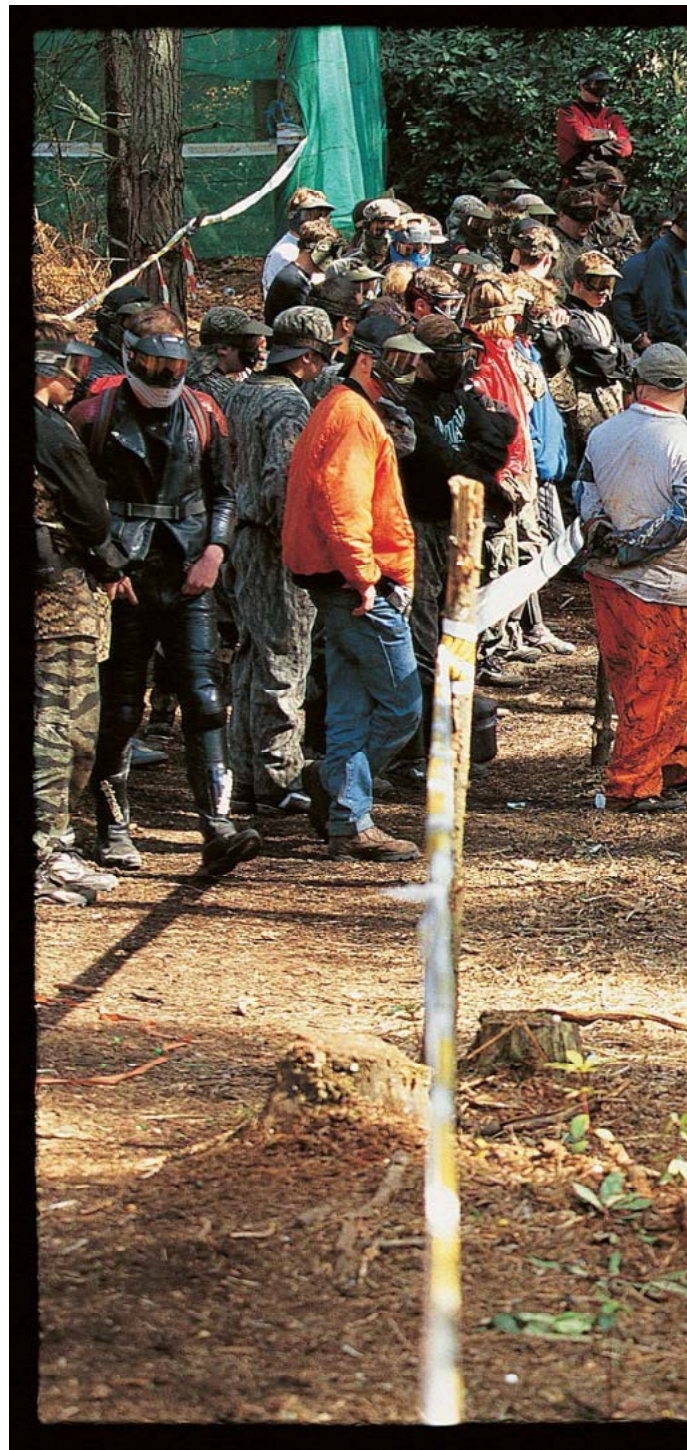
We have talked about the advantages of different types of terrain in strategic terms but the advantages for refereeing should not be forgotten. Indeed, when a tournament took place on a specific field, the organizers would often call on local referees. In a home game you got a local games field, local team and local refs and, in addition, you knew each hole through which you can fit the barrel of a gun, each angle from which to shoot, all this meant playing your own turf was an incredible advantage. Judgments were not always totally impartial when you played the rest of the year with the people you were refereeing.

Another charming aspect of the refereeing and of tournament rules in those days was the 'chrony penalty'. Ages ago, chrony was the end-of-the-game King. I'll explain: back in those days when the markers only worked mechanically, the speed was controlled twice. When you entered the field, the guns could not be faster than 300 feet per second, if they were you could end up without a marker. When exiting the field, it was custom to apply penalties if the control shots exceeded the authorized speed. If that were the case, everyone would start making complicated calculations on the average of three 'illegal' shots, for instance, multiplied by the penalty points, since the constants varied from one game to another.

The rush you got from the game was also very different. Imagine a 10 man match - or even a 12 man one - on a 12 ha field, playing for 25 minutes: 20 players dressed in camouflage from head to foot setting off for nearly half an hour's worth of game. It truly felt like a survival game. Strategies could be slowly devised. Players could crawl for 15 minutes until reaching the opponent's lair and wait for the opportune moment to jump up and hit the enemy - who didn't even suspect their presence - with a burst of pellets. Progression could then carry on. 15 minutes gives you the time to pull off a move. As always though, the last 5 minutes were action-packed, full of surprises, charges and other Dead man walks (players pretending to be 'out' so the opponents would come in close and then be eliminated when out in the open). A key factor in being a good player was endurance. If you were 'out' in 3 minutes, it wasn't a good thing unless you'd shot your quota of enemy before being hit.

Communication was an essential part of playing in the woods. How many are they? where are they? and other such 'intel' had real importance. Should I make my move on flank because it's clear?

Passing information from one side to the other could soon lead to shouting, radio use being forbidden. All the teams had their codes for signifying the number of players hit on both sides. Many will remember the G1, G2 used by the Ironmen.







HELLWOOD (FR) - NPPS Olm Bush - 1994





HELLWOOD (FR) - Mayem Master London - 1995



TIGRES de Camp (FR) - Ulis Open Paris - 1994







BOXER (FR) - Ullis open Paris - 1993



SHADE OF GREY (UK) - NPPS London - 1996

Like all sports, paintball needs refs and even a lot of refs depending on field size. In a 10 man game, with 3 or 4 refs on the field, it's hard to control a player in a split second and it was not rare, at the time, to see a player in attack position suddenly run back to the back of the field, without any apparent reason, and then slowly make their way front.

Strategies and tactics at that time had nothing in common with what a modern team would apply on a small-scale field in a stadium. Strategy had a lot more importance than it does nowadays, where tactics and individual technique have replaced it. How do you play a hilly 100 acre games field with a trench on one side and a mount on the other? The strategy had to be tailored not only the terrain but also to the opposing team and it was often difficult to go to watch their previous match. In fact, it was sometimes pointless to watch them play beforehand as tactics and strategies could differ so widely depending on terrain type. Similarly, individual technique would adapt to the terrain's characteristics. You just don't see a player crawl on modern fields; whereas it was the queen of all tactics in the woods, allowing progression unseen by the enemy but right under their nose.

The strategy could also be changed according to the number of points. Certain captains would spend ages watching the scores board trying to figure out which attitude to adopt - attack or defense: if against team A, I draw having only lost two players, I win the tournament. Many fell for this little counting game. The games were then a lot less interesting than usual since the players only had one goal in mind: to not get hit - and this was possible on an acre of wooded games field, even for 15 minutes- something that is inconceivable today the way paintball is played.

Camouflage wear was a must-have of this type of terrain, if your 'combat clothing' was adapted and effective it gave you a considerable advantage not to be sneezed at. Certain teams would insist on the smallest detail, covering every last inch of their gear in camouflage tape. Each team had its own camo outfit. They were often derived from military camouflage; it was in fact quite common to see players in real army camouflage gear, for instance Tiger strips, Woodland or Rhodesian. Later more 'politically correct' camouflage made their appearance like Tie-dye, Real tree or Bushian mostly derived from hunting outfits.

In the last years of woodland tournaments, many teams stopped wearing camouflage gear and started sporting clothing more reminiscent of extreme sports than of the army, often derived from motocross wear. 'JT' was one of the pioneers of this type of outfit, announcing modern gear and the arrival of the sport in the stadiums 'spotlights...

At the end of the weekend, after surviving weather conditions that were not always optimal, after numerous rifts between teams, referees and organizers, after complex calculations and many a gun failure; the winner was chosen; the one who had best survived. It was often, by the glow of car lights, with a three word speech and sometimes a small check that our weekend out-of-time would end and we would go back to our lives with only one thought in our head: 'when do we go again?' •



REFEREE (UK) - Camp Master Paris - 1994





TIGRES de Camp (FR) - Toulouse - 1995

# STADIUM

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The advent of paintball tournaments in stadiums may seem like a natural evolution but the shift from the woods took 15 years to truly settle in.

The first tournament to take place on artificial terrain was imagined by the English paintball company WDP in 1996 in Birmingham in England. For the first time, there were stands, and recognizable arbiters making gestures understandable by all and armed with speakers to explain the game to the public. As well as creating from scratch a symmetrical playing field and putting the players in a new environment, this new style of game brought paintball to the mainstream. Indeed, in the mid-nineties, Paintball was still a relatively obscure underground game. Finally, now, everything was open and visible; there was almost no need for game explanations.

Of course at the time of this first tournament, most of the matches still took place in the woods rather than on artificial terrain. It was quite a sight to see players turn up in full camo gear on the new futuristic playing fields.

The Frenchman Laurent Hamet perfectly understood the spirit and the attraction of these types of tournaments. He organized the first tournament to be played exclusively on artificial terrain. Furthermore, he actually created the concept of tournaments as they are today. With inflatable structures, paintball can be played anywhere, in any stadium, on the same field as football games. During the first years of the 'stadium invasion', the Toulouse tournament was spotlighted as a reference in terms of organization. No other event came close to this yearly game in the Southern French city of Toulouse. Paintball owes a lot to this tournament and its organizer. The major advantage of Laurent Hamet's product is that it can be dismantled and transported easily, a completely new concept of a paintball field a playing space that is easy to transport, set up, dismantle and that additionally offers fantastic advertising support was a god send at a time when Paintball was truly taking off as a sport.

The game's concept is so at one with its time that it can take over unexpected places according to current fashions. An example of this is the Toronto Skyball, where the word arena suddenly takes on all of its full meaning; being there is like being projected into a futuristic Roman arena. Even the Disney theme parks have got in on the act, providing the space for tournaments within their parks (Wide World Sport in Disney World, Orlando and Euro Disney, Paris). The development of the media coverage

attracted sponsorship from non-paintball brands, which 10 years before could never have imagined associating their image with paintball.

With the advent of inflatable structures - and everything that went with them: stadiums, specific outfits, 'sports' paintball rules- the game underwent a split. From then on, paintball was divided into two categories: Airball and Wargames in the woods. It was around that time that paintball started being linked to the sports industry. Tournaments were not only encounters between players; the whole industry was involved. Each brand was competing in style and audacity to show up with the best stall at the trade show. On each team there was at least one person working in paintball, so where better to chat business than at a tournament where all the big brands were present? Tournaments like the one in Orlando soon became the most important world paintball meeting points. The tournament, which was the final event of the National Professional Paintball league (NPPL) in October each year, shone not only with its sporting spirit but also with its trade show. Each manufacturer would come and present their upcoming collection of new gear as well as DVDs and so on, and all in grand style.

The NPPL then gave the concept more breadth by organizing tournaments in prestigious cities such as Atlantic City, Las Vegas, New York, San Diego, Los Angeles and New Orleans.

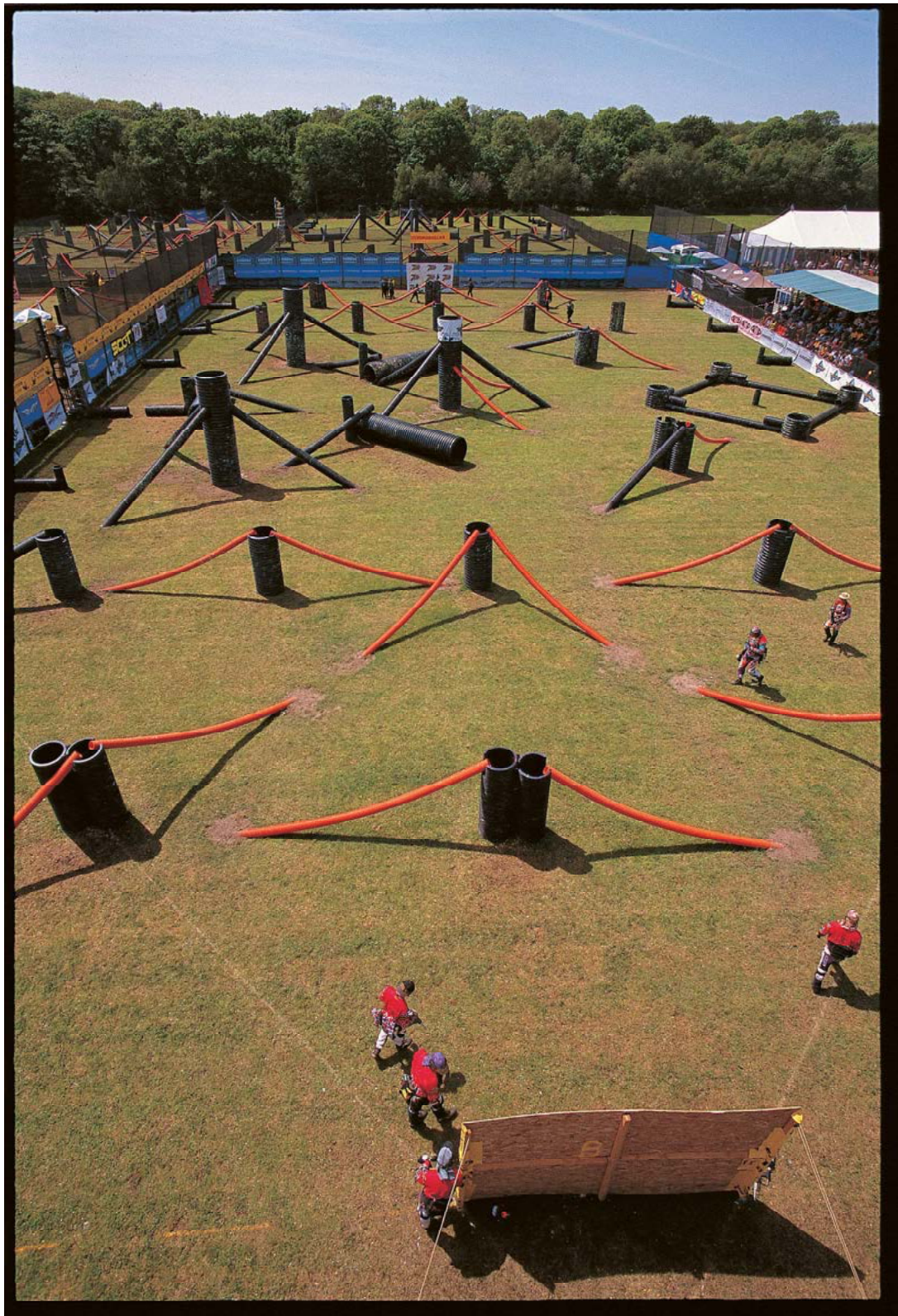
As the years went by, the inflatable arena became the standard competition field and all the tournaments took place on Sup'airball.

Today, there are two types of tournaments: competition paintball and leisure paintball. Teams have specialized in playing exclusively on fields with inflatable structures and some have even made it their career, like the American team 'Dynasty'. This increased the budgets needed for tournaments; for instance, the budget required for teams playing on circuits like the "PSP USA" or the "Millennium Three Europe" range from 50 000\$ to 500 000\$!

In 2005, Xball arrived on the scene, created by two Canadians, Richmond Italia and Mike Ratko.

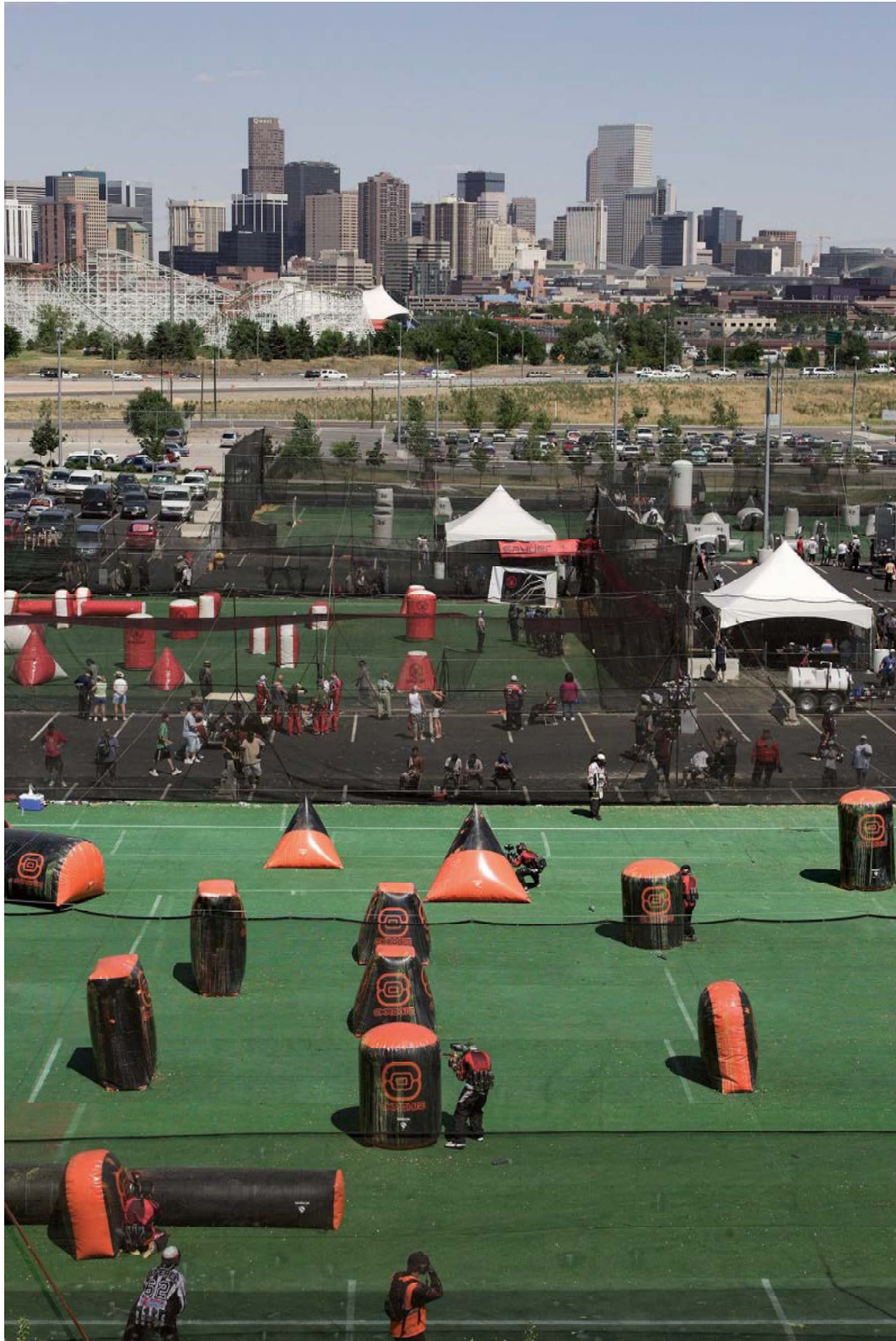
This was the beginning of 'sports' paintball; more of a physical sport than the other





HYPERBALL - Birmingham - (UK) - 1996





SUPER SEVEN - NPPL Denver (US) - 2005





SUPER SEVEN - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2003

types of paintball in the sense that it requires greater stamina and more technical and physical training. The idea behind the game is simple, a race limited by time to capture a flag on a much smaller playing field. Add to the mix inspiration from other games such as hockey and American football and a referee with a flag to signal penalties and you get a fast paced, dramatic and easy to understand game. The clarity of the game progression is added to by a scores board which signals, points, game time and penalties for the greater understanding and excitement of the public. This was a revolution because it meant that a team could afford to lose the first points of the game and still win the match. Strategically and tactically this changed everything. Chance, refereeing errors, bad starts, all became lesser factors and only the truly better team emerged from the arena triumphant.

The concept was launched at the IAO (International Open Amateur-Pittsburgh) in 2002 by its creator Richmond Italia as a 'Nations Cup' where the best players from around the world were brought together to compete and represent their countries.

A single year sufficed for XBall to make its mark in the United States (PSP) and in

Europe (Millennium). Certain changes were brought to it over time by Mike Ratko and Laurent Hamet, who rewrote some of the rules ( Xball light) to make the game easier to play. This 'light' version is now known as Race 2.

Another important aspect of playing in a stadium is the public. It's very gratifying and exciting for the players, who have spent each and every weekend training for the event, to finally compete, while being encouraged by the cheers of onlookers and fans. The level to which the game is played has hence increased over the last few years. Techniques, strategy and tactics have been codified and a paintball match has as many different aspects to it as a football match these days. Each action, move and element has a name and yet, when you enter the field you never know what you are going to get, or how the game is going to unfold. It could last 15seconds or 10minutes, you could win, you could lose, you could soar with triumphant pleasure or sink with the pain of failure.

This book is going to take you on a journey through the world of paintball. ●





SUP'AIRBALL - Toulouse (FR) - 1996



WORLD CUP - Orlando (US) - 2002





XBALL - IAO Pittsburg (US) - 2002



MILLENNIUM - Malaga (ES) - 2009



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# INSIDE THE GAME

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# WALKING THE FIELD

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Walking the field has always been an intricate part of playing paintball, whether you are playing for fun or trying to win a championship. Walking the field consists in scrutinizing the playing area to find its strengths and weaknesses. Once these have been determined, you can figure out how to play the field according to your skill set. This was actually the first thing I ever did in paintball. We were all getting ready to play and there was some down time, so I went out, looked at the field and tried to figure out how to play it; where I could hide and how the opponents would try to attack. Back in those days, finding the strong side of the field often consisted in finding the side of the field that had the most natural cover. With lots of trees and bushes to hide behind and deflect the paint, you have a huge advantage over a team sitting out in the open. The old Ironmen had a saying : « thick to thin to win. » Basically, it meant that if you started on the thicker side of the field, you had a better chance of winning. In addition to thick vegetation, there are other advantages like the high side of the field. You would never want to try to push up a hill against opponents, they would have far too big an advantage. Things have changed over the years, but people still walk the fields and it's still a very important part of the game. Yet, it has changed, gone are the days of altering the bunkers to give yourself an advantage or tying a ribbon on a tree marking what height to shoot so that you could get the guy on the other side of the field, even if you could not see him.

Another thing that players looked for while they were walking the fields were sweet spots. Sweet spots are open areas on a field that new players will run through to get to a key bunker. These spots are called sweet spots because they represent your best chance to eliminate opponents early on in a game. They will have to walk or, most likely, run through this spot so you get as many of your team members as possible to shoot paint at that spot. If you can shoot out one or two players on the break, then you obviously have a huge advantage in that game. Almost as important as sweet spotting is laneing. There is some confusion about the difference between the two. Sweet spotting takes place on the breakout and laneing during the game. Laneing is about finding a gap between two bunkers; the bunker that an opponent is in or will be in and the one they want to go to. Gun fighting with your opponent is risky business but shooting at them as they try to move from one bunker to the next is like shooting fish in a barrel. Finding the key lanes on the field and then finding the bunkers that can best control those lanes are paramount to a successful game plan. Yet keep in mind that as you figure these out, so do your opponents so you have to plan accordingly.

Over the years, the game has moved out of the woods onto hyperball fields and then airball fields. You'd think that because the fields are supposed to be mirrored which

means that bunkers on both sides of the field are identical you wouldn't have to really walk the fields because there wouldn't be an advantage or a disadvantage. Well, that couldn't be further from the truth. At least for now, the fields are never perfect, there is always an advantage or a disadvantage. It could be as simple as figuring out which side is staring into the sun in the morning or late afternoon. It could be that on one side of the field there is a key shot that isn't there on the other side. Teams go out with their maps and pins, pace off distances and look at lines to really try and understand exactly how the field is going to play out before the first ball is ever even shot. The better prepared the team is going into their first games, often is what gives them an advantage over their opponents. Once a team has a really good game plan based on walking the field, they can change it as they play games and apply what they learn from playing the field.

One of paintball's legends is Bob Long. He is larger than life as a player, captain and manufacturer. One of the things that made Bob famous was his ability to read a field better than anyone else. Somehow, he was able to go out, look at a piece of land, and understand how the game would be played. He then had the ability to make game plans on how to attack or defend different areas of the field. It was incredible to watch him walk around, duck down, look at things that no one else could see, and then make a plan based on what he saw. It was even more impressive to watch the results. I watched his team play in Oregon at a big event. The field had a big hill, with the fifty yard line on top of hill. While you played, you couldn't see the players on the other side of the hill. Bob walked the field and told all his players where to go and where to shoot. They shot out all their opponents without ever seeing them and won a 10-0 victory. This is one of the most impressive field walking displays that I have ever witnessed.

Nowadays, teams have a big advantage and field walking isn't as important as it used to be. Teams now get to practice and play the fields before they go to an event. The upside is that this makes for better games at the event because everyone knows how the field plays and they can go out there and compete at the highest level. The downside is that it takes some of the skill out of the game, as do automatic markers. With auto guns and without fields to figure out, you don't have to be very good to play at a high level. Some of the leagues are talking about trying to go back to not sending teams field layouts before events and making them walk the fields to bring the level of play back up to where it used to be. Whether it will be done or not is up in the air right now but if they do, try and get Bob Long on your team, you'll have a huge advantage over the competition. ●





DYNASTY (US) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010





LEGACY (US) - PSP Chicago - 2006



TONTONS (FR) - Mayhem Master London - 1999





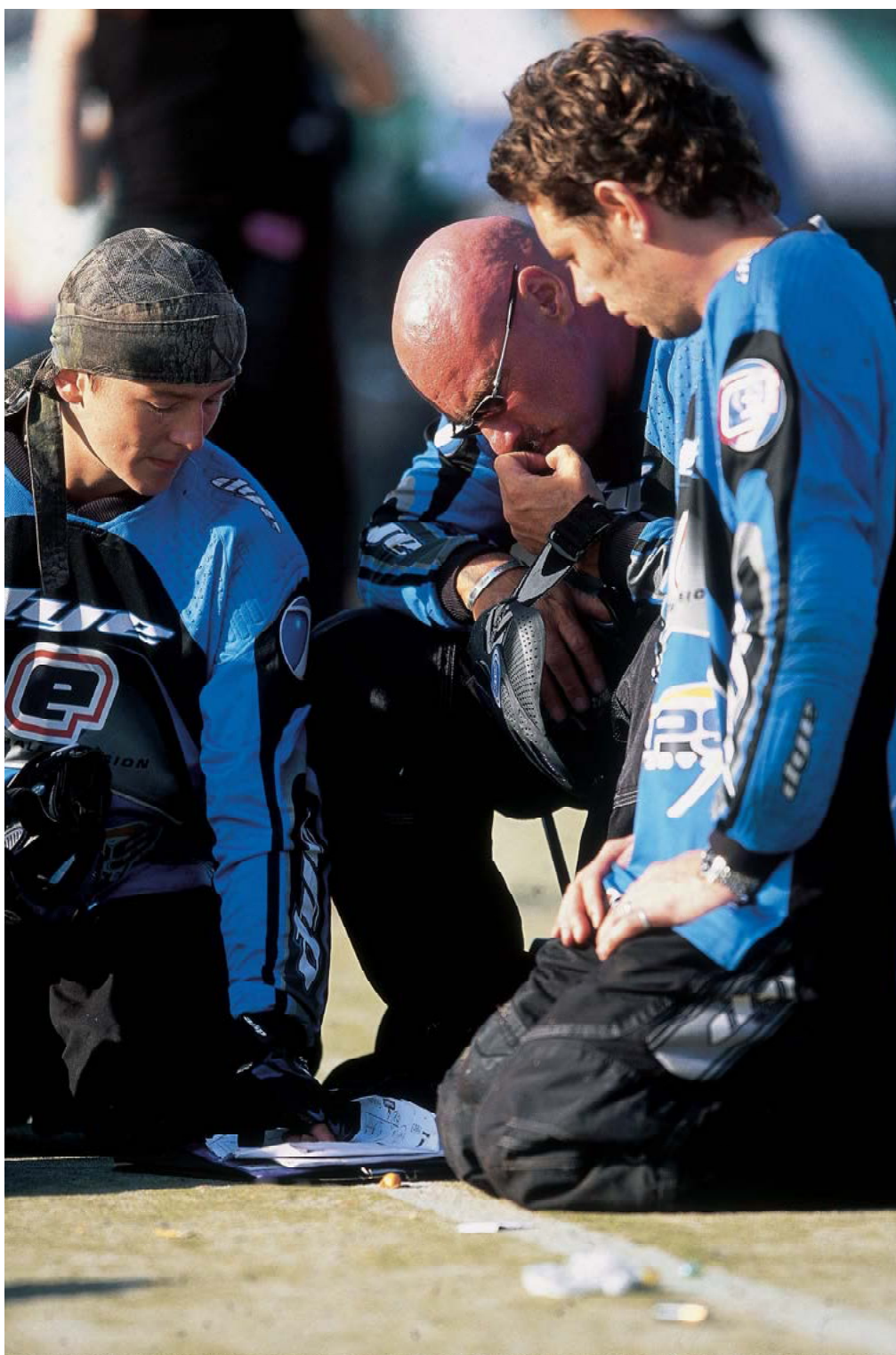
FEMME FATALE (US) - Mardi gras New Orleans - 2001



TRAUMA (US) - NPPL Boston - 2008



IMAGE (US) - NPPL Gettysburg - 2001



NEXUS (UK) - Millennium London - 2003









# CHRONO

A chronograph is an instrument that tells the speed of a moving object when that object is propelled over it. Usually, they have a series of beams that the object travels over and then the time that it takes to go from one beam to the next is measured and that gives you the speed. The speed for paintballs is 300 fps that means 300 feet per second, which is about 204 miles per hour. That is the top speed that you can shoot your marker. Many fields have set lower speeds for safety, so that kids and people that play for the first time aren't hurt or scared off. Chronos is the abbreviated term for chronographs. Chronos have changed over the years but the use and intent hasn't. There are chronos that sit on a bench and that you shoot over and then there are the hand held versions. They are an integral part of safe play and should always be used. Most paintball guns can have their velocity adjusted so that they can shoot harder or not as hard. This is done because speed varies depending on the conditions, size, paintball pellets type and other factors, which all have an effect on the velocity of a gun. Shooting over the legal limit greatly increases the chance of injury and should not be done.

When you play at a tournament you have to chrono your marker before you play to make sure that you are shooting at a safe and fair speed. There is an advantage to shooting harder than your opponent so people try and turn their guns up on the field or try not to chrono. When you shoot harder the balls travel further and

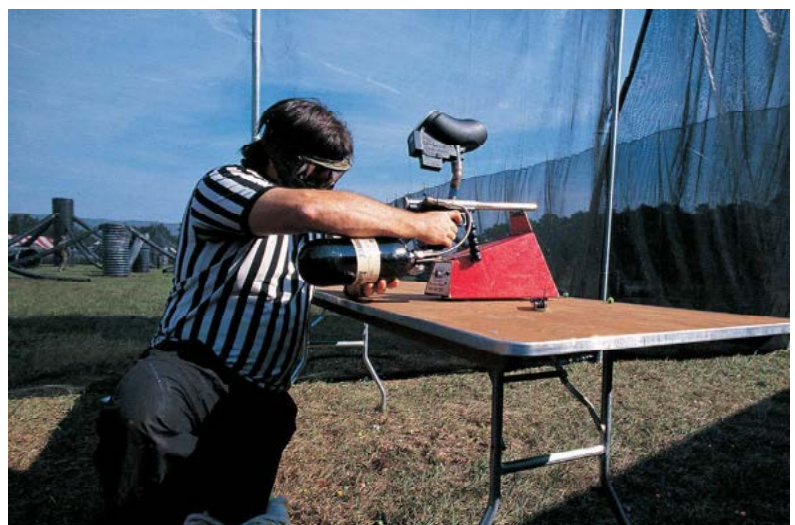




CHRONO - NPPL Atlantique City - 2001

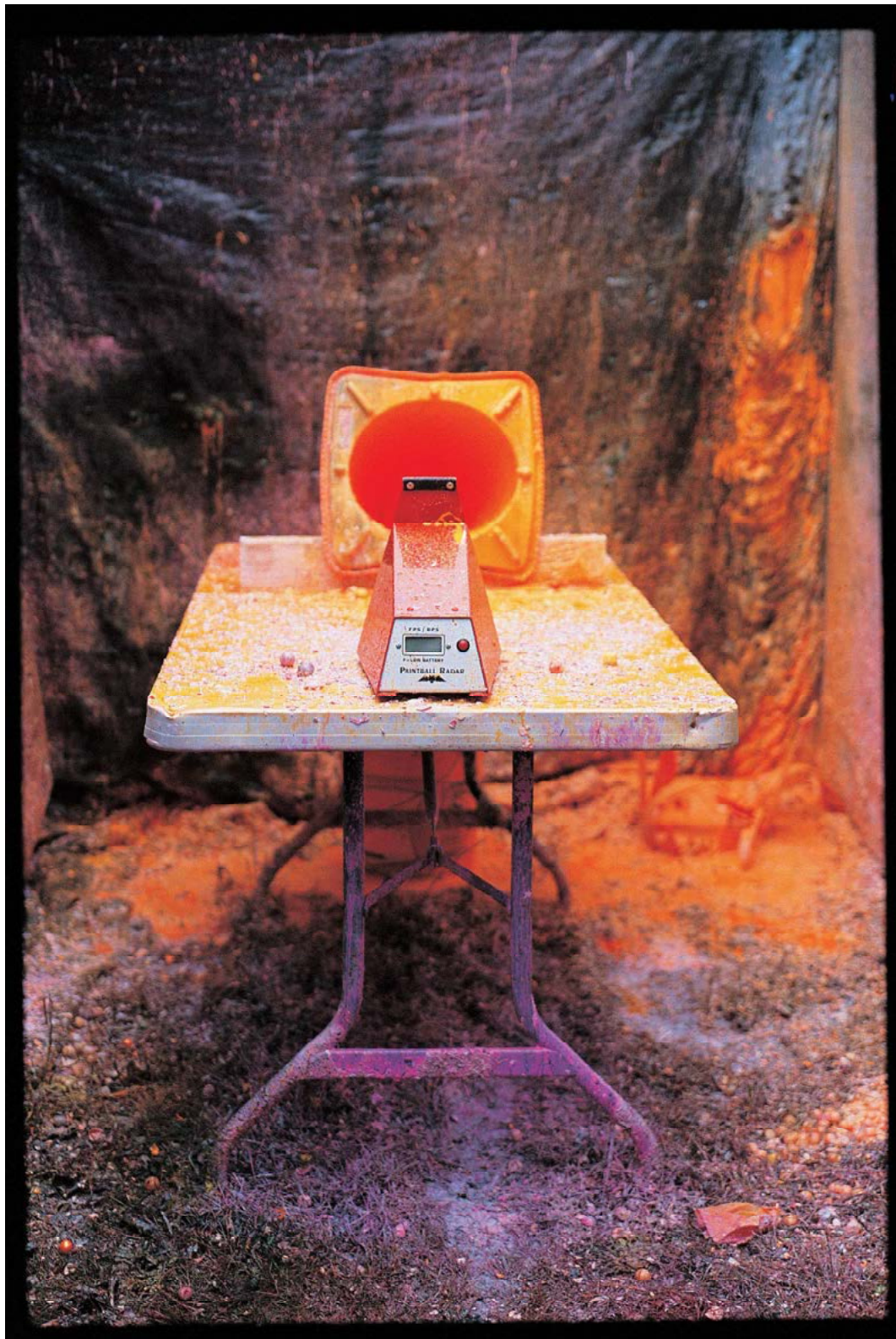
faster making them much harder to avoid. Back in the old days, you also had to crono your gun after you played and many games were won and lost when you heard that beep saying that your gun was shooting over the legal limit. It was decided that too many games were being won and lost at the crono after the game instead of on the field so that rule was dropped. Now some of the leagues have devices that can tell from the side lines how fast your gun is shooting; so if you're breaking the rules you get pulled out of the game. This is a great system; it encourages players to go out at the legal limit.

As the game of paintball evolves one thing that hasn't- and probably won't - change is the need to have some way of making sure that players and markers aren't shooting over the legal limit. Players will always try and push the limit, and some will cheat, so it's really important to make sure you're playing at a field that has strict rules regarding crononing your markers at a safe speed.●



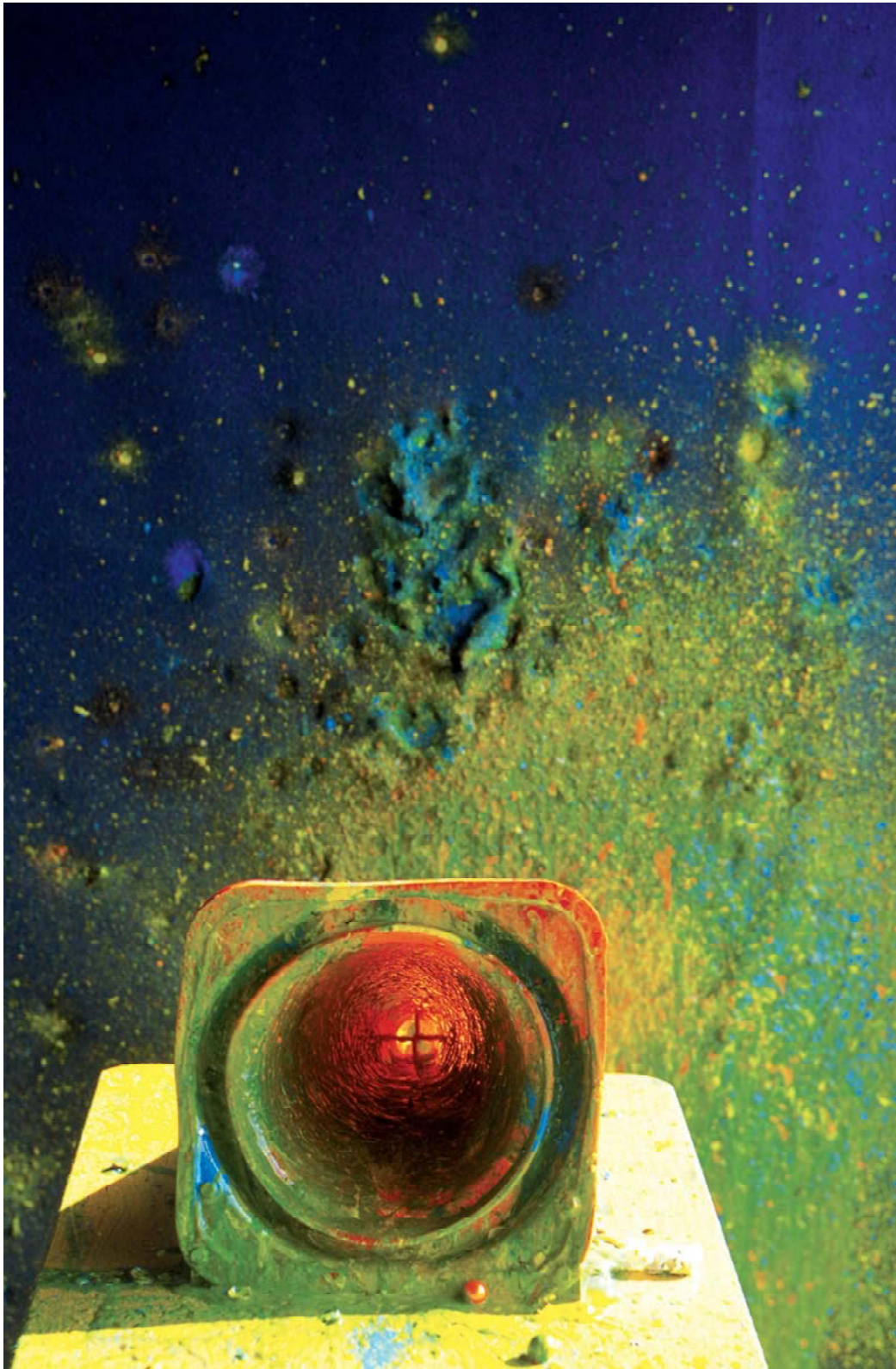
BON LONG (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2001





CHRONO - NPPL Los Angeles - 2005





CHRONO - Millennium Bitburg - 2005



CHRONO - NPPL Boston - 2008



CHRONO - Millennium Malaga - 2009





ALL AMERICAN (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002



## HUDDLE

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How do you know that you are in a group of really competitive guys and that you are probably going to win the game? A good indication is that when you look into their eyes, you see fire and hate; their voices crackle when they scream because it's coming from their guts not their throats. Another good thing to look for is someone vomiting. Right before the game, all the players get together and attempt to raise their levels of desire, performance and swagger. Knowing that the other team is doing the same thing, you yell louder, look meaner and get more pumped up. You're in the huddle; this is it the last chance that you have as a team to get everyone and everything on the same page before you go into battle. Every huddle is different and every huddle is the same. As different as each huddle is, so are the people in it. Some guys need to get fired up so when they yell, you yell. Some guys need to know what they have to do and how to do it. You may have told them a thousand times before but this is the one that matters. Some guys don't need anything; they are just there to support the others that need it.

Before every game starts, all of the players from a team get together in a circle. Shoulder to shoulder, arm over arm. This is like a board meeting for the battlefield. You have your agenda to destroy the other team. You have your business plans go down the snake and kill everyone, and you have your titans of industry and your workers. Instead of a table, we use a huddle; instead of a boardroom, we do it on the field but the goal is the same. The goal is always the same: to win, and, like in business, it's win at any and all cost. You don't have to be reminded of this when you look across the huddle at a full-grown man with tears and hate in his eyes. ●

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TONTONS (FR) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



XSV (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2010





DYNASTY (US) - Millennium bitburg - 2010



AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2001



IRONMEN (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



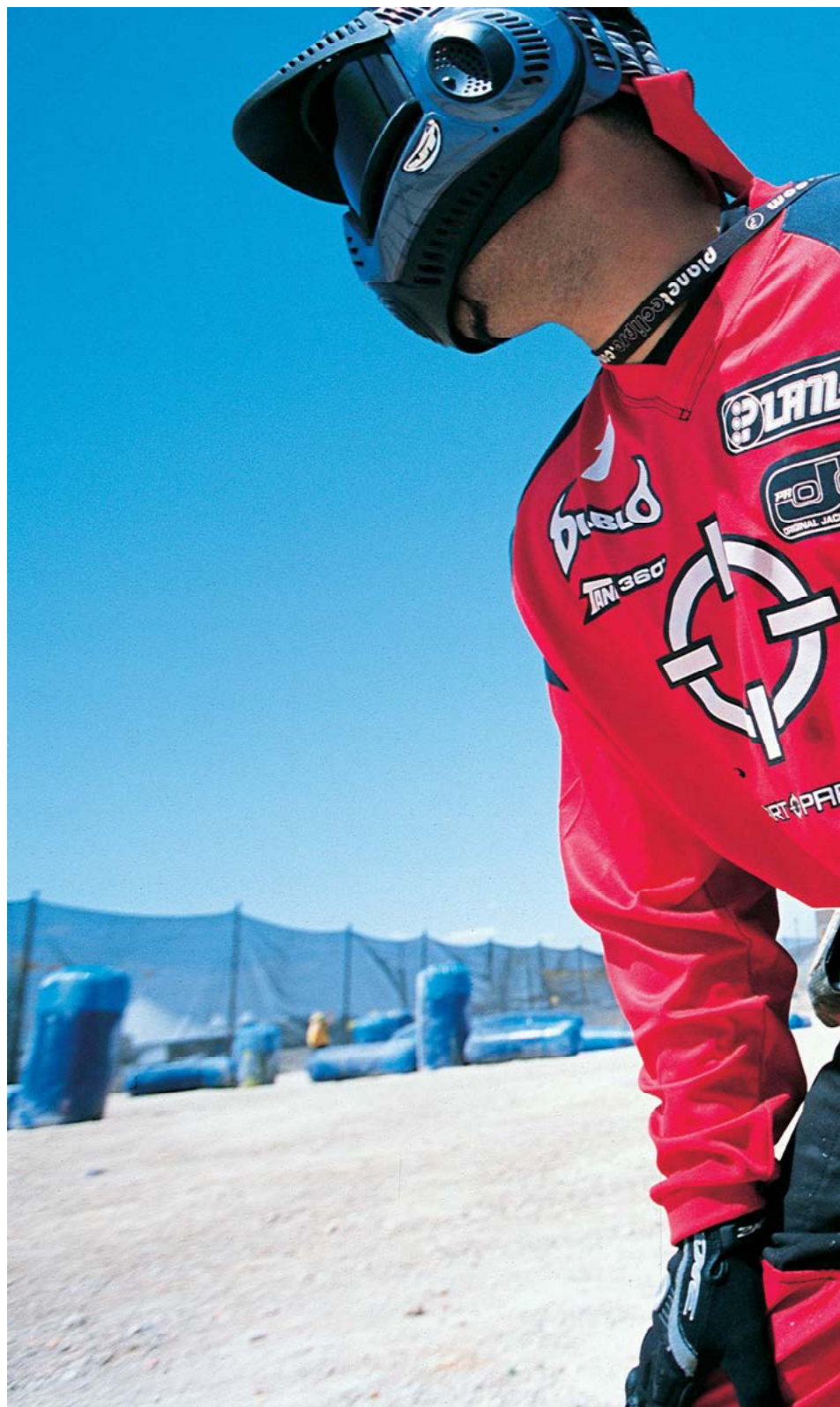
# 10 SECONDS

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This is when you are the most alive if you are a paintball player. This is when you alone know if you have the stuff or not. You know how you feel before you play. The winners all have one thing in common in the ten seconds before every game, they know they are going to win. They may not know how or when but they know that no matter what they are going to win. The other guys on the team might not feel it; they might not believe it; but you know that if you have to, you will carry them or sacrifice them to get them to the win. If you're getting ready to go out and play and you don't have that feeling in your stomach - that feeling that tells you that you are going to win; that it's already over but the other team doesn't know it yet - then you didn't train hard enough. So most of the time that is what confidence is. While you train and learn how to do things, and learn how to do them better than other people, you gain confidence. When you practice with your team, you gain confidence in yourself as much as in the other guys on your team. You build on this confidence little by little; sometimes you slide back and lose some of it, but then it comes back stronger. As you build your confidence during practice and by playing events, your skills improve and you learn more, making you more confident. The first time you play a tournament you might get smashed. You go home and you don't know why you lost so you go out and practice and build that confidence back up.

The best teams have one thing in common, after they huddle up and the referee calls ten seconds and begins his silent count down, they all believe they are going to win. Maybe not every player on every team but the better the team is, the better chance there will be that all the guys in the huddle believe. They may look scared or nervous, they may look like they have no confidence, but they do. They have it where it counts, inside; they go into those games expecting to win and they, most often, do. They go into the game with the forgone conclusion that they are going to win, that they are going to play amazingly and that they are going to be super stars. It may not always happen but you can see the ones I'm talking about. When they lose, they look shocked or even confused because what's happening doesn't make sense to them. They knew in that ten seconds before the game that they were going to win. I guess the only problem is that the guys on the other team thought they were going to win too. In those ten second after the huddle and before the game starts, you can learn all you need to learn about yourself and you teammates and if you don't like what you learn then fix it because champions are made in the ten seconds before the game starts! ●

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TRAUMA (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002



XSV (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2008





NEXUS (UK) - NPPL Tampa - 2007



RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - World Cup Orlando - 2003



# THE BREAK

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The break or the breakout is when you get to see if all of the planning, all of the preparation, pays off. You train, you condition, you scout the other team so that when the game starts, you have a better chance of winning than they do. Of course, while you have been prepping so have they so this is harder than just showing up; you have to show up knowing that you worked harder to get there and that you are going to win no matter what they throw at you. The breakout is different for each team and then for each player and position on the field. Everyone needs to get their head right so that they have the advantage going into the game. There is a countdown for the beginning of the game. Players take off the safety devices on their guns, start their timers and then go over in their mind what they need to do when the game starts. They fire their guns to make sure that they are working. There is usually a ten second count down. It's the longest or fastest ten seconds ever. So many things are flying around in your head. You're either supremely confident or scared to death. No one that competes is scared of being shot or getting hurt; they are afraid of losing or playing poorly and letting their team down.

The break is different for all of the positions on the field. They all have different goals and different responsibilities. For the front guys, it's all about a quick start, getting out in front of everyone else. They have to run as fast and as low to the ground as they can; all the while avoiding the paintballs that are being shot at them. They have to stay alive and get to their spot before the other team gets set up and locks down the lanes so that no one can move. They have to get to their spot and make the other team pay for not shooting them out on the break. Before the game, they are trying to figure out how many guns are going to be shooting at them. They try and figure out whom it is that is shooting at them because some are better than others. Front guys always have a bunker to go to on the break but if they can go past that bunker because there aren't good lines of paint in front of them; they keep going and break the game open. For the mid guys, it's a little harder, they have to make a spot like the front guys but they also have to shoot at the shooters to help their front guys get to their spots. They also try and shoot the other team's front guys. They also have to watch what their front guys are doing because if one of them gets shot, it's up to the mid players to fill their spots as fast as they can. Mid guys have to have the speed of the front guys and the smarts of the back guys. In fact, they have to be just as good at both jobs. Before the game starts, they have so much to think about that sometimes I'm surprised that their heads

don't explode. The back guys have a lot to think about on the break too. They need to anticipate where the other team is going on the break; where the other team is going to go; how the players are going to run in order to get to that spot. They have to shoot their guns and make adjustments based on what they see, in an instant. Once they make or miss their shots, they have to let everyone on their team know what they have seen. How many players did they eliminate; how many did they lose? This all happens in ten to fifteen seconds. The front, mid and back players have to do all that they can to win the break and give their team the advantage and they have to do it with split second timing and supreme athleticism.

In some of the different formats that we play, like X-ball, the breakout is almost the whole game. X-ball is a five on five format with a wide field making it challenging to get outside to the corners on the break. Generally, each team will try and send someone out to each corner on the break. This will most often win or lose the point for the team- based on whether or not the team makes the corners and eliminates the opposition. A team with players outside on the break has a big advantage; they can trap all of the other team's players in the center of the field and move up either side making eliminations as they go. So in this format the break out isn't just important, it's the whole game. If you win the breakout, you win the game so make sure you do. In other formats, like seven man, the break out is important but it's not a win or lose proposition. Because you have more players and the field is longer, you can recover from losing a couple of people on the break - if your team has enough experience not to panic, run down the field and die stupidly. A team that loses a couple of players off the break just tries to settle in and lock up the lanes until they are equal on numbers and then they switch back to offence and get the job done.

There are three parts to any game: the beginning, the middle and the end. If you want to have a good middle and a good end, it starts with a good beginning. The most important part of any game is the breakout; this is where teams spend all their time trying to figure out how to beat you and you have to be smarter than they are if you don't want that to happen. Teams that don't spend the time or have the knowledge of how to win a breakout often don't and then that game is lost as well. Take the time, get the experience and plan on winning the breakout and you'll most likely win the game. ●



IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Philadelphie - 2004





LOCKOUT (US) - NPPL Atlantic City - 2002



ALL AMERICAN (US) - PSP Latrobe - 2008







DYNASTY (US) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010



NAUGHTY DOGS (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2003



SYNDICATE (DE) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010



IRONMEN (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2010





STRANGE (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002



GROUD ZERO (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002

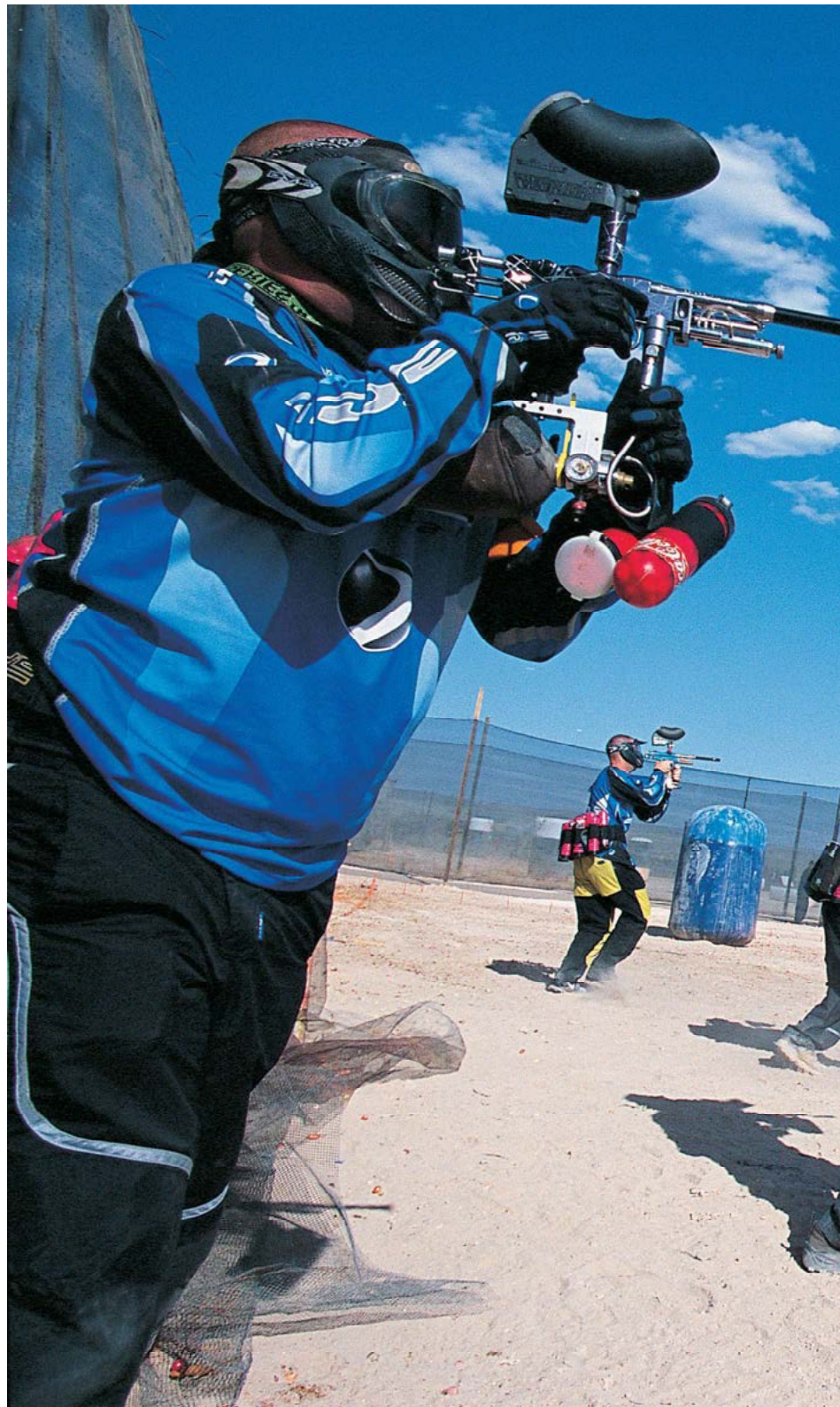


# SWEET SPOTTING

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This is one thing that hasn't changed much over the evolution of paintball, we still sweet spot the same way. We either shoot from where we start or we run to a spot and try to predict where a player from the opposing team is going to be. We try to beat them there with our paint so that when they do get there, they run into our paint. It's an easy way to get an early elimination and that gives your team the early advantage. Now although the concept is easy, the application is often much harder. First, you have to guess when and where your opponent will go and then get your paintballs in the perfect spot. •

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TEAM USA - XBALL IAO Pittsburg - 2002



JOY DIVISION (SE) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2007



AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000





DYNASTY (US) - NPPL Huntington beach - 2003



DYNASTY (US) - NPPL New York - 2003



AFTERSHOCK (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2010



# JUMP & SLIDE

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Some people aren't sure if paintball is a real sport or just a game. What is the criteria for a sport anyway? You have to compete and there has to be some athleticism. Well, if you play paintball then you're competing and if you have ever tried to sprint to the corner as you shot your gun, to dive under a line of paint and then pop up and snap your mirror; then you know paintball is athletic. Some of the coolest pictures I've ever seen have been of players running full speed almost parallel to the ground trying to avoid a line of paint. You think of the paint that someone is shooting at you like a squirt of water from a hose. That spray of water is between you and the bunker that you are trying to get to. You can go over it or under it but you have to get through it. This is hard, or at least hard enough, but you can't see the line or if you can, only barely. You almost have to anticipate where the line is going to be and get over it or under it. Sometimes there are two or three lines. Paintball players come in all different shapes and sizes but no matter what position you play, if you play paintball you're going to have to run, dive and jump.

The faster you are and the more athletic you are, the easier it is to run and dive and jump but paintball isn't one of those sports where you have to be the quickest or the fittest; but the more you are, the easier it is to play. The position you play in paintball is often based on your size and speed. Your ability to run fast and dive into spots of the field that others can't make often makes you a very valuable asset to your team. If you can run, dive and jump faster than the other guys you're playing against, your team is going to have an advantage. Sometimes, the little bit of advantage you gain from getting to your bunker faster than the other guy is all that it takes. There are lots of cool pictures of guys running and jumping or even sliding but the best are the ones where it has been raining. Everyone likes to play in the mud as a kid and we all did it, didn't we? It's even more fun to play paintball in the rain. When it's wet out, there are puddles and it's mad, you can slide a mile! You feel like a super hero tearing off to the corner and then sliding much further and faster than you ever would on dry land. ●

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TONTONS (FR) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002





AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



GROUND ZER (US) - Millennium London - 2001







BOB LONG IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002



X FACTORY (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002









Bushwakers (US) - Chicago NPPL - 2003



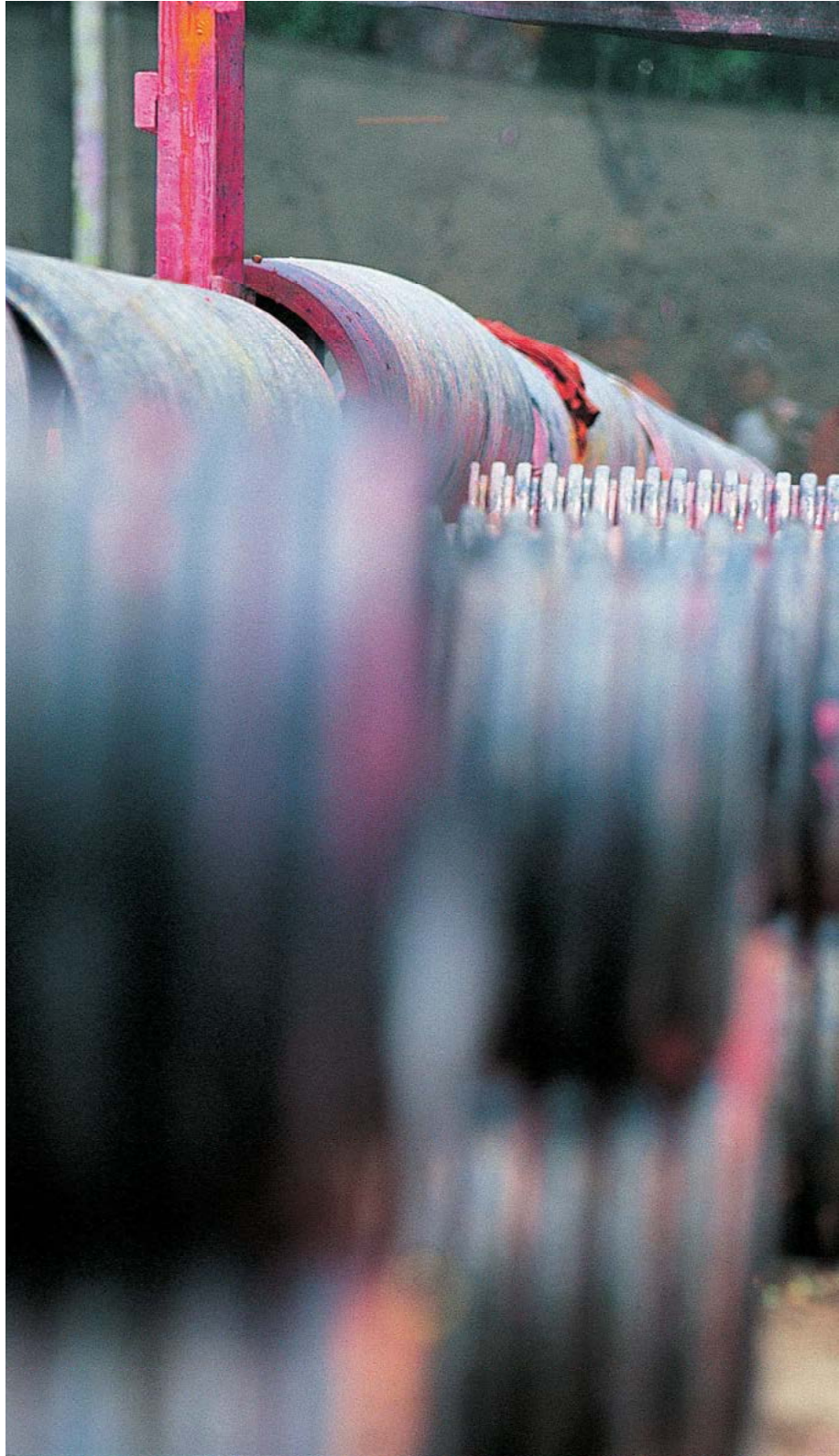
# FRONT PLAYERS

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The front player holds a glory position similar to that of a wide receiver in a football game. These are the guys who get the chance to win the game from its beginning . They take all the risk and sometimes get all the reward. Being a front player has really changed over the years. Front guys have always been small and aggressive but as the game has become more of a sport and more competitive, front guys have had to too. They were once just little guys that liked to get in peoples' faces. Now they are little mean guys that are super fast and super athletic and on top of that they have to have great cardio. These guns sprint every time they play. In an x-ball match that means they are running a lot and not just jogging; they are trying to outrun both their opponents and the paint coming at them. Front guys also had to be pretty smart back in the day; I mean, you had twenty people on the field and half of them were trying to kill you. Front guys had to get to their spot, stay alive, but they also had to figure out how to make their next move. Front guys today still have to do that but take my word for it, on a flat field with no bushes or trees, it's a lot easier. At least now you can see all of the players. Back then they often had to use their sixth sense to see the guys hiding in the jungle.

A good example of a really good front guy back in the day is Dave Youngblood. In his prime, Dave was probably 6'2 and 185 lbs. Even

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with that height and size, he could get to his spot. Once Dave got up there and everyone started shooting at him he would relax, talk to the guys around him and put together a strategy for pushing through. You had to be really good at communicating to figure all of this out while racing against the other team who was also working on a strategy. Finally, Dave and company would devise a plan and it was 'go' time. Everyone would gun, Dave would get up and go, get two or three guys off the field and walk to the dead box assuming the Ironmen would win - and they usually did. His approach was really deliberate and dangerous. Front guys today are forced to make much faster decisions because the games don't last 25 minutes anymore. The front guys of today could play more than three seven-man games in the time it used to take to play one game. If they were playing x-ball, they could play 12 or more points in the same time frame. Another thing that has changed is that front guys used to be pretty fast and pretty agile as well

as being smart. The new front guys are fast, really fast. They have to be because the guns are so much faster now. Front guys have to run very fast and very close to the ground to try to get under, through or around the lines of paint coming at them. Ten or fifteen years ago, when the auto-cocker was the gun of choice, players got one, two or ten balls shot at them now they have a wall of paint coming at them. It's unbelievable what some of these guys do and how they do it over and over again.

Now I could argue who of the new front guys or the old ones were better but it doesn't matter. They both are good at different things and they both were at the top of their game at the time they played. I would love to see someone with today's speed and size play back in the day, it would be fun to watch. Probably the only thing that could stop him would be the craftiness of a front guy from back then. ●



STRANGE / BOB LONG IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002



# MIDIE PLAYERS

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This might be the hardest position on the paintball field. I mean, it's not hard to play but it's really hard to be good at. The mid player has to have all the skills of a front guy and a back guy and, in addition to playing as well as the front and back guy, they have their own unique skill set as a mid player. There aren't as many mid players out there as you might think. Out of all the mid players out there, there are only a few that are truly gifted.

How does one become a mid player? I think it might be by accident. I mean if you are small and fast you should play up front; if you're big and slow you should play in the back. These guys fit neatly into the middle of those two groups, not as small and fast nor as big and slow. Yet there is more to being a great mid player than simply not making the cut in the front or the back. You have to have those skills that both other positions covet. You have to be able to see the whole field and put together the moves before the other team does. You have to be able to move forward to take over the role of the front player who has been lost or go back out to the corner if a back guy has been illuminated. Players like Oliver, Nicky and Chris could have played any position they wanted on the field. Why did they choose the mid player spot? Because these guys can single-handedly win games. These guys and, for that matter, any other top mid player can literally go out and play well enough to win games all by themselves. That's not to say that they don't need a team around them but if their team goes out there and doesn't make any big mistakes then these guys will figure out how to win the game. Usually, the breakout for any team is the same; the back guys break out laterally and establish along the back of the field while the front guys take as much real estate as they can. Mid players like to find those bunkers that they can break to quickly, get their gun up and hopefully shoot someone on the break. If this happens and it's the right person, the game could be close to over. A great mid player who shoots his opponent on the break is then able to capitalize on that elimination and make a big move down the field that should secure his team's victory. Mid players are also crucial to communication within a team. They are often between the front and back players and pass on information.

Front and back players are easily defined by their size speed and skill set. Mid players are defined by their ability to play all the positions on the field well. In addition, they are expected to communicate well and win games. The mid position is probably the hardest to play on the field and they are probably the most important players out there. They win more games and contribute on the field more than any other position. ●

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AFTERSHOCK (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2003





AVALANCHE (US) - Millennium London - 2002



MIAMI RAGE (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2008



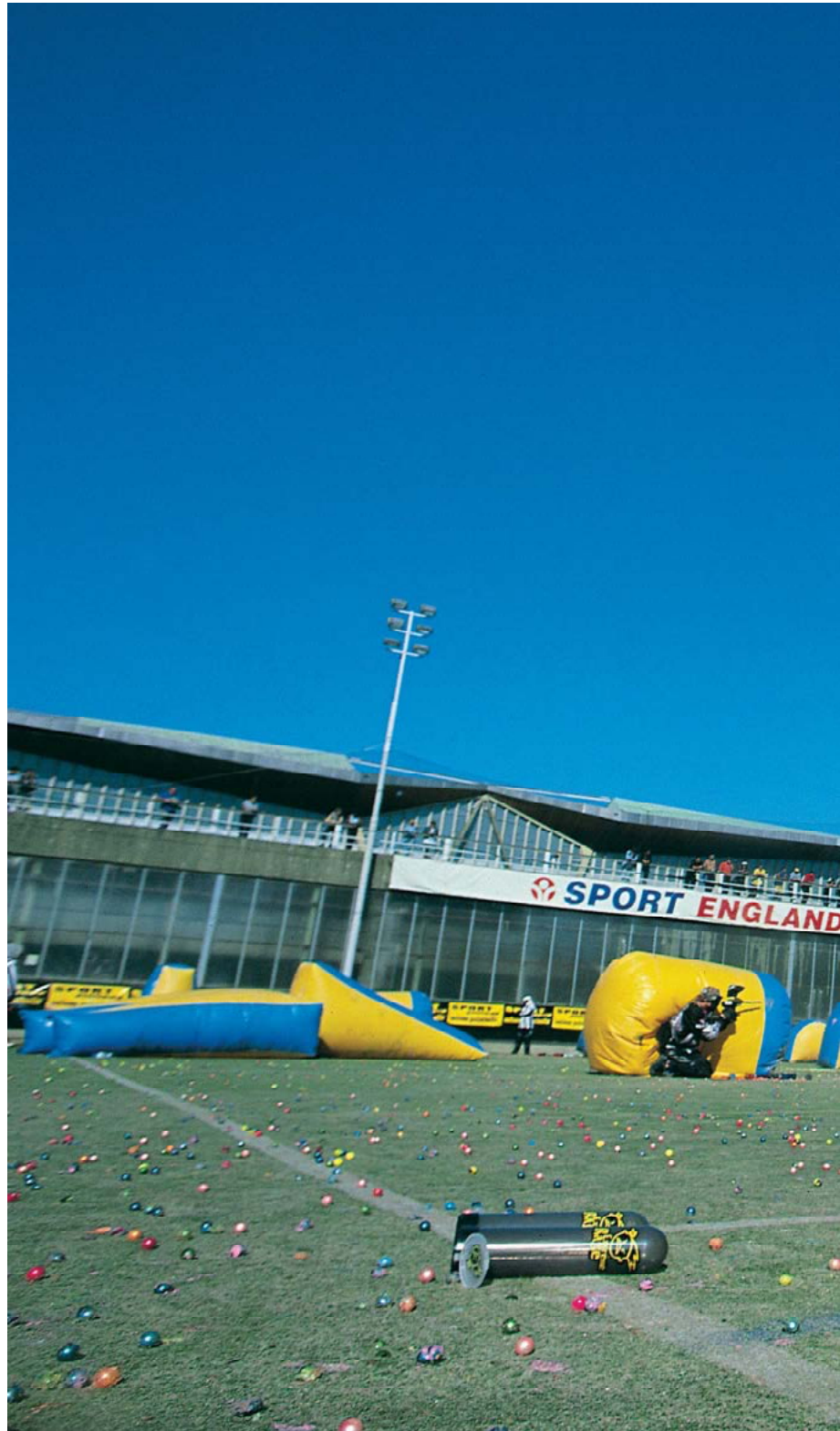
# BACK PLAYERS

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The back player is like the offensive line in professional American football. He is always doing a lot of the work but only really gets noticed when he makes a mistake. The back position is the most cerebral on the field, you are constantly thinking and playing out scenarios in your head. At the same time you're doing this, of course, people are trying to shoot you and move up the field. I'm not sure what combination of qualities makes a great back player but there are some all the best ones have. They can all shoot well out of the break. This means they will sweetspot well and give their team a chance at an advantage right from the start.

This is harder than it sounds. You have to know where your opponents are going before they get there. You have to guess the route that they are going to take. You have to accurately shoot the spot that they are running to or diving towards. Doing all these things is challenging and at the same time you have to avoid getting shot by the other team. In order, first a back guy sweetspots; then either hits his target or doesn't and then has to start shutting down the movement of the other team. The best way to do this is by shooting the hell out of the other guys' bunker. If you target the outside edge over and over and then he runs through it, he is an idiot. That's not to say that it doesn't happen- because it does- but the probability of the guy running through the paint without getting hit is very low. So once you have shot your guy on the break and contained the other team's most dangerous player, what's left to do? You then need to communicate to your team your position in the game. How many players did you loose on the break? Did any of the players from the other team make it into their key bunkers? Based on the all the information you gather you then make decisions for those on the front line: whether to attack or to hold back. This decision is based on field position and the number of players on both teams. Once you have made the decision to attack or defend you move your players into position to do your bidding just as you would in a game of chess. ●

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IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Tampa - 2005



IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002





## REFS.

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If there is a worst job or position in paintball then there is no question as to what it is. If you do this job, you are never right and, even when you do the best job you can, one team is always going to hate you. That's right, I'm talking about the zebras that walk on two feet, the referees. Anyone who has been a referee will tell you with certainty that it's one of - if not the - worst job in the world. They get shot more than the players; they are always expected to behave perfectly, and the losers always blame them. Back in the old days, the teams used to referee themselves. If it was an LA tournament, one or two LA teams would referee the event. There was always talk about this team or that team helping each other and it might have happened here and there but in reality each team eventually got to referee the other teams. So if you screwed them on the field then they would do the same to you when the event was in their neck of the woods. I think that the major reason that we switched to professional referees was the perception that players refereeing each other just didn't fly. There was a big push to get paintball on TV and we wanted everything to look like it was much more organized than it actually was.

So we brought in a bunch of referees to arbitrate the matches. When they first came in

they weren't really that good but little by little they got there. The best and brightest were in the Paintball Sports Promotion (professional tournament paintball) on the NXL (National X Ball League) fields. Next to them, the best refs had always been the Europeans so occasionally they would be brought over to help out. Little by little, this grew into what we have today; where professional referees arbitrate all major events.

They do a great job, or at least the best job that they can do under the circumstances.

I think the next step in the evolution of refs is to start bringing in some of the retired pros to join the ranks of the pro refs. These guys work long hours and for little to no pay so you can see why retired pros haven't been fighting to get involved. However, we owe it to the sport to give something back and to help a bad situation get better. This is the one constant complaint at every tournament so let's all get together and try to fix it. •



Las Vegas NPPL - 2004





AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000

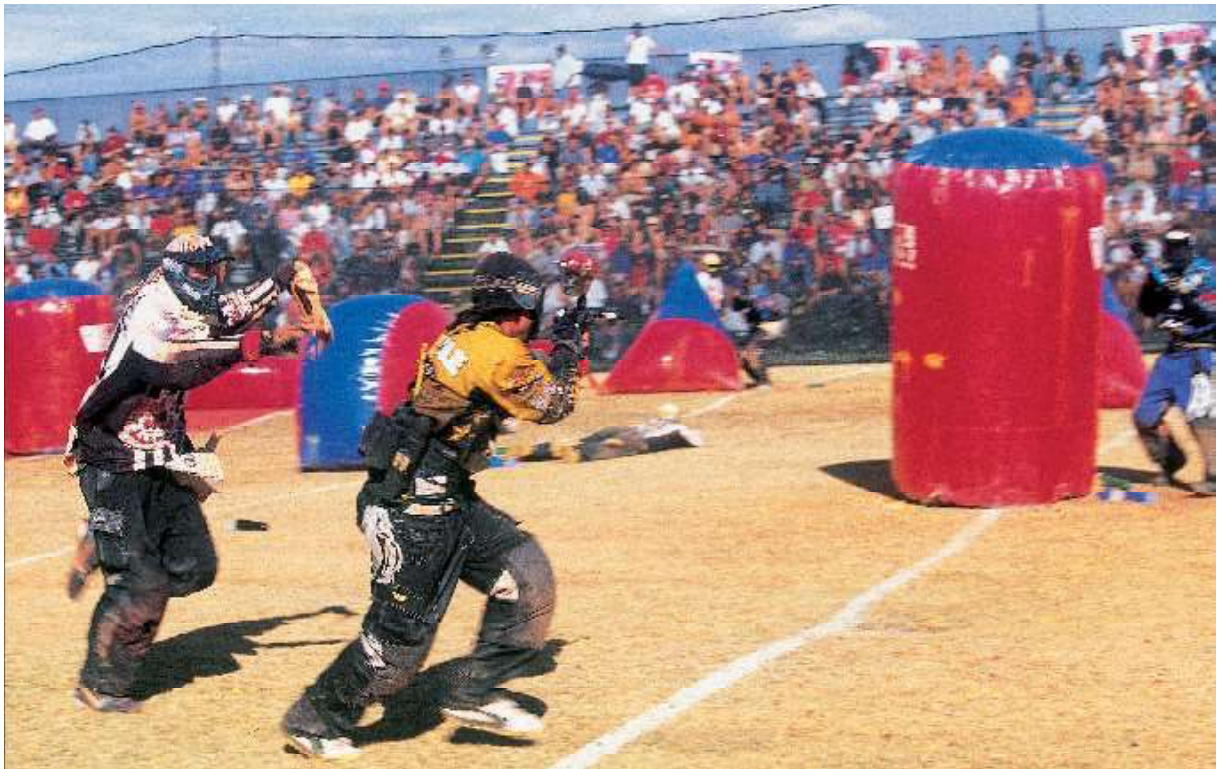


RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - Joy Master Suede - 2002













ADDICTED (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002





# MOVE

Moving is really what paintball is all about. There are three major components to paintball; they are shooting, communicating and moving. The more you move and the more effective you are at moving, the better you play paintball. Gun fighting takes a while to master and communicating also takes time to get the hang of, but we can all move. There are two sides to moving, these are moving as a team player and preventing your opponents from moving. So you move or transit up the field to try and gain an advantage on your opponents. The closer you are to them or the further you are on their side of the field, the more angles you can exploit. Having a number of angles to use is where your advantage lies. Bunkers are often set upon that have great angles on many of the others. These are the key bunkers on the field. You have to move to these bunkers either on the break or as the game progresses. Of course, just as you're trying to move up the field to gain an advantage so are the bad guys; so some of your teammates are trying to keep them from moving whilst you're progressing to strategic points.

The difference between a good paintball player and a great paintball player is the same as the difference between an average and a great chess player. The more moves ahead you can think of in a fraction of a second, the better player you are. You see paintballers making big moves all the time but once they have made the move, they stagger around in a circle wondering what to do or where to go next. Great paintball players know exactly where they are going and what they are doing and they don't need anyone to instruct them or much time to figure it out. Big moves in paintball are the coolest thing to watch: one guy running down the field shooting at two or three guys on the run. They don't happen all the time because they are really hard to pull off, but when they do and it all goes right, everyone stops and is caught in the moment, bewildered by what they just saw. They wonder if they could do it or if it could be done again. Did all the stars line up just right to make this happen or is he really that good? Sometimes, the players themselves don't even know what they pulled off, they just made a move and then things started to happen. Those are the truly gifted among us, the instinctive players that move down the field at will, effortlessly it seems.

When the sport was in its infant stages, people moved down the field but they did so on their own. They just put a guy in and made the move. Nowadays, the fields are smaller and the guns are faster which makes it much more of a team sport. You have to work with your teammates to eliminate the opposing players and then make your moves. This is much harder to do but the rewards are often much greater. If you make the right move and get to the right spot, you look out and all you see are the backs of the players on the other team and that is just about as good as it gets. ●





GROUND ZERO (US) - Mayhem masters - 2001



BUSHWACKER (US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2003





NAUGHTY DOGS (US) - PSP Chicago - 2009



PAINTBALL AUTHORITY ( US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2008



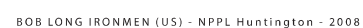
# SNAKE

Back when we played in the woods, the only snakes that we had to worry about were the type that bite you. One of the skills that players used out there was the ability to get down low and sneak from one spot to another. We called it crawling. This allowed us to get a better angle on the guys across the field or to get closer to a player that we wanted to eliminate. The first real 'snakes' appeared when we started playing on the hyper ball fields. These were large fields that used black corrugated pipes as bunkers. The snake bunker would be long, sometimes almost as long as the field. The snake would have small legs coming off it that players would use to hide behind as they worked their way up the field.

When Sup Air started to make air ball fields, the snake really took off. The first ones actually looked like snakes - only much bigger - the snakes were forty feet long with a tail and a tongue. They didn't have legs like the hyper ball field ones so they made up for it by having bends. Players would use the angles in the snake to block the opponents' shots as they tried to work their way down the field. The new snakes are on almost every field that we play in one form or another. They are the power bunkers on the field. In many games and on most fields, the snake wins the game so you have to win the snake battle to win the match. The new ones come in many shapes and sizes but they are almost all long and low. In order to play the snake, you need to be small and fast, the smaller and faster the better. Not only is the snake the most strategic bunker on the field, it's also the most recognizable. It's almost always on the tape (e.g. the very edge) so on one side of the field or the other. It's usually long, but not always; some consist of a few short snakes with spaces between them.

The thing that most people like about the snake is the action. There is no other spot on the field that has more action. The snake is a fast paced and action filled spot on the field with many games won and lost in it and because of it. Sure there are other bunkers but no other like the snake. It's in a class of its own. If you want to watch the real action in any game, watch the snake side of the field. If you want to play a game, get good and playing the snake and you'll do well. ●









IRONMEN / DYNASTY (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2003



DUCKS (DK) - Millennium Bitburg - 2009





RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - NPPL Chicago - 2003



STATIC (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2003



SYNDICATE (DE) - Millennium bitburg - 1998





# SNAP SHOOTING

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Snap shooting is best described as the ability to break cover for the briefest of moments and to shoot one ball very accurately at your opponent and then get back to cover before your opponent can mark you. Although the task is simple, mastering it can take a lifetime and some of the best players in the world are unbelievably good at it. They can have an opponent right in front of them already gunning at them and in a fraction of a second they can snap out, shot their opponent and get back behind cover without being marked. Although this is a simple task and the mechanics aren't all that difficult, to be able to do it well, over and over again, takes a lot of work. This is one of the best skills to have as a paintball player because it is what the sport is all about. You are one on one against another opponent who has the advantage and you figure out a way to beat them. I highly recommend you spend time working on, and perfecting, this skill if you want to be a good paintball player. You can never be too good a gun fighter- and snap shooting is your bread and butter.

Snap fighting has always been a big part of paintball although some people are forgetting about the importance of it now, with the advent of the fully automatic guns. I can tell you the ones who

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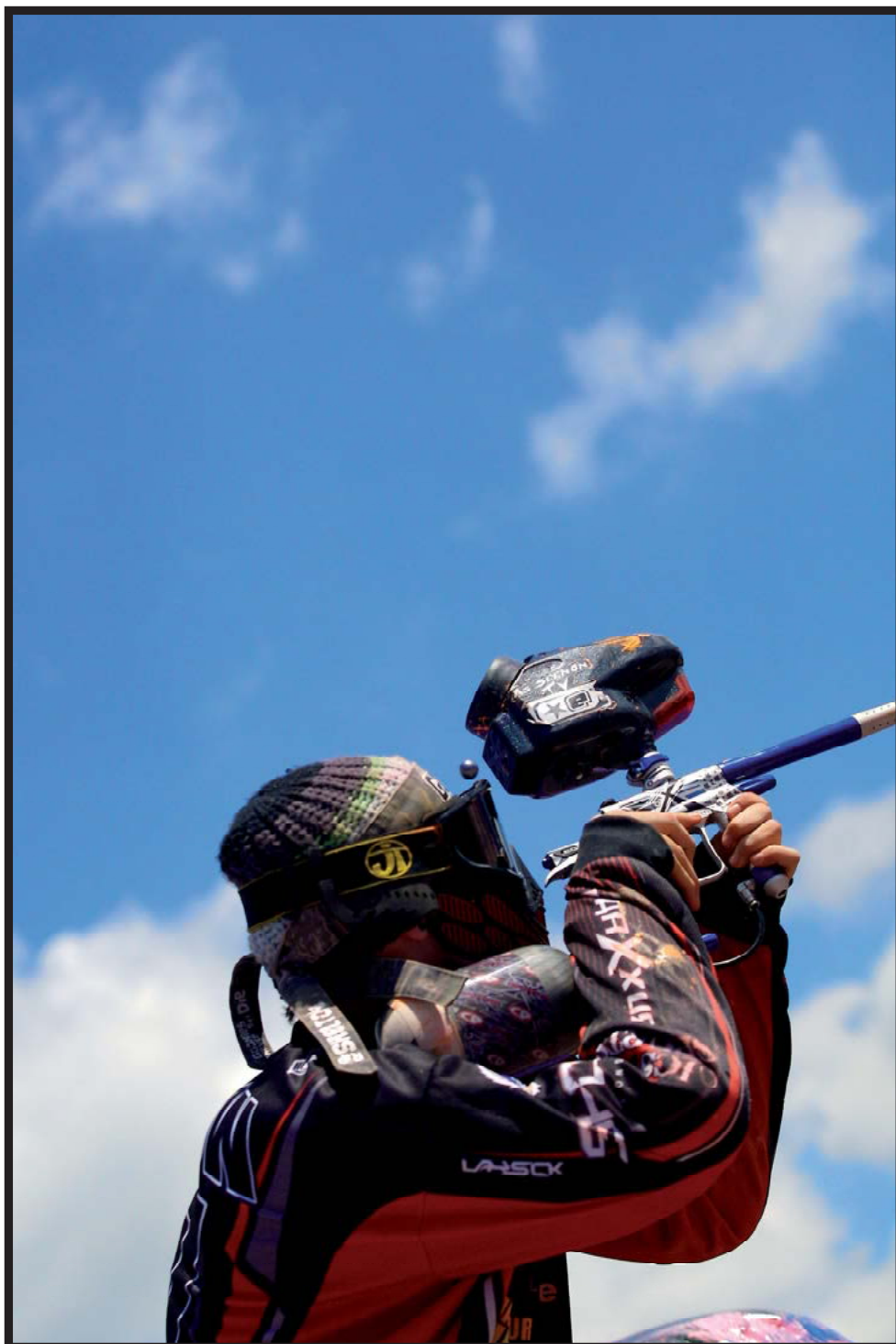


INFAMOUS (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2003

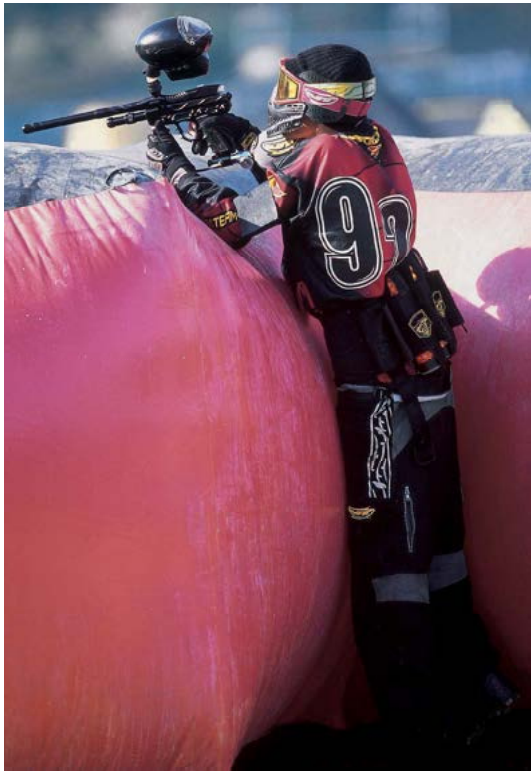
aren't forgetting about it are the pump players that are still out there. I watched a pump tournament recently and these guys were on fire with their snap shooting. Watching them play was like watching a snap shooting tournament, it was great. They would come out of cover and shoot one straight ball and get back to cover in one fluid movement.

Learning how to be a good snap shooter is easy and you don't have to use a lot of paint because you're only shooting one ball at a time. This drill is best done against someone who is better than you, but try to work on going back and forth in and out of your bunker without getting shot while your partner does the same thing. At first, you can do this from a good distance just to get the feel of it. Once you get better at it, you get closer so that you can hit what you're shooting at and vice versa. This should be practiced as much as possible and once you get good, your game will be much stronger and you will be able to work on your other paintballing skills. Another way to get good at this, which is probably faster, is to do a clinic with a pro. Any pro out there will do, they are going to be better at it than you and will help you get past some of the most common mistakes. People tend to lead with their elbows and step out with their feet. People also like to snap out from the same spot all the time. A pro will help you work on all of these things and you will grasp in a day or two what would have taken you a year to figure out on your own. ●





Fly man - Millenium BitBurg - 2010



KAP FACTORY (US) - Millennium London - 2003





RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - PSP phoenix - 2010



LTZ (US) - PSP Chicago - 2008





Ducks (DE) - Millennium Bitburg - 2009



# RELOAD

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Loading paintballs is way harder then it looks. When the sport was young, loading paintballs wasn't even considered a skill. When you shot a lot less paint and there was no such thing as a line of paint, there was no need to load fast without spilling or dropping your line of paint. Now it is essential and although it's not really hard to do, it gets harder when people are trying to shoot you and the game is on the line. Most people can't even handle playing paintball at the most competitive levels. Add to that trying to take something out of a pocket on your back, that's tough; and that is only the half of it, once you get it off your back, you need to open it and then without getting shot, bring it up over your head and drop it gently on top of your hopper. Again, you have to do all this while you're shooting your gun and trying not to get shot. I can't even imagine how much paint has been wasted by guys trying to load their hoppers and dropping a whole pod on the ground. It's one of the funniest things that you see in videos or in games; a guy gets to the pinnacle of the game and he uses his last three pods to get a total of twenty paintballs into his gun. At this point, out of complete frustration over not being able to perform the simplest of tasks, he gets up and runs down the field leaving the game to chance.

One invention that has really helped players in this area is the speed feed. The speed feed is a lid that goes on the hopper with plastic fingers that allows the paint to go in but not fall out. With a speed feed on your gun you don't have to open and close your lids. I think most of us that play have been loading and shot in the lid but those days are over now. The only real draw back to the speed feed is rain. Having a big open hole on the top of your hoppers is great for getting paint in there but bad for keeping the rain out. ●

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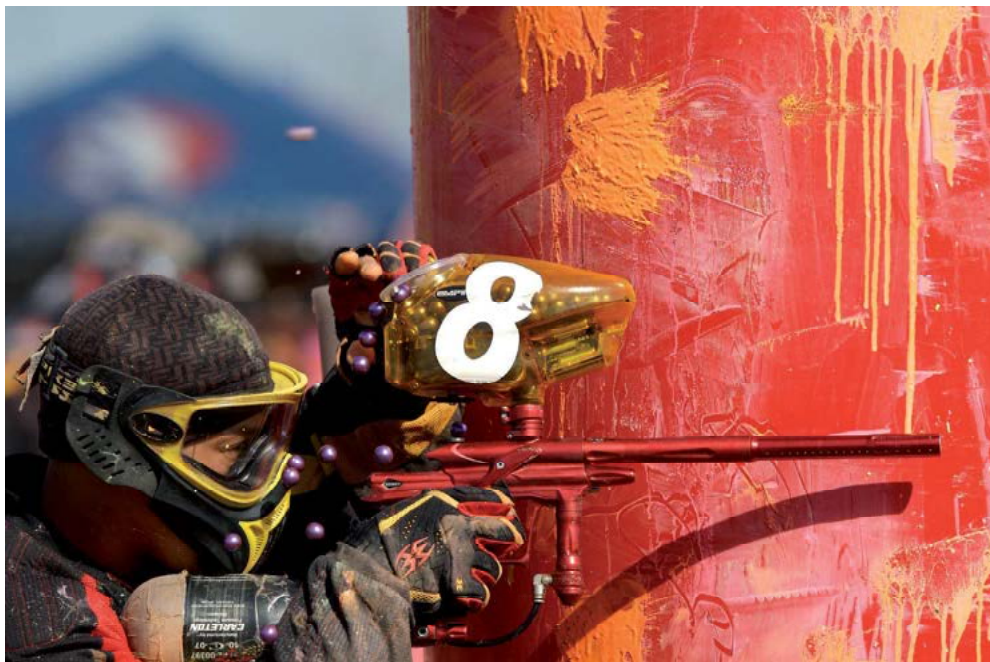




IRONMEN (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



BUSHWAKERS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



INFAMOUS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2008



ALL AMERICAN (US) - Toulouse - 1995





INFAMOUS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2008



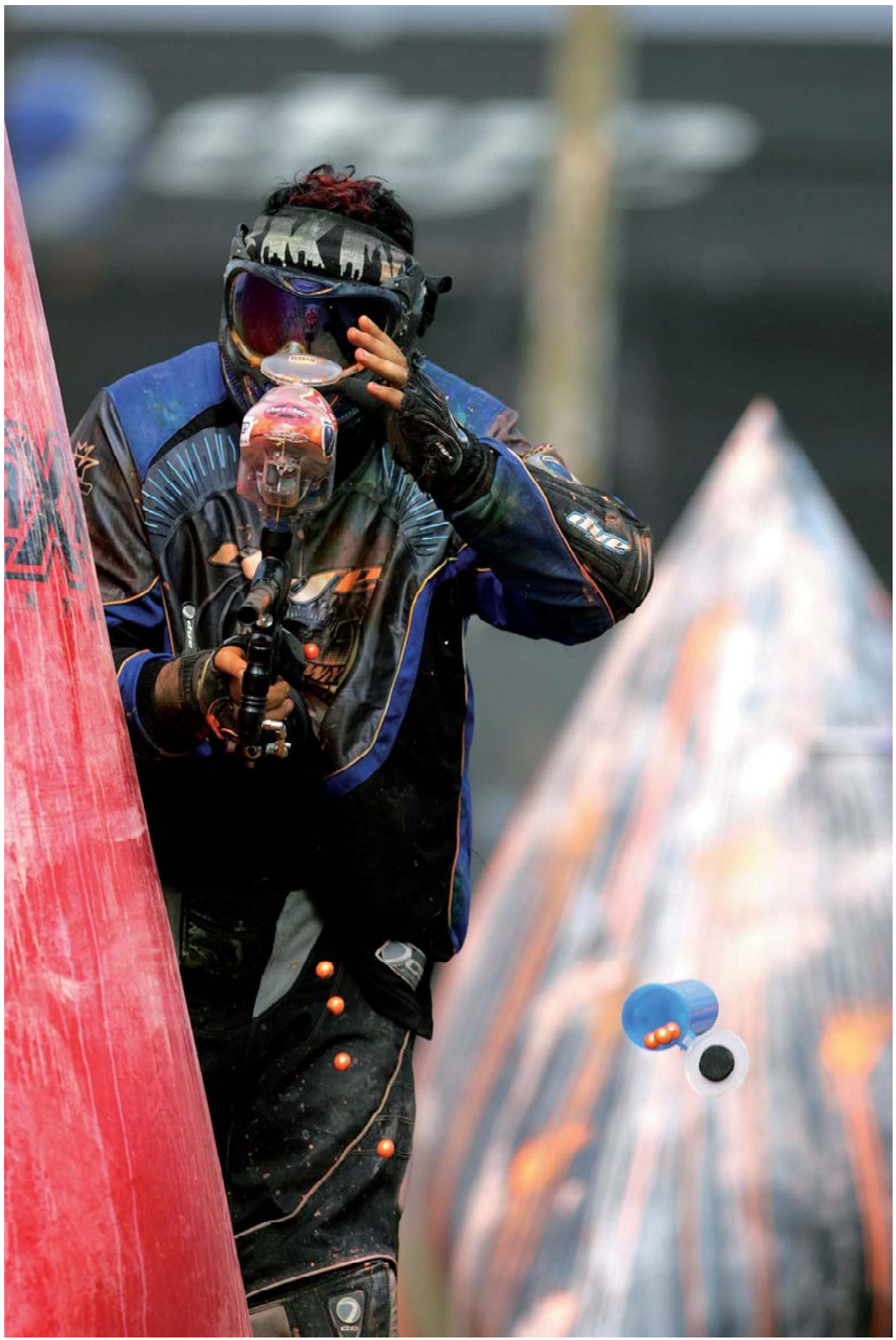
ALL AMERICAN (US) - PSP Latrobe - 2008



AFTERSHOCK (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



SK MOSCOU (RU) - Millennium Bitburg - 2009



GROUND ZERO (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2005





AFTERMATH/BOB LONG IRONMEN (US) - NPPL huntington Beach- 2003





# BUNKERING

This is the slam-dunk of paintball. This is spiking the (American) football in the end zone. This is the coolest move in paintball bar none. Bunkering is when you run up to your opponent and shoot him at point blank range. It's very demoralizing for the opponent, you got close enough to touch him without him knowing and then you blasted him. There used to be a lot more bunkering but with one of the leagues letting people yell from the sidelines, bunkering has been diminished somewhat. I think that the other thing that cut back bunkering is the appearance of super fast guns. It's much harder to bunker someone when the guy behind him has a laser beam. The one spot where there is still a lot of bunkering is the snake and that's great. Paintballs hurt and the closer you are the more they hurt so point blank really hurts. Watching a really good player set up, move and then go 'bunker' someone is as cool as it gets. To 'bunker' someone, you have to be of a somewhat aggressive nature; you have to be willing to take the big risk for the big reward. The truly great players can 'bunker' more than one player, practically winning or breaking open the game with one move.

In order to 'bunker' someone cleanly, which means you shoot him and don't get shot, a lot of things have to happen just right. First, you have to know where the players around this player are and what they are doing. You have to know which way the player you're going to bunker is looking. Then you have to work it all out in your head. What you're working out is who can shoot me if I try and go get this guy. Once you figure out who can shoot you then you try to get the guys on your team to put the opposing players in. Unfortunately, good players know when you're setting up to go get their guy so they try to prevent you from doing so. If you're good enough to figure all of this out and your players are helping you, you get ready to make your move. Even with all of the planning and help there is no guarantee that you are going to get your guy. On the one hand, you may step out and get smashed and when you do that you look like an idiot. On the other hand, when all the stars line up and everything is going just right, you make your move and you're a hero. Maybe only to yourself and to your team but there is no better feeling on the field. •















RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) / Strange (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2005











# OVERSHOOTING

Overshooting is when a player gets hit with multiple paintballs after the first ball has already broken. Once the first ball breaks on you, you are eliminated so there is no need to be shot again. That is unless the first ball bounced or slid off on you and didn't break. Overshooting has changed over the years. Back when players used one-shot pumps, two or three balls were considered overshooting. Then people started shooting semi automatics and the two or three balls became five balls. Just like that, the arms race had started. Some genius- who was also a paintball manufacturer- decided that we should shoot fully-automatic guns. Now, you get hit with ten balls, maybe more. Looking back, I think that this was one of the biggest mistakes that our sport made. We scared off many potential new players with our super fast guns and the inevitable overshooting that came with them.

Now overshooting is going to happen even under the best of circumstances, it's just part of the game, especially if you're competing. Quite often when you're shooting at an opponent, you don't see them. You're shooting where they are going or where you think they might pop out. With the new faster guns there is more paint in the air. When there is more paint in the air, people get shot more. Think about it like a water hose, you spray someone with a hose and as soon as you hit them you turn the hose away, what happens? What tends to happen is that all that water keeps moving forward and splashes them no matter where the hose is pointed. The same thing happens with paintballs.

There is also a different kind of overshooting, one that is all too familiar. It's the kind that happens on purpose. You might think a guy cheated or maybe you just don't like him so you shoot him and give him a couple extra to show him how you feel. Of course, he doesn't appreciate this so the next time you play, he returns the favor and so on. If this becomes too obvious at a tournament, they will penalize the guilty player but it's a tough penalty to call because there is always a lot of paint in the air. Every once in a while someone will get a penalty for it and everyone will back off the extra bullets a little bit. The best thing to do is to just not get into the game of overshooting. You will get overshoot at some point, it happens, just try not to make a big deal out of it and move on. If it gets too bad, then do what you have to do but be careful, there are guys out there that play this game very well, and you don't want to be on the losing side of an overshooting war.. ●







AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2001







INFAMOUS / AFTERSHOCK (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2010



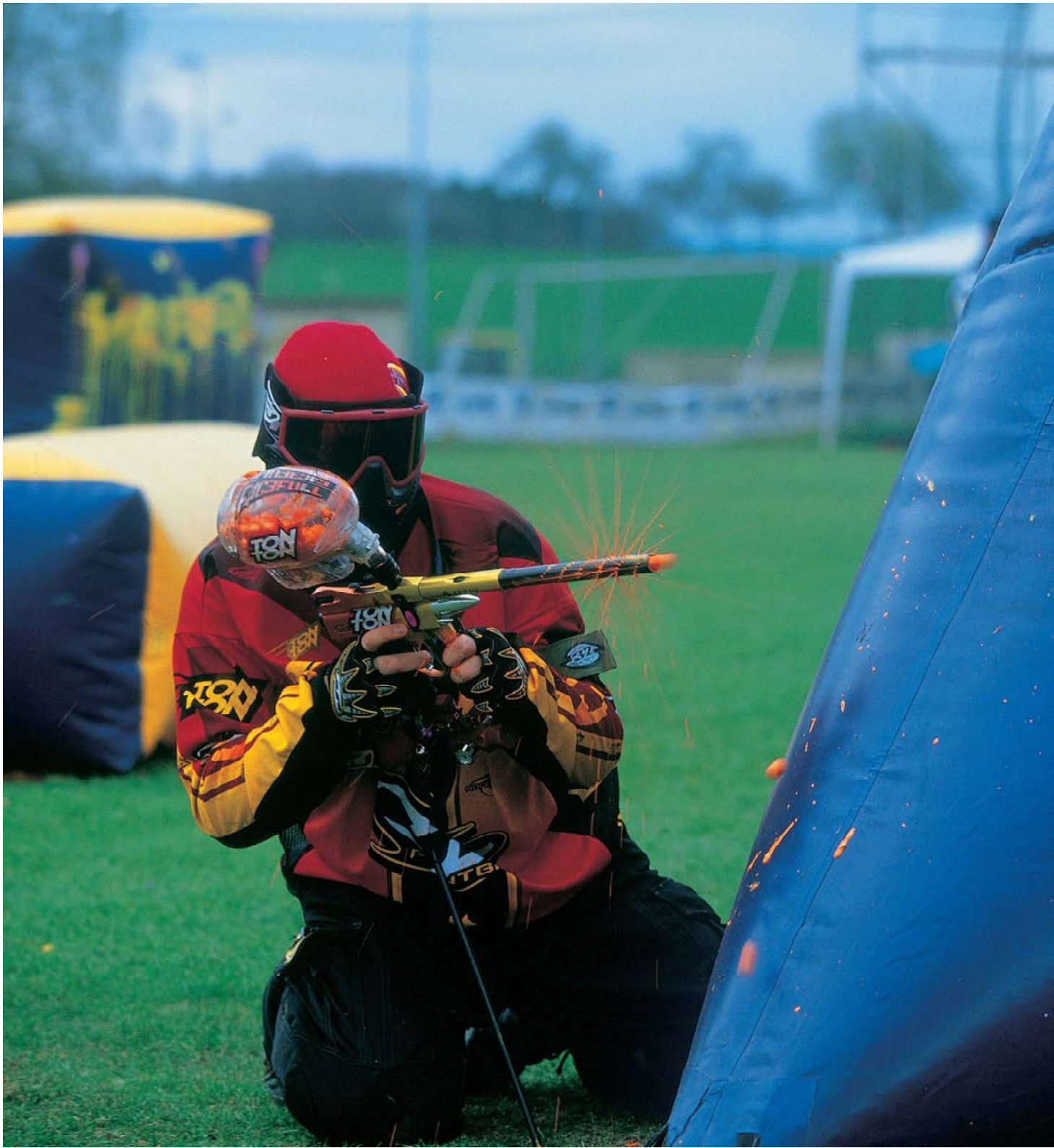


JOY DIVISION (SE) / NAUGHTY DOGS (US) - NPPL Tampa - 2005



AFTERSHOCK (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001





TONTONS (FR) - Millennium Bitburg - 2003



# GUN PROBLEMS

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You might be the best player in the world but if your gun doesn't work then neither do you. Paintball, like any other sport, relies on equipment. That's not to say that you need the best equipment to be the best player, but it doesn't hurt. Players spend tons of time getting their gear just right. You have to because you rely on it so heavily. First, you have to find out what gear works best for you. Everyone is different and has their own taste so what works for one might not for another. Once you have figured out what equipment works best for you then you have to get it working as well as you can. The catch is that when you set up your equipment and you are getting the most out of it, you tend to wear it out. The more you use your gear, the better it works, until it doesn't. There is no worse feeling than being in the middle of a big game and your gun breaks or your goggles fog. There is also a strange phenomenon that occurs when this happens, everyone exposes themselves to you and you could have had the game of your life. Almost every time my gear has broken down on me in a big game, I could have easily won the game if only I had had my gear running.

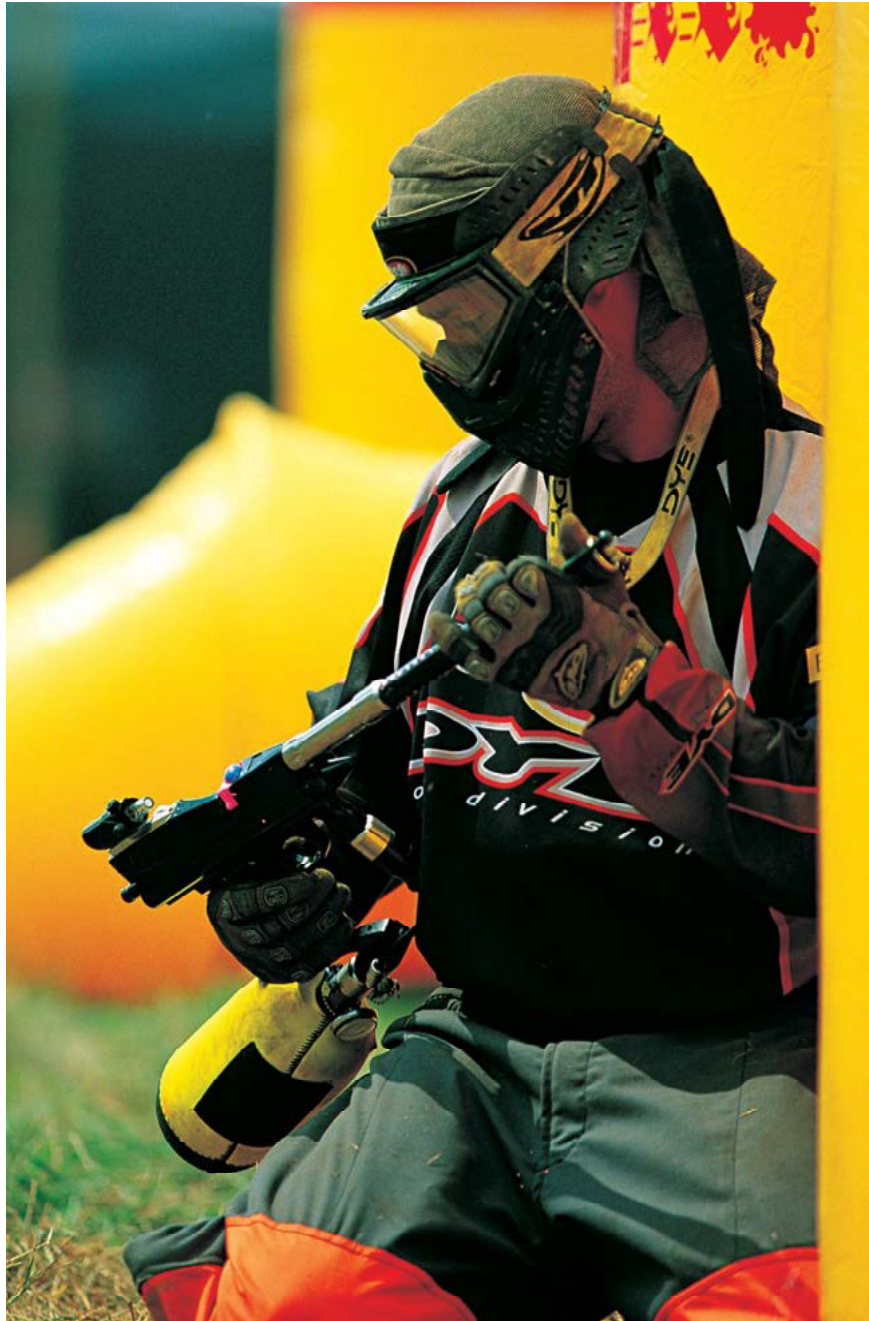
Gear breaks down for all kinds of reasons and all of your gear can and will fail at some point. Even if you have a great tech and you take really good care of your gear, it's going to fail and, when it does, you are screwed. The best thing that you can do is to try and help your team by not letting the other team know that your gun is down and by drawing as many guns as you can. This isn't always easy when you can't really do much but it's the only thing you can do to help. Sometimes your equipment is only partially down and if that's the case then you have a chance, a small one, but that's better than nothing.

Depending on what's wrong, you might be able to fix it on the field. Maybe you only broke paint in your gun so you can clean it out. Hoppers break all the time and if yours does you're in trouble but at least you can hand load a ball or two at a time. Maybe it's your goggles and they have fogged up so badly you can't see anything so you rub off the lenses and make a move before they fog again. The point is just because your gear is down doesn't mean you have to be. In the long run, the better you take care of your gear the better it will take care of you but it's still going to fail at some point so make the best of it. Oh, and always be nice to the gun techs, your life is in their hands.●





DYNASTY (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2002



AFTERSHOCK (US) - NPPL Gettysburg - 2001





FAT LADIES (SE) - Joy Masters - 2002



TONYONS (FR) - Millennium Bitburg - 2003





SAN DIEGO - LA Ironmen - 1998



# OUT.

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The worst thing that can happen to you in a game of paintball is getting put out! The only thing that you can hope to do is to go out in a blaze of glory. No matter how fast you are or how clever, sooner or later, you are going to be out. At some point, a ball will come out of nowhere and hit you and if it breaks then you are out. Maybe you'll be lucky and the ball will bounce off of you and not break this time but the next ball will be on its way. So you might as well get used to it, you might as well get used to being out. Sometimes, when it happens, you don't even feel it when you get hit. You might be playing your game having a great time and another player or a referee will lean over and say 'you are out'. Other times, it will hurt so much that you don't even care about the game anymore; all you're thinking about is the sting from the last shot.

I guess there are good ways out and bad ways to get shot out. A great way is running through the field trying to shoot as many guys as you can. For some reason, when you do that, even if you get shot to pieces, it doesn't hurt much. The feeling that you shot a couple of guys before you went down is enough to mask the sting from all the hits you took. Other times, that just isn't the case. For instance, when you're on the other end of a guy making a big move and shooting you in the back. I think it's the shock of not knowing that it's coming and then- boom - fire on our back. Sometimes, you get shot out as soon as the game starts from an unknown source and that is frustrating. If you get shot early and you don't know who shot you; it's tough because you don't know what to do differently in the next game.

The only thing worse than the physical pain of getting shot out, is the mental anguish. No one likes to lose. In paintball, when you get shot out, you lose. This does not mean that your team will not win, but not with you on the field. Occasionally, you're one of the lucky ones that get to make a big move and win the game for the team but those events are few and far between. Most of us get shot out trying to stop other guys from making big moves or trying to make one ourselves. Paintball is a blast, it the most fun thing that I have ever done and I do it as much as I can, but if you're going to play paintball, you're going to get shot out. The sooner you can come to terms with the fact that you are going to get shot every once in a while, the better a time you'll have playing this sport. ●

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AVALANCHE (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002



TRAUMA (US) - PSP Chicago - 2006





CARNAGE (FR) - Millennium Paris - 2011



SPLASHMAN - World Cup Orlando - 2001



XSV (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2009



VICIOUS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



NEXUS (UK) - NPPL Tampa - 2007

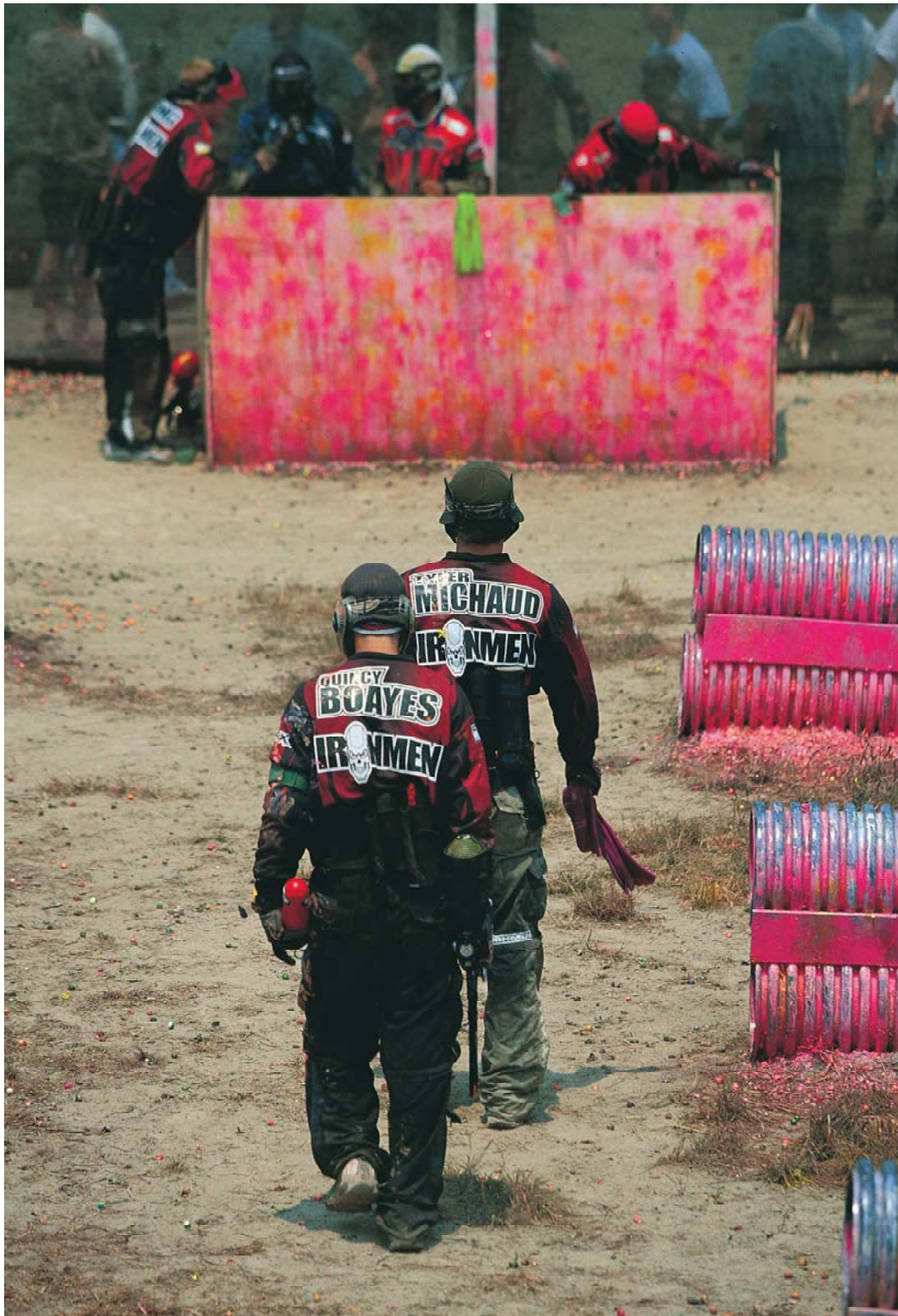




# CAPTURING THE FLAG

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There is no better or no worse feeling than someone grabbing the flag depending on where you're standing. There are many different paintball games. They are mostly based on how many players are involved and the environment the game is being played in. The one thing that almost all have in common is that they play 'capture the flag'. Your flag represents your team, your will and your spirit. To break through the enemy lines and take that away from them makes you feel like a million bucks. Of course sometimes it is you and your team who watch some 'bad guy' come into your house and take your flag. There are different games, in some the flag is in the middle of the field, in others it's at the other team's base but it doesn't matter where it is, you have to get theirs and defend yours. This is the very principle of paintball: attack and defend the flag. Neither is more- or less - important. The glory guys want to attack and the strategic guys want to defend. In the end, you have to do both and the team that does that, wins. ●



BON LONG IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2002





TONTONS (FR) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



WARPED (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001





RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - PSP Phoenix - 2008



NPPL Boston - 2008





TRAUMA (US) - PSP Chicago - 2004



## ARGUMENT

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**M**an! This happens way too much at paintball tournaments. If the teams and players understood one simple fact, it wouldn't be that way. It's not about what happened on the field or who did what or didn't do what. What matters and the only thing that matters is what the judge saw. That is what it's all about; we see things all the time from the sideline but if the referee doesn't see it then it didn't really happen. Even though we know this, we march out onto the field to argue with the refs and try to convince them that they saw what we saw. What we are really trying to do is to get one of the other refs, who might have witnessed the same thing as us, to come over and help argue our case. All in all, the refs do a good job but it's a tough job and you can't see everything so they can't be expected to. What they are expected to do is to be fair and do their best to enforce the rules when and where they can. Of course, in the heat of the argument, we don't care how hard their job is or whether or not they are human; we want what we want and we want it right now. In the entire history of paintball, I can only think of one game that was ever replayed and that was the Kansas City debacle with the Ironmen and Impact. What a bad joke that was! It was no one's fault and everyone's fault that that was ever allowed to happen. There was some confusion on the field and it was late so they decided to replay the game at the next event. This was, as far as I can remember, the only game that was overturned and it probably won't ever happen again.

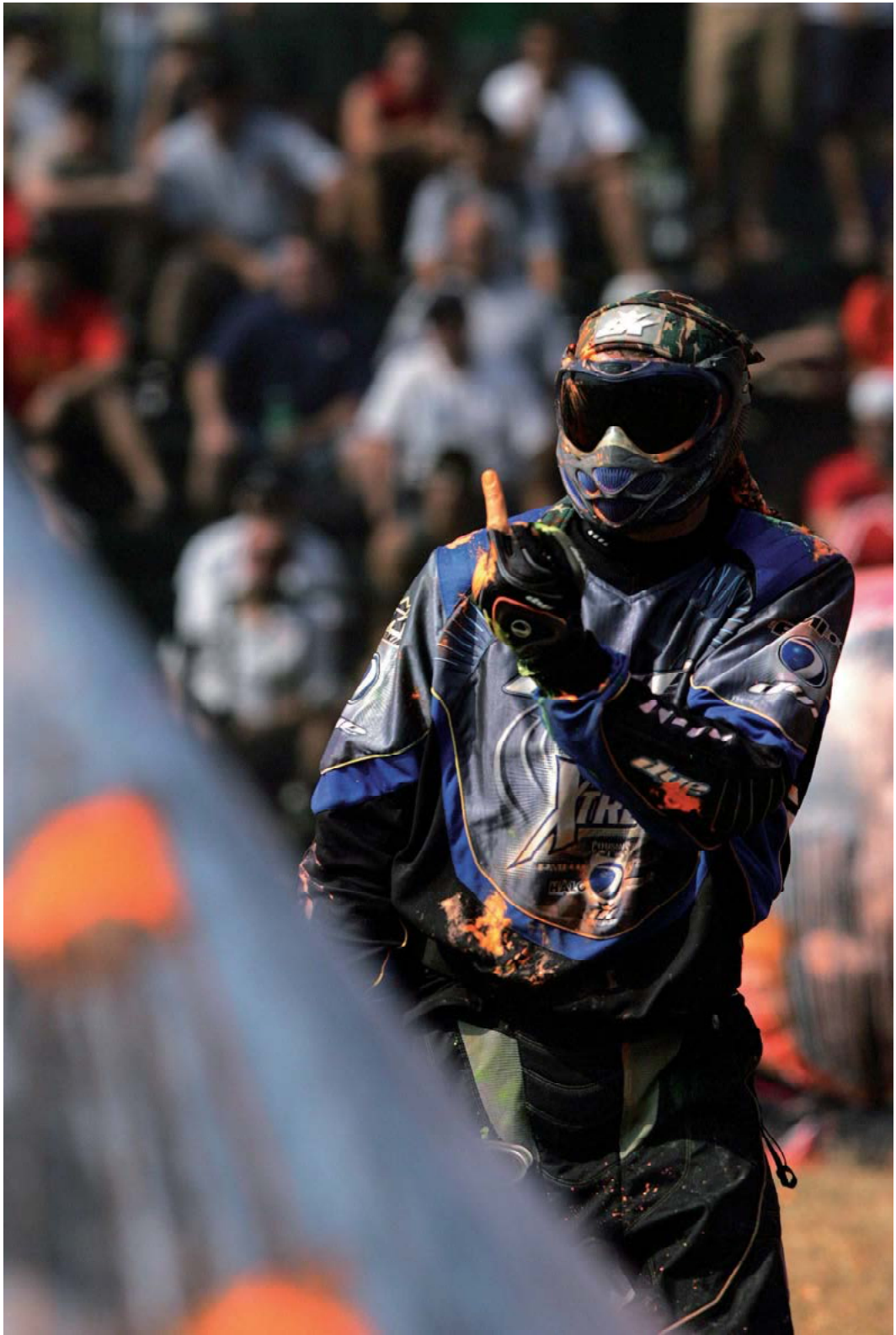
Of course, that isn't going to stop the captains and players from running out there on the field and arguing until we are blue in the face to try to get what we want. Although this isn't always the best course of action, it is what we do as captains and players. We are passionate about our sport and we want to win. Lucky for us that the refs are very patient and are willing to listen to us but that doesn't mean that they are going to change their call. It's most likely that the call is going to stay the same; no matter how good you are at arguing your case. •

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XSV - PSP World cup Orlando - 2009



GROUND ZERO - PSP World Cup Orlando - 2005





TONTONS (FR) / NAUGHTY DOGS (US) - NPPL New York - 2003



AFTERSHOCK (US) / ALL AMERICANS 2 (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



# DEAD BOX

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The dead box is the last place you want to be on the field and if you have to go there, you don't want to be the first one in. The dead box is the area on the field where all the eliminated players go after they have been put out. There is nothing worse than sitting in that box watching the events unfold before your eyes. There isn't any time when you feel more helpless than when you sit there and watch your team battle while you sit on the sidelines. The amount of time you spend in the dead box maybe only minutes but it seems like hours. Your teammates are out there fighting and you're already out of the fight. Sometimes, you go to the dead box with a smile on your face because you think you have already won the game. Maybe you went out and shot three or four guys so there is no doubt in your mind that you're going to win. Then you look across the field and there are just as many of your guys walling off as there are of the opponents' and you get that sick feeling in your stomach. We all think that when we are in the game, we can still win. We all think that we can do better than those who are out there playing but if that were true then why are we here in the dead box?

The dead box is also where a lot of problems pop up for teams. If you get gamesmen who are not team players and are only thinking about themselves, they can try to divert attention away from themselves by pointing out the flaws in others. It's easy to sit in the box and criticize other players who are still out there playing. Paintball isn't like regular sports, where there is always a text book way of doing things. That's one of the reasons it's so hard. Guys will sit in the box and say 'this guy should do this' or 'that guy should do that'. They plant seeds of dissent, which, if left unchecked, cast doubt on the player's skill and are detrimental to team unity. Some of the best teams and players have had this happen to them, not always from the dead box, but more often than not it springs from there. So my advice is 'don't go in the dead box and if you do, go in last'. If someone is in there badmouthing the guys on the field, remind them that they are in the dead box for a reason and they should worry more about why they are in there and less about how everyone else is playing. •

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LOCKOUT (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2002



STRANGE (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001



DYNASTY (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001



AFTERSHOCK / IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Las Vegas - 2002





SHOCKWAVE (UK) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001

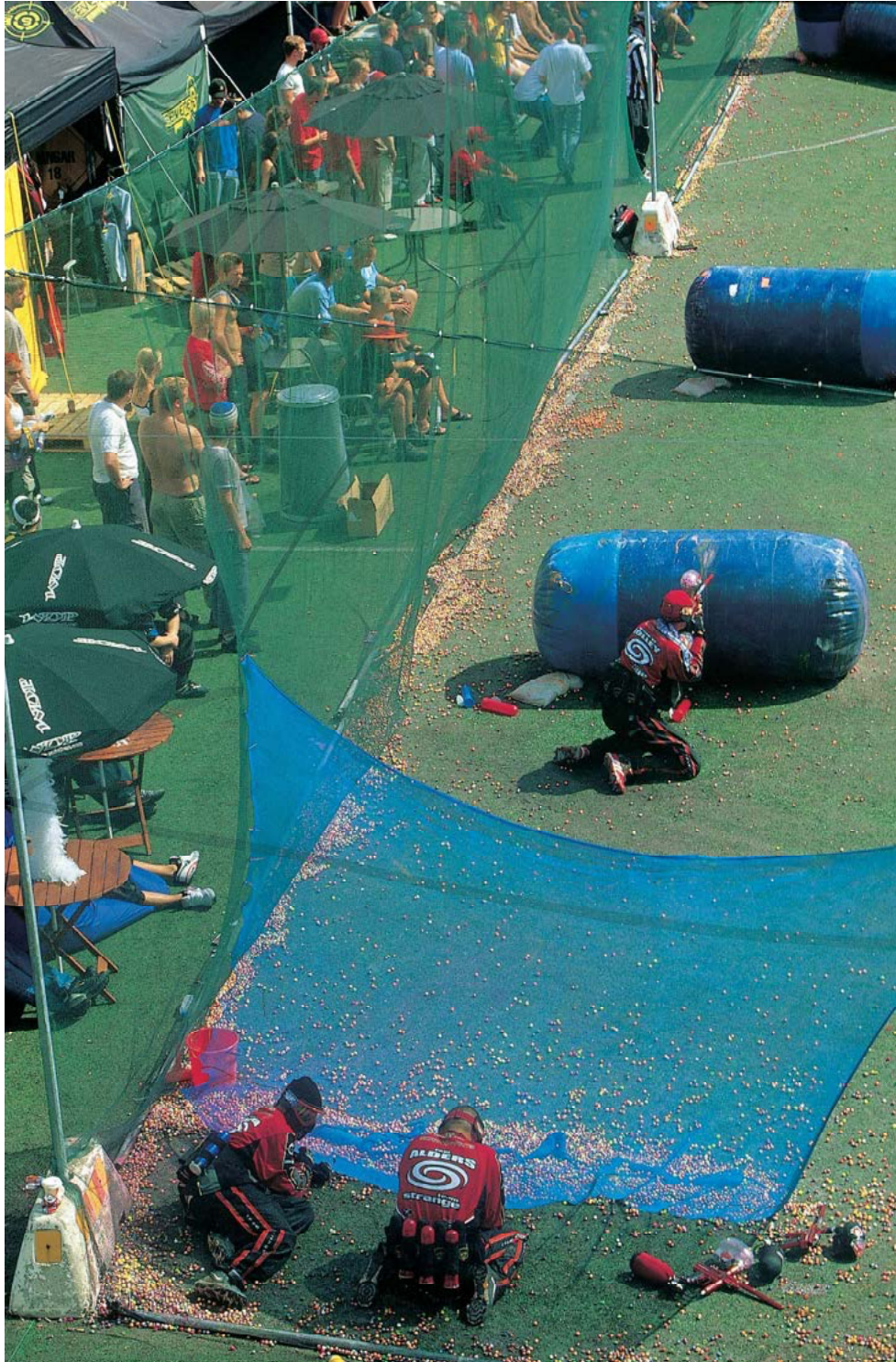


DYNASTY (US) - PSP Los Angeles - 2008





TEAM USA - X BALL IAO Pittsburgh - 2002



STRANGE (US) - Millennium joy masters - 2003









## GAME OVER

In every game, there is a winner and a loser. No one likes to lose and everyone likes to win. If you're competitive in this sport, your goal is to win a pro event. It doesn't matter what league or on what continent. You just want to win and nothing will stand in your way. You need to accept all of the losses you have to face to get to that first win. The feeling of winning that first event is indescribable, it's everything you have worked for, it's the best thing ever and then some. Unfortunately, to get there you have had to lose many games, tournaments and events. You learn along the way that it isn't always the best team that wins; it's not always fair or right. It takes something special to win an event; everything has to be just right and then maybe you win. You can have the best team and do everything right and still not win. It's a paradox that none of us truly understand. I think that the hardest thing to face once you have been doing it for a while is that you don't always remember the great victories, they just kind of happen. However, the big defeats are devastating, they hurt much more deeply than the joy you feel from winning. Years later, you might not remember who did what or why you won but when you lose, you remember who, what, where and why. That's probably why so many of us don't play pro events; we just can't take all of the heartbreak it takes to finally get there. We struggle, we fail and then we continue until we finally win. Unfortunately, some of us aren't strong enough to do this and somewhere along the way we lose our drive, our passion and our commitment.

If you're going to be in paintball and you want to make it to the top and you want to win big events then you have to deal with losing. No one likes it and it doesn't get better but it's going to happen and if you want to work past it, you need a plan. My plan has always been to learn from our mistakes as players and as a team. If you lose, it's only a true loss if you don't gain anything useful from it. If every time you lose you walk away from it with more knowledge and experience; if you continue to learn with every loss then, eventually, you won't be losing as much and then not at all. This isn't easy. In fact, it's one of the hardest things that we have to do. We have to look honestly at why we lost. You have to break the event down into pieces, analyze those pieces and then figure out how to fix the problem. The easiest but least beneficial solution is to cut players. This is the easy way out and a short-term solution to a long-term problem. What you need to do is face the facts, figure out why your players were not as good as the other team's. Figure out what the opponents do to get ready for a game or an event. Think about what your team does and then apply that knowledge to the next game. Use the defeat to improve your game and eventually you will win! •





IRONMEN (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



GROUND ZERO (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2001





INFAMOUS (US) - NPPL Tampa - 2008



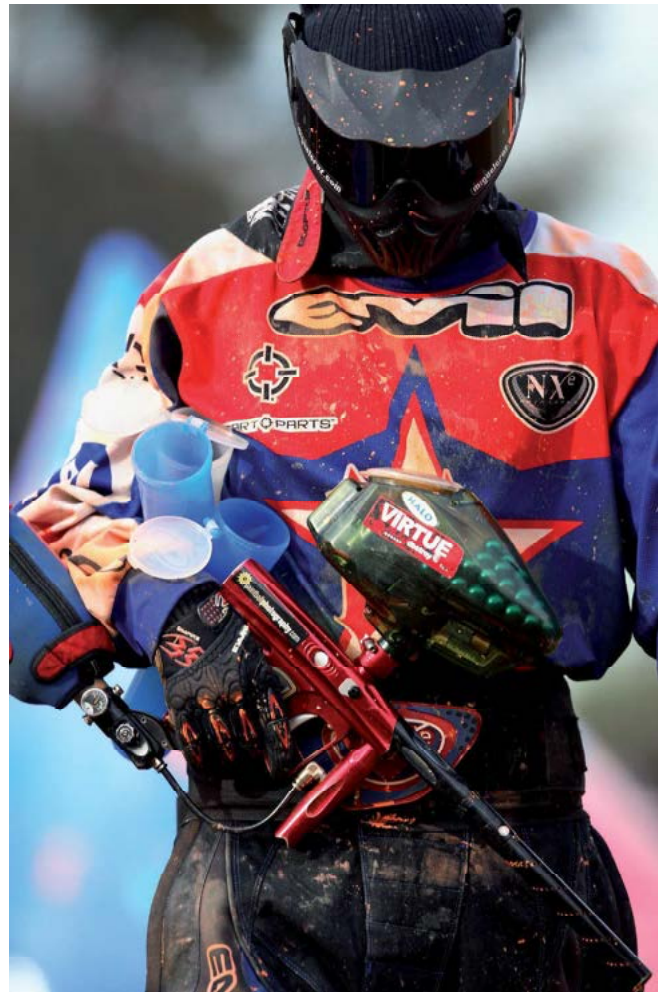
ALL AMERICANS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2008



VICIOUS (US) - PSP Phoenix - 2008



Joy Division (SE) - NPPL Sand diego - 2008



RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - PSP Los Angeles - 2008



XSV (US) / TONTONS (FR) - Millennium Amsterdam - 2005





IRONMEN (US) - PSP Los Angeles - 2008



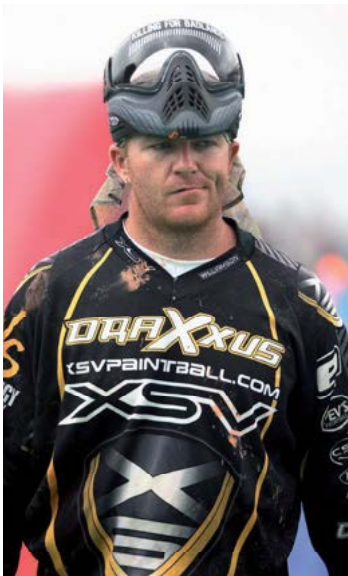
DYNASTY (US) - PSP Chicago - 1998



GROUND ZERO (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2007



AVALANCHE (US) - Toulouse - 2004



XSV (US) - NPPL Boston - 2006



IRONMEN (US) - PSP Chicago - 2007



# STORM

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Paintball is a challenging game almost like golf in the sense that you never truly master it. This game is constantly changing and growing. There are a ton of things going on while you are playing weather you're in the woods or in a big tournament. The only thing that can make it harder then it already is, is would be Mother Nature. Shooting a round ball down a smooth barrel doesn't make for much accuracy but trying doing that when it raining and breezy then forget about it. Paintball is played best in a dry not humid environment with not to much heat and no wind. Unfortunately that almost never happens. It seems like every time we show up some where its either raining or super hot and a tornado is blowing through. Very rarely do we get perfect paintball weather but when we do it great.

I think that worst storm condition for paintball is the Rain. When the paintballs get wet going into the hopper or sitting in the breach they pretty much get ruined. They will not fly straight no matter how good of a shot you are. They are completely unpredictable so they are next to impossible to shoot. You can't correct your last shot because the balls are so inaccurate you don't know where they were going. Of course the rain leads to mud. Mud is bad for a few reasons number one it's hard to run fast and slide which we all really on to get to our bunkers and make our moves. Mud makes everything slippery, people start to fall, drop there markers, it gets crazy. Plus it's hard to see a little paintball hit someone and break on them when they are completely covered in mud.

So when I said rain was the worst I guess, I meant mud and rain. I guess the only other things that we regularly deal with is wind and oh yeah lighting. Paintball markers are pretty much all mad out of steel or aluminum. It doesn't really matter they are both very conductive and make really great mini lightening rods. We paintball players are a hardy bunch we play in the rain, mud and wind but when the lighting comes we hide. That's the cardinal rule for storms in paintball run around have fun in the mud and rain but when the lighting comes hit the road at least until in blows buy. ●

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MARDI GRAS OPEN - New Orleans - 2004





XSV (US) - PSP Los Angeles - 2006



STRANGE (US) - New Orleans - 2004







SURFING - NPPL Sand Diego - 2007





STRANGE (US) - PSP Los Angeles - 2006



MARDIS GRAS OPEN - New Orleans - 2004



STRANGE (US) - PSP Los Angeles - 2006



PSP LOS ANGELES - 2006



TEAM











ALL AMERICAN (US) - World cup Orlando - 2002

## ALL AMERICAN

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The all Americans were one of the original big pro paintball teams. Back in the days in the woods, they were the most technical team in the world. When the All Americans were at the top of their game, there was only one team that could touch them and that was the Ironmen. The two teams brought out the best in each other when they competed. Year in, year out, from event to event, they battled for supremacy. The All Americas were very smart, very technical; they walked the fields and tweaked their guns so that they would always have the advantage in the games they played. There were often referred to as geeks with guns. You didn't say that to their faces because they would blow you off the field but their style was in stark contrast with the other teams that played at the time. When other teams were learning to push and run and gun, the All Americans were focused on camouflage and high tech guns. The All Americans were one of the most successful teams that ever played.

They had their own style and it worked. They won events all over the world; they were one of the first American teams to play in Europe and were very successful, winning most of the events they played. The Gardner brothers, who had originally formed the All Americans, started the company "Smart Parts". They were able to take their ideas

onto the field, test them and make them work then sell those products to the public. They always had the best gear. They were doing it the right from the start because they actually played with the same gear they sold. They wanted every advantage on the field and you, as the player buying their gear, benefited from it.

When the Gardner brothers got too old to play they changed the team's name and got younger players. The team became the Philly Americans. This new team won the very first season of the NXL, which was the X-ball league of the day. The Gardeners took great care of their team; they were the first owners who really valued their players. They paid their players and made sure that they had whatever they needed to win. They had their own training facility, almost unlimited resources and did really well for a long time. The problem with all the money coming into the team from the company was that when the company sank there was no one left to put money into the team and so the team disintegrated. The best of the players are still playing on great teams today. The All Americans were one of the first teams that designed high performance gear, used it to win events, and also took great care of their players. This team was one of the best but never played better than when they battled the Ironmen.



AFTERSHOCK (US) - World cup orlondo - 2001

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# AFTERSHOCK

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This was the second coming of Aftershock. They still had a few holdovers from the old days like Ryan Williams and Danny Love , but they also had some new talent, and some vets from other teams like Brian Bennie. There was a saying that everyone came to the World Cup to see Aftershock kick the crap out of all the other teams. It's no surprise that they started the saying but it seemed to stick. They had a really good run for a few years, always doing well at the Cup, always pulling off big wins. The year that this photo was taken was one of those years. They had a terrible season not winning a single event, barely making it to Sunday on a few occasions, but then the World Cup rolled around. They were like an entirely new team; they couldn't make a mistake if they tried. Their paint shot straighter, their guns shot faster and they seemed to always get the calls. This was very unusual; most teams build up their momentum and then peek at the Cup. Not these guys. They sucked all year and then caught everyone by surprise; they were unstoppable. It was a real make it or break it event for them.

Some of their players were tired of losing sponsorship, but a win at the World Cup makes that all go away. Aftershock was sponsored by Dye, and they wore their gear proudly.

Aftershock was one of a handfull of teams that successfully transitioned from the woods to the modern arena of paintball. This was harder to do than you might imagine. Players in the woods didn't have to be athletic; you could just be sneaky. In the arena, it was often one player that made a big move and won the game. In the arena, it was more about being a good team and winning and losing as a unit. Shock was so good in the woods that they were able to make the transition, and even excel. Because of this, Aftershock was, and still is, one of the best teams in the world; they have one of the longest histories of any team out there and have a huge fan base in the mid west. They keep going to the World Cup and doing well. The names and faces may change, but the team values, like winning and working hard, are still there today like they were back in the day.





AVALANCHE (US) - NPPL Los Angeles - 2002

# AVALANCHE

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Avalanche was the first 'Rock star' team in paintball. Its fame was largely due to its success on the field and its players' flamboyance off the field. They were shooting angles that no one could compete with. They were partying all night long and winning the tournament the next day. They were the team that everyone wanted to beat, and, at the same time, hang out with.

Leading the team was Chris Lasoya, he made huge moves on the field and personified the image of a Rock star off the field. Rocky Cagnoni was another player that was larger than life. These guys were on the covers of magazines and in every video you watched. They were the first guys to be paid to travel the world and play paintball.

Many of them transitioned from ten-man in the woods to seven-man on the air ball fields. They went from being good players in the woods to the best in the world on the new fields. They shot more paint than two or three teams put together, and they weren't afraid to make big moves. They had a very fast-paced aggressive style that was hard to play against. They came forward hard and fast, right off the break.

They also shot guns that were faster than anyone else's. They had a huge advantage for the better part of two seasons. They were responsible for the arms race that followed. Once everyone had figured out that they were continuously winning, and that it had a lot to do with how fast their guns were, so everyone else wanted to get faster guns as well. The race was on but they were way in front. They had fast guns and they even knew how to modify them to make them even faster.

The problem with being a Rock Star is that you're a Rock Star. As time goes by, it gets harder to party all night and then play and win the next day, while the other teams were at home sleeping or walking the fields. Eventually all good things come to an end and so it did. They lost sponsors, and when the money started to run out, so did the players. More and more new players came in, but they were never able to recapture their spot at the top of the pro circuit.

Avalanche was a lesson on how to get to the top, but it was also a lesson in what you have to do, if you want to stay there. But all in all, they set the example for what superstar players and teams are all about. Avalanche made a huge impact in paintball.



DYNASTY (US) - NPPL Miami - 2006

## DYNASTY

Dynasty is just that, a Dynasty. They have done what no others have done and then some. The core of the team has always been Alex, the brilliant artist off the field, the fast and aggressive guy on the field, and Ryan - a playboy off the field, jet-setting from one party to the next, but on the field, solid and always there to win the game. Another strong core member is Yoshio. In all things, he is cool, calm and collected; on and off the field, he is a master of life. Oliver is the Alpha among Alphas and, at times, has been bigger than the team, but always a part of it.

The Iron kids were one of the best up-and-coming teams. They had that perfect balance of swagger and humility. They started playing locally and won some events. People started to notice and, like it had happened a number of times, people wanted some of these kids to play with them. This usually means the end of a team, but they stayed together and, with help from Chuck Hendsch, they became Dynasty, the best team in the world.

They didn't do it overnight, but little by little they started to win. At the time, Oliver was playing with the Ironmen, Yoshio played with them too for a while, but their hearts were always with their friends and they always came home. They played every national and European event for many years. They quickly became one of the big shots but never lost their boyish charms.

Soon Dynasty, the business, started. They had their own guns, videos, you name it. The fans were beating down the doors; the problem was no one was home. The kids were traveling the world, becoming men, having a blast. They didn't want to sit in a warehouse and ship videos. Once again, they were doing what no one had done before in paintball. They built a pro team into a brand name. Dynasty was synonymous with winning and being cool. Everyone wanted Dynasty products, but they couldn't always get them. The players had little passion for the business side of the team and soon the company fell by the wayside.

The current Dynasty has its original core intact; all of those who started it are there now. They are still one of the best teams in the world. Yet, they are nearing the end of their run unless they can reinvent themselves again. The kids aren't kids anymore; they still live the life of paintball Gods, traveling, doing clinics, but their passion has waned over the years.

Last year, Dynasty won their 50th event, a feat that probably won't be done again or, at least, not for a long time. They have done hundreds of clinics where they taught the Dynasty version of paintball. They have their own moves, theories and style and they seem to work. Through playing and winning events, making products and doing clinics, Dynasty has done more to shape the direction of paintball over the past decade than anyone or anything else. There may never be another team that accomplishes quite as much as Dynasty.





GROND ZERO (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2003

## GROUND ZERO

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GZ, as they were called, was one of the best of the old guard teams. They had been around for a long time, successfully making the transition from the woods to the stadiums. GZ was a top team in the States, but really seemed to play well in Europe as well. The team was from NY, their base of operations, and they had that special mix of new blood - like a very young Nicky Cuba, and veterans like Rosie. GZ had backing from their sponsors, but also had Jerry Braun backing them up. They were one of those teams that were always right on the cusp of really distancing themselves from the rest of the pack. They never really had their run but were always in the mix. They won lots of tournaments and played some of the best paintball at times, but, for whatever reasons, never had a season where they just completely dominated.

They decided that the respectful thing to do was to change their name after the September 11th attack on the twin towers; the remains of which were referred to as 'ground zero'. The team name was changed to 'NY Extreme'. They played for a few seasons under the new name, but they had lost more than just a name. The core team members had grown up, had families and were having a hard time committing to the team. They brought in new talent, who were really good, but the team just wasn't the same. Eventually, the team disbanded and most of the older players retired. There are still a few players playing here and there, but the old GZ is gone forever I'm afraid. They had some of the coolest guys and great paintball players.



IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Atlantic City - 2002

# IRONMEN

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The Ironmen are easily the most prolific name in paintball. There have been many Ironmen teams, players and captains, but their spirit has always been focused on one thing - winning. Over the years, the Ironmen teams have had more battles and victories than any other team in paintball and that says a lot. They have had their trials and tribulations, but the team's name and values have always been so strong that nothing could keep it from enduring. Its first incarnation brought it its fame and popularity. Players like Shane Pestana, Marty Bush and Dave Youngblood made names for themselves and created the Ironmen legend. They did this by being better than everyone else. Not just a little better, a lot better; so much so that in a sport full of superstars, they were the best of the best. With Bobby Long as their captain, the Ironmen became the team to beat and the team to emulate. They won titles in the USA and in Europe, but that wasn't enough for them, they wanted more. However, they didn't want to be told what to do and how to do it any longer, so the team split. Bob Long went one way, and the rest of the team went another.

Was it the right thing for them to do? Only the team knows that. In the following years, there were two Ironmen teams, one lead by Bob Long and one regrouping the other

players. In the first year, Bob Long's team won the championship, but the others didn't fare so well. Time went by and the tide turned, Bobby's team started struggling and the Ironmen team rebuilt and won their world championship. This was a whole new team lead by former players Shane Pestana and Dave Youngblood, who captained this team to win after win.

The new team became the new Ironmen and Bobby settled on the name Blast. The new Ironmen team was playing well, winning events, but then X-ball was invented. At the end of the season, the Ironmen management decided to retool the team and build them back smaller and faster. It took time, but, little by little, the Ironmen got back into winning shape and won two world championships. The team is still going strong with players like Billy Wing, and Mike Paxton. The one thing that I know is that there will always be an Ironmen team and they will always climb back on top of the sport.





JOY DIVISION (SE) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2006

## JOY DIVISION

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Joy is without a doubt the coolest team in paintball. They have in their captain and co-founder one of, if not the, coolest guys in the world. Magued is The Man in Sweden, which maybe doesn't mean all that much, but he is The Man wherever he goes; so I guess it does mean something. Joy is just one of those teams. They have their own style, their own way of doing things. They are very competitive on the field, but, unlike most of us, they are really nice guys off the field. This instantly makes them likeable. No matter whether they are playing for first and second or sitting on the hillside drinking beer and singing, they are a Joy to be around. The team has been around for a long time mostly because of Magued and his passion for the game. They have had some great players over the years, and each of them was great on the field and off. Joy is a loyal team; they were the only team to stick with Angel when everyone else jumped ship. There was Joy proud to help a friend out and shoot their gun.

Joy is one of the best teams that Europe has to offer in my opinion. They are more than just a team; they are a propaganda machine for all of Europe. When playing these guys on the field, you develop a lot of respect for them and when hanging out with them, you become friends. I have never met a Joy player that I didn't like and respect. That can't

be said for many teams; actually I can't say that for any other team. Unfortunately, Joy can't get across the pond to play on the United State side any more. They influence people in a positive way more than any other team. You want to go play with and against these guys, and you want to hang out with them and have fun. They somehow have figured out what so few of us have: how to compete at the highest-level then step off the field and let it go. They always know why they are playing. They are playing to win and to have fun. Most of us can't do one without the other, but they can and that is why they are special.



RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - Phoenix - 2010

## RUSSIAN LEGION

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The Russians are the first and only team that have been built from the ground up as a professional paintball team. Unlike most teams, it wasn't a bunch of buddies saying: "hey, lets have some fun and play paintball". This team was built like a pro sports team. They had a backer, one of the best, in Sergei. They had coaches, and then they worked on the players. This was one of the first true pro teams, in the sense that all of them got paid to play - that was the positive aspect. The negative aspect was that you had to perform. You couldn't keep guys around because you liked them. They have a staff of coaches and actually use them. They run the practice, select the players and make the game plans. The players are actually just athletes, they show up and do as they are told, and it works. The Russians have done it right, they play well, they are very focused and have been successful since their inception.

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TONTONS - World Cup Orlando - 2000

## THE TONTONS FLINGUEURS

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The Tontons are one of, if not the, best teams to come out of Europe and certainly the most famous French team. They have a long history of winning major events and playing big games. Laurent Hamet, as one of the former players, has always been one of the Tonton's benefactors. He has great love and energy for the game and has stayed involved by helping the team. The Tontons have a very aggressive style and although the team is constantly changing with players coming and going, the aggressive style has stayed a hallmark of the team. They have been playing at top level for as long as any other European team. Or maybe longer...



TRAUMA (US) - Mardi Gras New Orleans - 2004

# TRAUMA

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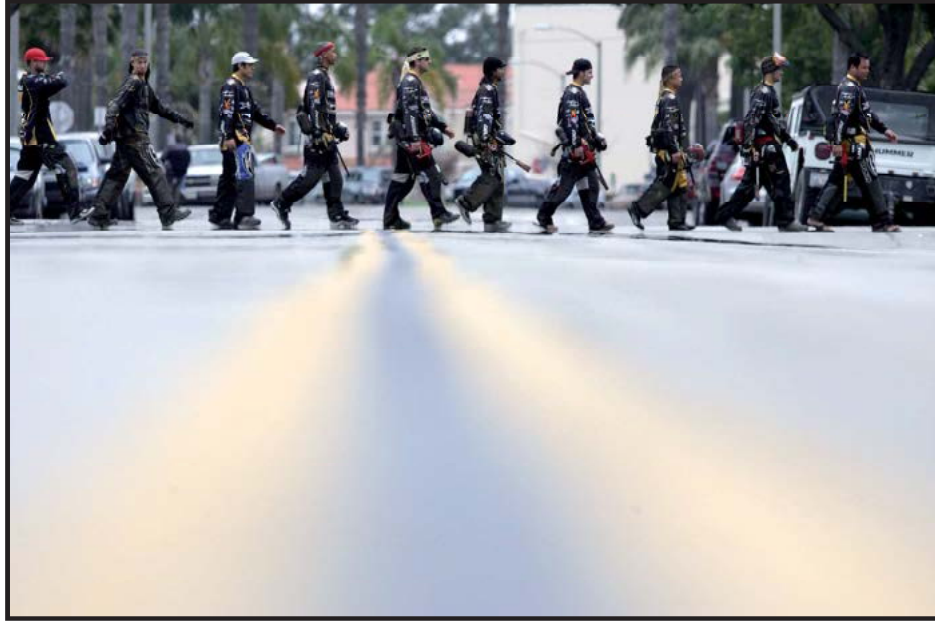
Trauma was an experiment in building a successful paintball team from the ground up. The experiment's mastermind was Rob Staudinger. On a personal level, he had had a very successful career in playing tournaments. He had a successful paintball playing field and gear store, and decided he wanted to help some local kids get good at the game and play tournament paintball.

They started by playing locally and, as they got better, they moved up to the national circuit. Rob wanted to try and use a little of everything he had learnt from traveling and playing with other teams. He bought the team a house and made them a private field to practice on and that's what they did. They practiced and played and competed, and went from being one of the best amateur teams to being one of the best pro teams

in the world. Rob pushed and pushed and they got better and better, until finally they won a world championship.

The downside of their victory was that they had worked so hard to get there that when they did, they didn't have much left for anything else. They had a goal and they accomplished it but after that they didn't have a plan. Little by little, the team fell apart and the players scattered. This was a lesson on the importance of having a plan to keep a team going strong once it had got to the top. These players had a lot to offer and teach future players but sadly that input was lost when the players went back to their lives outside paintball.





XSV (US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2007

## XSV

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XSV was started with the intent of hitting the ground running. They didn't pick up a bunch of kids, they picked up a bunch of vets who had been there and done it before. The team started with the core disenfranchised players from the Ironmen . They added to this roster the best players that weren't under contract and jumped head first into the pro division. It took an event or two but XSV was soon the number two team in the world. There was a battle over the next seasons, but eventually they became the number one team in the world- if only for a season. When the money ran out so did the players. The team that was built for winning would have a long road back to the winners' circle. The team's new core picked up some up-and-coming kids, worked hard and kept the dream alive. Their battle to get a good roster, to keep those players and to be able to afford to play continued.

XSV has always been ahead of the other teams off the field. It's probably the one thing that had kept them going as an independent team. Some rich guy or a company doesn't own them, they own themselves. They can go where they want and play who they want. In the past, the team played all three leagues: Millennium, PSP, and NPPL. Recently, they have chosen to focus on seven-man and really try to do well in one league. They

are hoping that if that works well, next season they will be able to afford to play all the series again. It's a gamble. We will see if it pays off for them. If not, they will come up with a new strategy.

The team has been reinvented many times, but is presently ranked third best team and looking to improve on that. The current roster has a good blend of new talent and old blood, and they all seem to be pushing in the same direction. Will this be the team that gets XSV back to where they should be- in the number one spot- or will they go back to the drawing boards and start again? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain, this team has not quit, and they are once again hunting Dynasty and the number one position.



FAT LADY'S CHARMS (SE) - Millennium Toulouse - 2005

## FAT LADY'S CHARMS

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Fat Lady's Charms was one of the first all-woman teams. There were from the Scandinavia and they were tired of sitting around while their boyfriends played paintball so they picked up guns and started to play themselves. Their boyfriends helped them learn the game's basics but when the tournaments came around they were all on their own. Their boyfriends didn't have time to help them at the events so the girls figured it out on their own. They played really well, and not for girls, they just played good paintball. There beat other men's teams all the time and they smashed some of them. It was a good situation all around: they played well, they won and they were attractive, so everyone loved them. There got good sponsorship and played all over Europe, winning games and charming everyone they came in contact with.



# TEAMS



BANZAI BANDITS (UK) - World Cup Orlando - 1997



BAD COMPAGNY (US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2003



NEXUS (UK) - NPPL Tampa - 2006



FEMMES FATALE (US) - Mardi Gras Open New Orleans - 2004



LEGACY (US) - PSP Chicago - 2007



IMAGE (US) - NPPL Gettysburg - 2001



VISION (FR) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010



LTZ (US) - PSP Chicago - 2008



SK MOSCOW (RU) - Millennium Paris - 2011



FRANCK'S JUBILEE - Millennium Paris - 2011



CONSILIUM DEI (SU) - Millennium Paris - 2011



CARNAGE (FR) - Millennium Paris - 2011





BOB LONG IRONMEN (US) - NPPL Chicago - 2003



STRANGE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2001



MIAMI RAGE (US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2006



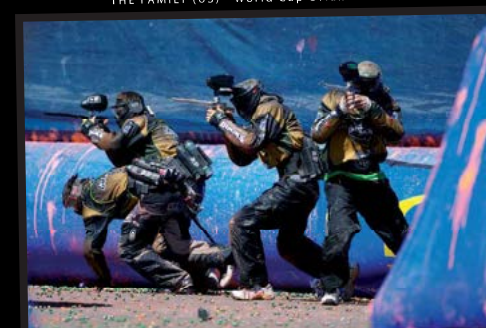
THE FAMILY (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2002



IMPACT (CA) - PSP Phoenix - 2009



ICON (FR) - Millennium Paris - 2009



DUCKS (DK) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010



STONES ASSASSINS (US) - NPPL huntington Beach - 2005



LONDON TIGERS (UK) - Millennium Paris - 2011



ART CHAO MOSCOW (RU) - Millennium - 2011



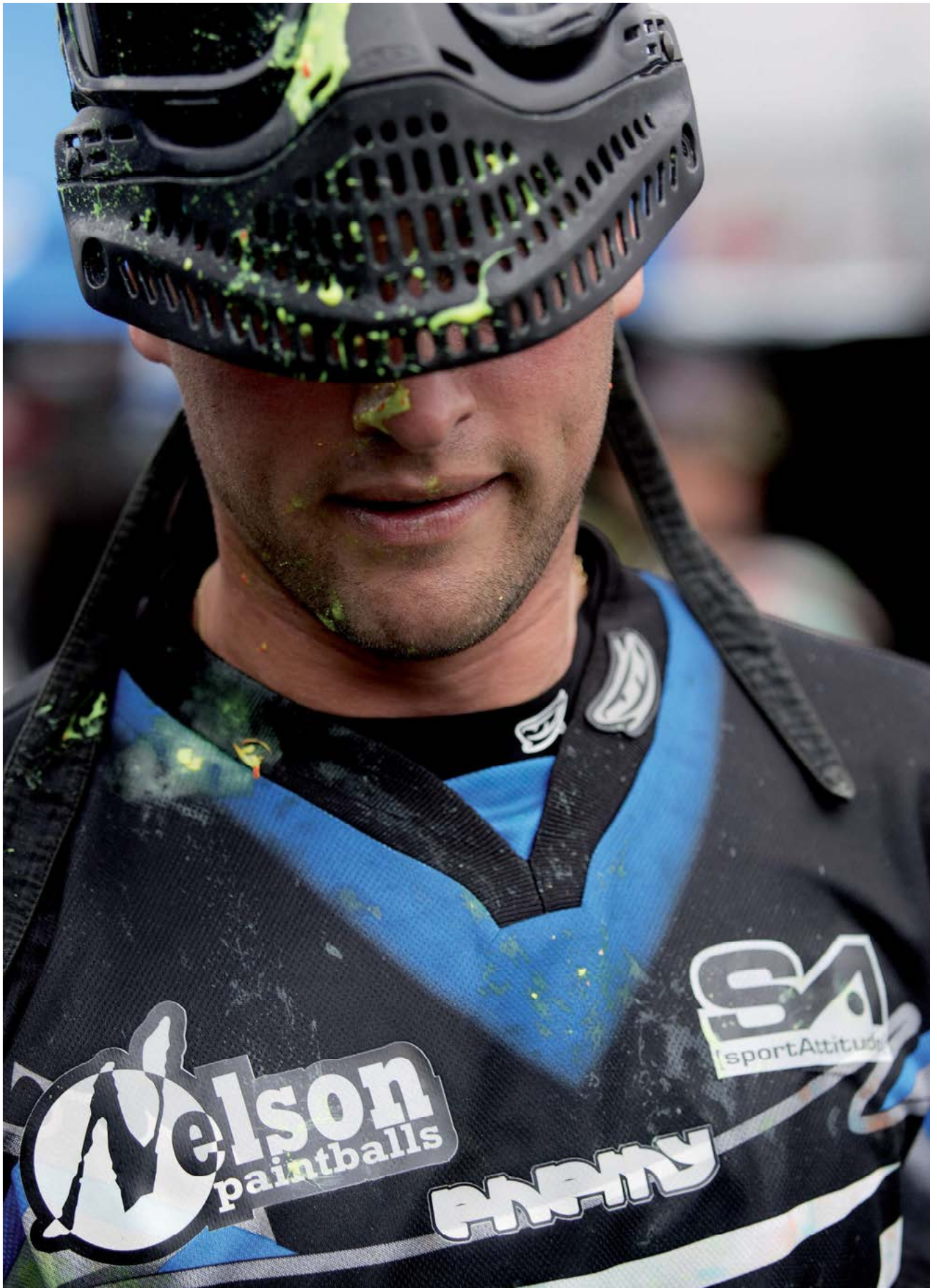
THE TORNADO ANGELS (MY) - PALS Kuala Lumpur - 2009



SYNDICATE (DE) - Millennium Bitburg - 2010



PLAYERS







## MARTY BUSH

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Marty Bush was the first of the iconic players of paintball. This guy was a sneaky bastard out in the woods with his pump. In fact, he was so good that long after everyone shot semi-automatics, he was still out there with his pump, winning games for the Ironmen. He was a true competitor; he worked really hard and played even harder. He is from Northern California and cut his teeth on teams from that area, but it was the Ironmen who gave him the chance to become a legend. I met him when I first started playing paintball and he was really good. Unlike a lot of other good players, he wasn't cocky; he was a down-to-earth guy that liked being around paintball players.

He was more than happy to work with players after practice, helping them get better.

Marty was also a practical joker, he likes to mess with people and have a good time. He was actually responsible for handcuffing one of the younger guys on the team to a stop sign, naked. This was just another day in the life of Marty Bush. You got the feeling that he was one of those guys who could be good at anything. He just happened to choose

paintball - paintball and hunting, which was his other passion. A lot of the old Ironmen shared that love and would always talk about it.

Marty was one of the last of the old Ironmen to hold out and keep playing after the rest had retired. It was hard to come out of the woods, where they were the kings, and compete with a bunch of kids, who didn't even know who they were. Marty had a bad knee and it would swell up to two or three times the normal size, but he never complained about it, he just grabbed some ice, hobbled over and took a load off.

When walking the field with Bob and Shane, Marty would come up with a game plan, which inevitably involved him winning the game and the rest of the guys supporting him.

We made fun of him for it, but we were all the same. His famous quote was 'who could shoot me if I stood right here?' This alluded to the fact that he had discovered a spot, which covered all angles and from which he could win the game.



IRONMEN (US) - Camp Masters Paris - 1996



## DAVE YOUNG BLOOD

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Dave Dehan was the first paintball player to be more than just a paintball player. Until Dave, the only way players got any recognition was through their play. Dave, who was very young for his level of play, quickly got the nick name YoungBlood. He was from the newer and better generation of paintball. YoungBlood brought his personality onto the field with him. He was a really good player from the beginning; but what really got him noticed was his personality. He started wearing black suits on the field. When everyone else was trying to hide in the woods in their camos, he was wearing a black suit and using a silver gun with silver pods. The last thing he was doing was hiding. When he started playing for the Ironmen, YB - or YoungBlood- became the first real superstar in paintball. This eventually led him to being a sales guy for 'JT' the biggest and best brand in paintball at the time.

This was about the time when he had the crazy idea that he was going to make barrels that were better than everyone else's. He improved the barrels by spending a lot more

to make them. Barrels at the time cost 50 dollars on average for a really good one. If you wanted a DYE (Dave Youngblood Enterprises) barrel, you were going to pay at least twice that much. Dave had worked in a famous machine shop called 'Carters' where he had learned enough about the industry to make the barrels. YB started off with five thousand dollars worth of overpriced barrels that most thought he would never sell. I'm guessing those same people are kicking themselves now for not jumping on the DYE ship when it was leaving the station. DYE quickly grew to be the premier brand in paintball manufacturing.

Dave could have taken his millions and sailed away. Instead, he got more involved in paintball. He immersed himself into what he thought was going to be the best way to promote paintball, through Paintball Sports Promotion. Dave stepped up time and time again to help steer and, in many cases, fund the PSP and for this we all owe him a debt of gratitude.



IRONMEN (US) - Camp Masters Paris - 1996





## BOB LONG

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Bob Long is, and always will be, a hunter, which might be what made him such a great paintball player. I don't know what made him such a good captain, but he is. Bobby gained popularity and made a name for himself as the captain of the Ironmen, arguably one of the most successful teams to ever play. Bob led them to win after win, and championship after championship.

Bob Long, the player, was as good, or better, than most. If you take into consideration the fact that he was at least ten years older than his opponents and that he wasn't as athletic, you might come up with the conclusion that he was a better player. He got some of his skills from hunting, others he learned along the way. He was a great gun fighter, one of the best, able to make the split second decisions and then execute them to perfection. You could hear his booming voice from anywhere across the field. He was really the first general in the 'paintball war'. He would sit back, coordinating and directing his team, like a chess master moving pawns and knights into battle.

Bob Long, the captain, was a force to be reckoned with. You did what Bobby wanted you to do both on and off the field. He was a born leader; he didn't have to work at it. He had confidence and that gave you confidence. He wasn't afraid to get down and dirty either. He could crawl through the bushes and roll down the hills with the best of them. He was always in the game, he never got shot out early and he was the first to go when it was time to push.

Bob Long, the gunsmith, is what he is best known for now. He made some of the best markers in the world. It all started back in the day when he began making custom cockers. He then invented the 'Intimidator'. It took a year of fine-tuning, but when he finally got it right, that gun was the best the industry had to offer at the time. His latest gun is the 'Victor' and it's one of the best guns in the world, fast, light and still accurate. Bobby really is one of, if not the, best at making guns, being a player and leading a team. There are many people out there, including myself, who owe him gratitude and reverence. He has given more to this sport than almost anyone else in the industry.

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ALL STARS - Toulouse (FR) - 1995



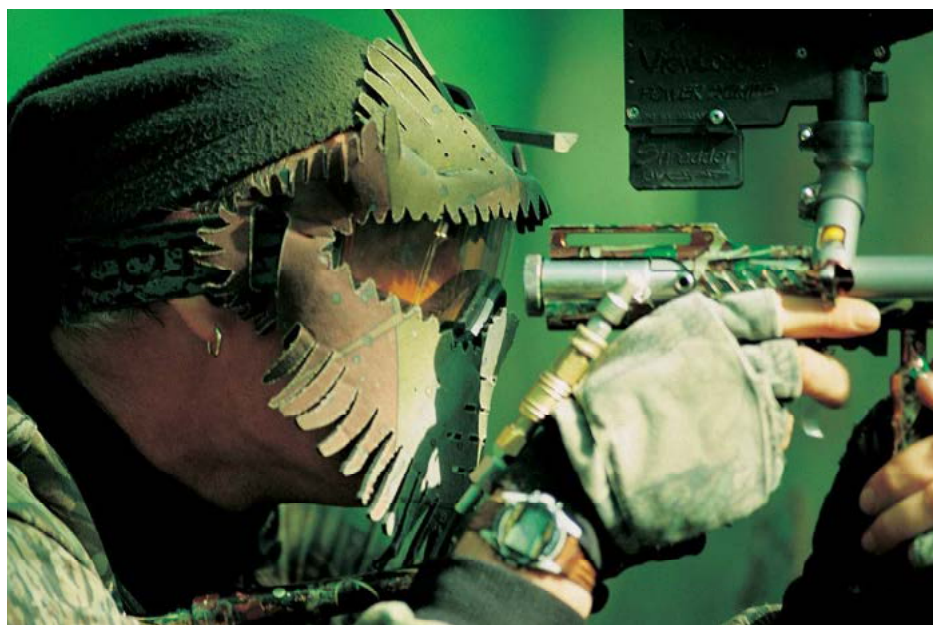
## PETER ROBINSON

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Peter Robinson- better known as Robo- wasn't the first big name player to come from England but his popularity quickly eclipsed those before him. Pete was so good that the best teams in America had to have him. This had never happened before, no one from overseas was playing on any of the top US teams. Robo was good enough to play for the All Americans and Aftershock. He played better than he had ever done in the past on those teams. Pete, in essence, was a great paintball player, but, like all of us, he aged, and it became harder for him to compete at the top. At about the same time, paintball was blowing up and there was a new brand of paintball called x-ball. Robo, being the nationalist that he is, put together the best of the best of England and built a team to compete. They came over to America and competed in the first X-ball match called the Nations' Cup. There were teams from all over the world playing and England, thanks to Pete's leadership, did very well. When the team went back home most stayed together,

and, under Pete's tutelage, formed Nexus, the premier paintball team in England. Pete excelled as a coach and mentor. He took a handful of young players and turned them into one of the best teams in the world. This was no easy feat, but Nexus received sponsorship and training support from Dave Youngblood.

The nickname Robo is largely to do with Pete's online persona. He was the man behind one of the best paintball publications of all times, PGI. This lead to him starting his own forum. There is no one out there that has spent more time and energy making paintball what it is today. This guy has been in paintball for as long as most of us can remember. He is an ambassador for the sport, which had become his life and no one has done it better or more completely.



SHOCKWAVE (GB) - Mayhem Masters London - 1995





## CHRIS LASOYA

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Chris was, and still is, in many ways, the bad boy of paintball but don't feel bad for him, he wouldn't have it any other way. Some players are so good that they transcend just being a player. Chris is one of those guys that is just as big a presence off the field as on it. Chris first gained attention out in the woods running people down. It might not sound like much but pulling off a two or three stop bunker in the woods was tough.

Not only were the bunkers a lot further apart; they also had stuff between them. There wasn't any symmetry to the field so you couldn't just find a line and go; you had to make it up on the run. Chris quickly became the most popular, or if not, at least the best - bar none, paintball player in the industry. He is a nice guy off the field and a great player

on the field. He was the backbone of the original Avalanche team that won so many tournaments and traveled the world amassing victories.

Chris has the ability to play up the gut better than most. He can run and shot off the break, hold a lane, catch someone, and then go run another player or two down. He might be a little slower now, but he is still playing amazingly. He is back home with Infamous, where I can see him playing out his career. Chris has a lot to offer a team and young players; he has a wealth of knowledge and is one of the world's best players. Chris is one of those guys who truly helped carry us out of the woods and into the stadiums. He has done a lot for our sport and deserves recognition for it.



AVALANCHE (US) - World Cup Orlando - 2000



## ROCKY CAGNONY

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Rocky wasn't like a lot of the other iconic players that grace the covers of magazines and videos. Rocky was just as good a player and just as much of a character but he never got caught up with himself like so many others did. As players start to get a reputation for being a great player, they seem to change; they believe that they are better than everyone else and should be treated as such. This was not the case for Rocky, who is a good down-to-earth guy. No matter how much sponsorship money was coming in, how many tournaments he won, he was just the same guy. Rocky always has a smile on his face, and is always happy and easy-going, at least off the field. He has the same intensity on the field as everyone else, but it seems to switch off once the goggles come off.

Rocky was one of those players who were always there to make the big move, or to go

get the key guy off the field. He was on a team with a super-star roster, Avalanche, and he could well have been overlooked because of his relaxed demeanor. Fortunately, his play on the field more than made up for his relaxed attitude off the field. Rocky was one of the reasons that Angel became as big as they did as fast as they did. Rocky really did some good work on the guns and became a tech for Angel. Not only could you get your gun worked on, but one of the best players in the world was doing it. Sometimes people would bring their guns in just to meet and talk to Rocky. The lines got long but Rocky, being Rocky, just stayed there and did what he had to.

Rocky is truly one of the best guys that paintball has produced. He is a great player on the field and the best of the best off the field. If there were one guy to pick as an ambassador for our sport, it would have to be Rocky.



ROCKY - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2003





## ALEX FRAIGE



- WORLD CUP Orlando - 2010

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Alex Fraige is the glue that binds the best team in paintball. He is the grounding force and the cool head that has kept all the egos in check in Dynasty. Ever since Alex was a kid, he has been a little smarter and a little more mature than everyone else. He is a 'big picture' kind of guy and doesn't get caught up in the day-to-day grind because he is looking to the future. Alex is a standout player on a team of standout players. One of the other things that people don't know about Alex is that, unlike most of the best players in the world, Alex has money. His family is well off, which means that Alex could have done anything or been anyone. He chose paintball the way that paintball chose all the other top guys. Alex, Oliver and Ryan grew up together and started the Ironkids when they were in their teens. Ironkids was one of the more successful youth teams, the core of which formed Dynasty, and Alex was at the centre of all of it.

Off the field, Alex is calm, cool and collected. As a captain, he is the hardest guy to try to argue the call against because he is so smart. On the field, he is a beast with only one speed, which is fast, and he goes forward all the time. There are lots of players that you see trying to play with finesse out there, and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Alex doesn't play that way; he is hardnosed and will get you, and anyone else he can, off the field and it works every time. Alex is far more complex than the average paintball player, who is probably a good athlete, super competitive, and probably hasn't fully grown up - and never might. Alex is an artist, a student, a mentor and so much more. For whatever reasons, Alex is Alex and there is no one ever close to being like him in paintball or for that matter anywhere else.

Above all else, Alex is a good guy, he always has a smile on his face. He always has something good to say about you or your team. As competitive as he is on the field, he is just as gracious off the field. In a sport with tons of standout players and even more insane characters, Alex has always been just a little ahead of the curve. He has always been a little faster, a little smarter and a little bit cooler. We need more guys like Alex in paintball.

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## RYAN GRENNSPAN

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Ryan Greenspan came up just like Oliver and Alex. He was almost destined to be one of the best paintball players in the world. Despite his popularity and success, he is, in my opinion, an underrated player. He has probably won more games for Dynasty than Alex and Oliver put together. He has a more methodical yet less visible style. Once Oliver and Alex do the damage, or get shot early trying to do it, Ryan is there. He is smart and precise, almost never making a mistake. The reason he hasn't gotten as much credit as some of the other guys is because he doesn't go up early and clean people out. He doesn't take the snake on the break and shoot five guys, but he is the anchor of that team and always has been. A ship with no anchor is in big trouble and Ryan is the best anchor that there is. He can play any position on the field better than anyone on the team. His versatility is one of the things that make him so hard to beat. He can go anywhere and do anything; so predicting his next move is next to impossible.

Ryan is the quintessential professional paintball player. This is what he does for a living and he gets paid well for it. Ryan has done a great job promoting himself and the team. When he isn't winning paintball tournaments, he is doing clinics, which further promote him and the team, as well as earning Ryan more money. He is one of the few pro players who doesn't work for anyone but makes a really good living just by being himself and playing ball.

Ryan is a little cocky and arrogant on the field, rightfully so it seems, since he and his team have won more events than any other ten teams. Off the field, Ryan is a Californian surfer with an easy-going attitude. He is always doing something cool or going somewhere trendy, that's what he does. He is the cool, funny guy at the party, who can also step on a paintball field and blow your head off. Remember not to underestimate him because he does most of his work in the clean up position. Ryan takes care of business on the field and is one of the biggest reason Dynasty are who they are and why they have won so much.

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- WORLD CUP Orlando (US) - 2010





## OLIVER LANG



- Millennium Paris - 2010

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Ollie is paintball's Golden Boy and it's well deserved. He is the total package, smart, athletic, good at all aspects of paintball. He is young, good-looking, and easy to market – he's what paintball needs more of.

Oliver has changed over the years, since he started playing with the Iron Kids. What got him noticed was his personality more than his abilities; he was a good player but there were lots of good players. He was a really nice kid, smart, funny and cool to hang out with. So he got noticed and picked up by the Ironmen. He played well in practice, made big moves, got up in the mix a lot and really proved he was a great player. He really came into his own at an event in New Orleans. It was Mardi Gras and it was his first big event with the team. He didn't play particularly well during the prelims or semis and was a little down on himself. No one on the team expected him to do well. The finals rolled around and Ollie shot three or four guys a game. After that, all anyone asked about was that new kid on the Ironmen. I think one of the reasons he got so good was that he never stopped working at it. A lot of guys get some fame or notoriety and stop being hungry. Not Ollie, he worked as hard, or even harder, to become better and better. This was only the beginning of Ollie's career. He then went on to leave the Ironmen and join Dynasty where they won many tournaments.

Oliver was the big name on Dynasty, even though they had one of, if not the, best rosters in all of paintball at the time. They were young, had grown up together and were traveling the world winning tournaments. Oliver was huge in the world of paintball but Dynasty wasn't really promoting him and neither were their sponsors. Someone else did, and that someone else was Dave Youngblood. Dave offered Oliver what no one else had, money and a marketing campaign. He deserved that rewards as he did his job with Ironmen during a couple of years.

Today Oliver isn't a kid anymore but he does still have a childlike love for the game. He travels all year long doing clinics. He is still one of, if not the, best players in the world, he came back with dynasty for the best. Since Oliver, there hasn't been another player that has impacted the game, in fact the whole sport, in the same way.

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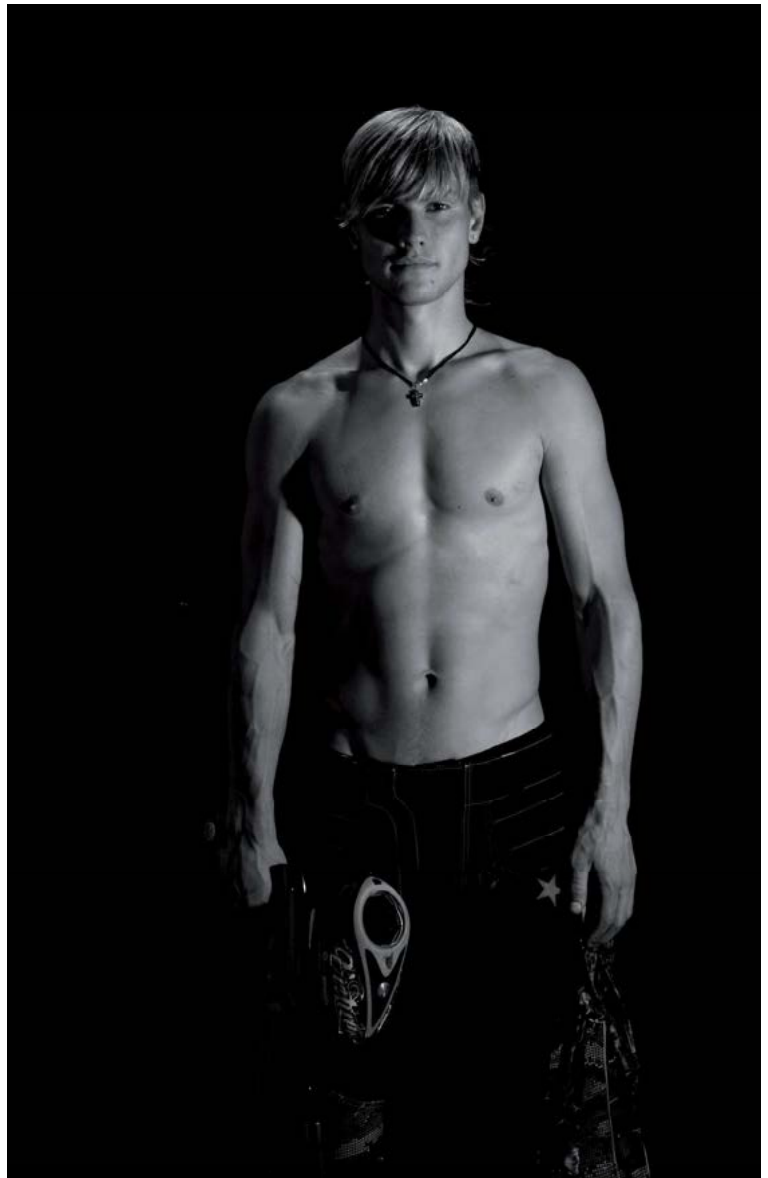
## CONSTANTIN FEDEROV

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The next - Oliver, or the Russian version at least - Federov came onto the scene during the height of X-ball. He would run down the field, single handedly destroying complete teams. He was unstoppable. He could get outside against anyone, and once out there, run and gun down the tape taking out anyone and everyone in his path. He was playing for the Russian Legion and really benefited from their style of training. He was obviously a natural athlete, which, combined with the Russian training program, made him one of the most gifted players we have ever seen. In fact, he was so good that an American team hired him to come and play with them. This might not seem like a big deal but it is; it never happens. Usually, it's the other way around an American will go play with another team to help them out. He was so good that the Philadelphia Americans had to have him.

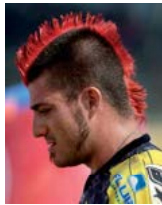
It wasn't easy for him when he moved to Philly, he was used to one style and this wasn't it. Although he continued to play well, he didn't stand out as much he had done in Russia. This can be looked at in two ways. One school of thought is that he was on a new team with a new approach so he struggled to find his place and style. The second school of thought is that before he was a great player on a good team so he really stood out, but Philly is full of great players like him. He played really well but when the team folded because of sponsorship issues with Smart Parts, his time in the States was done. He is now back in Russia playing paintball and enjoying life.

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- WORLD CUP Orlando - 2010





# THOMAS TAYLOR



XSV (US) - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2006

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The hawk is known for the Mohawk hairstyle he sports, as well as being one of the best snake players in the sport today. Thomas started off playing five-man in the North East (of the USA) and moved up from there. His first big team was the Cartel where he became an aggressive player who liked to take as much real estate as possible at the break. He went to a practice with some of the Cartel players and some of the Ironmen guys. There he caught an ironmen player's eye. This Ironman noticed that despite having a bad day, Thomas had a good attitude and potential. The one thing that really stood out, over the next year or so of training, was how hard Thomas worked to become better. Driving three hours back and forth to practice every weekend, rain or shine, made it clear that he wanted to be a pro and that he was willing to do what it took to get there. Thomas quickly became one of the most feared snake players in all of paintball. He was one of those players who was coming for you and coming hard.

He would let nothing stand in his way, and he would march down to the other side of the field and shoot as many as he could while he did it. This was the beginning for Thomas. He was getting the respect of the teams and players around him. He was getting in lots of magazines and videos he was coming into his own.

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## NICKY CUBA

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Nicky got his start the old school way, maybe that's why he had to make his name in the new school; new school because the old school way was too hard and it was too old. Nicky put in the time and worked his way up to the top of an old school team called Ground Zero. They were a New York team and they had that New York attitude and Nicky still has it. He is known for his big moves, big attitude, big hair and lots of game. What people don't know is that the on-the-field maniac isn't a bad guy off the field.

Nicky got his big break making it on the XSV squad when the team was formed. At that point, he was a very talented player but he really didn't have the experience to be a top pro player. He had all the skills but none of the playtime; and that's what he got playing on XSV. He flew all over the world making mistakes, learning from them and getting better and better on one of the best teams in the world. By the time Nicky left XSV, he was one of the best players out there, with few players competing at his level. He had found his style, his groove, and he could play on any field; every team out there wanted him.

Nicky had a lot of friends on Dynasty and many people thought that's where he would go but the Ironmen offered Nicky what Dynasty wouldn't: cash. The Ironmen gave Nicky a good deal for three years so he joined his friend Oliver Lang and went on to win World Cup and become part of the best X-ball team in the world. Unfortunately, Nicky and the Ironmen eventually had a disagreement and, like so many others, Nicky left the Ironmen with a bad taste in his mouth. This left Nicky in a tough spot economically, he was used to making a decent living playing for DYE. He needed to make money quickly but there weren't any teams looking for players of his caliber, and with the cash to pay for him.

Nicky found a new home with the team 'Infamous', one where he could grow into the leader that he was meant to be. Little by little, Nicky has evolved from a kid to an adult, from a player with potential to a top pro player. Nicky is well liked by players and fans alike. He is a great ambassador to the sport and is one of the best guys in paintball.

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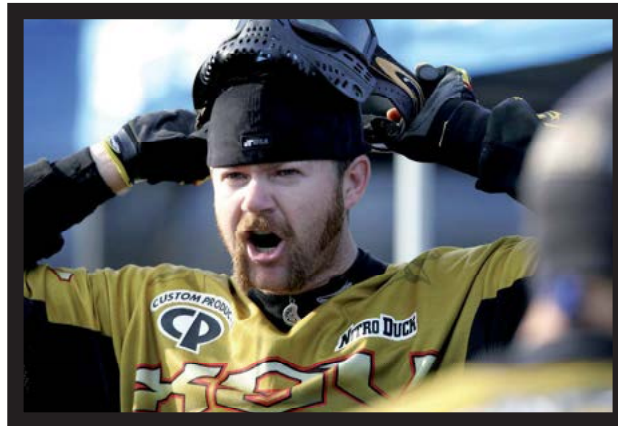


INFAMOUS (US) - Phoenix - 2009

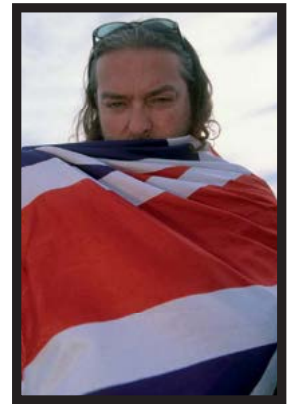




ERIC DEARMAN (US) - All American



MATT MARSHALL (US) - XSV



GED GREEN (UK) - WDP

# FACES



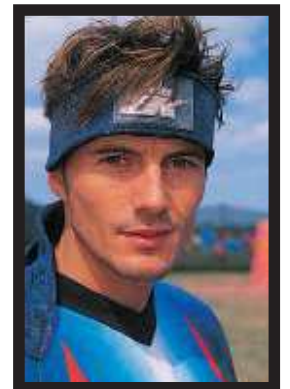
BE REAL (US) - Stones Assassins



WILL AROYO (US) - World Cup Orlando



FRED HALMONET (FR) - New Orleans



ALEX LUNDQUIST (SE) - Groud zero



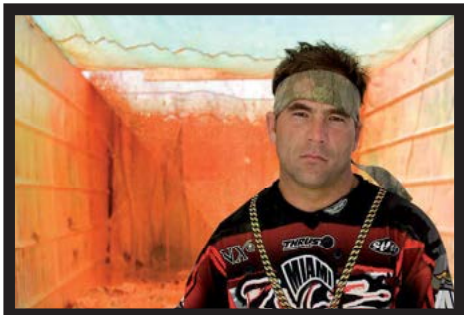
JACK WOOD (UK) - Chicago 2004



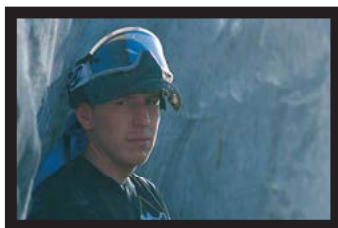
JEREMY SALM (US) - Mardi Gras New Orleans



BILLY CERSANKI (US) - Aftershock



SHINO CARBAJAL (US) - Miami Rage



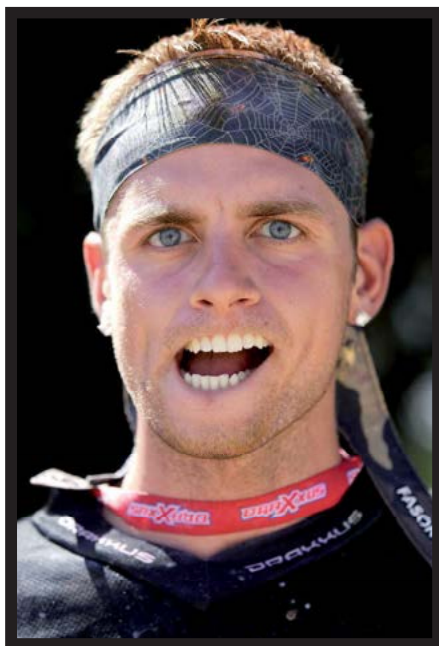
JOHN RICHARDSON (US) - Avalanche



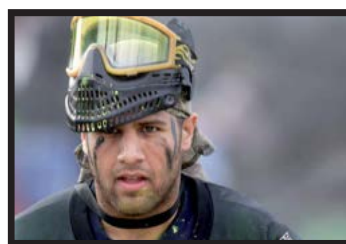
ANGEL FRAGOZA (US) - Dynasty



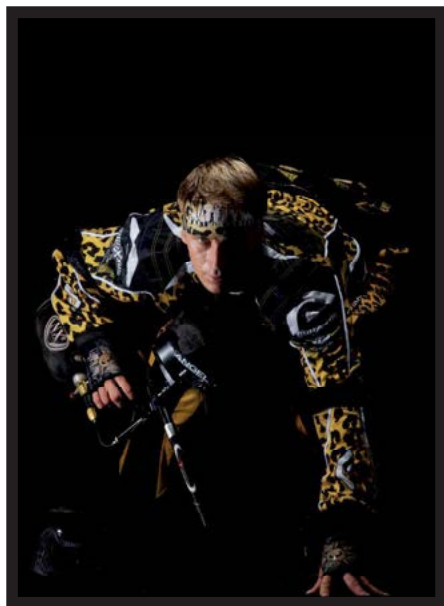
ARTHUR SHANG (US) - Kingman



TYLER HUMPHREY (US) - Trauma



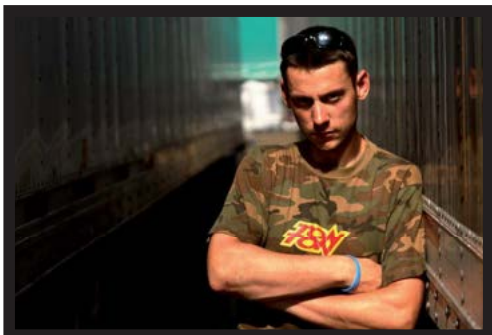
DAVE BAINES (US) - Avalanche



MAXIMUS LUNDQVIST (SE) - Joy Division



LAURENT HAMET (FR) - Sup'airball



FABRICE "TAVAREZ" COLOMBO (FR) - Tontons



WALLY DONNER & MITCH KARN (US) - Lock out

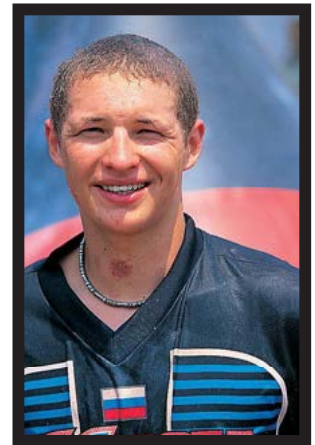




MAGUED IDRIS (SE) - Joy Division



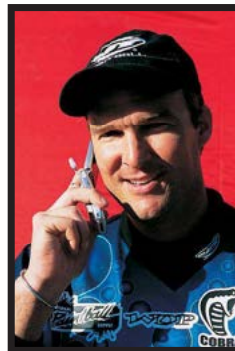
MARCUS NIELSEN (US) - Arsenal



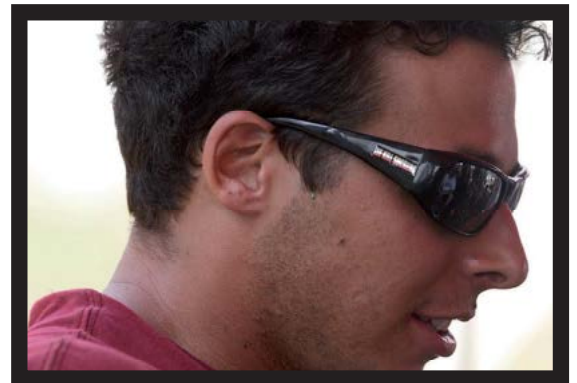
MISKA KNIAZEV (RU) - Russian Legion



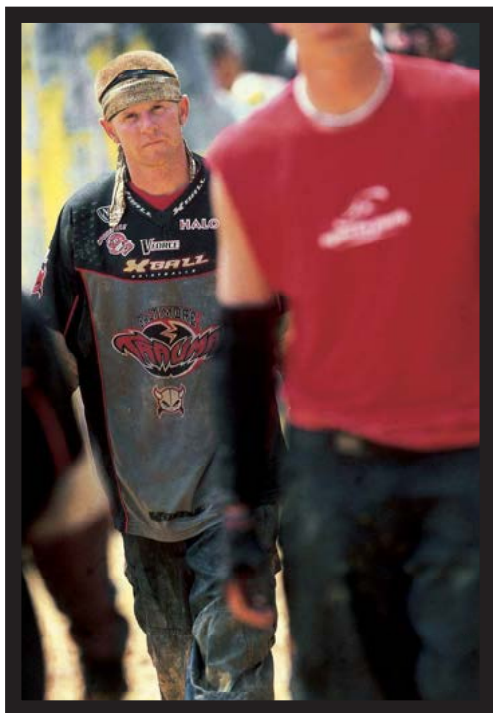
MATT SCHMIDT (UK) - Shockwave



CHUCK HENDSCH (US) - dynasty



PETER UTSHING "MISTER U" (US) - Ironmen



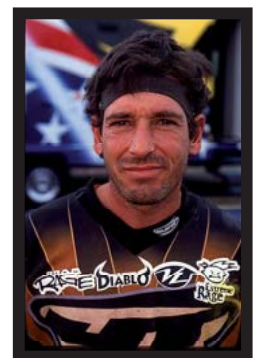
ROB STAUDINGER - TRAUMA



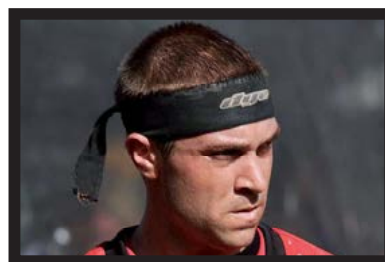
JOHN RICHARDSON (US) - Ava-



MOANA DUBRAY (FR) - Tontons



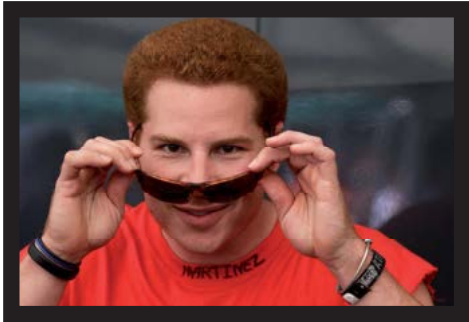
DANY BONURA (US) - Rage



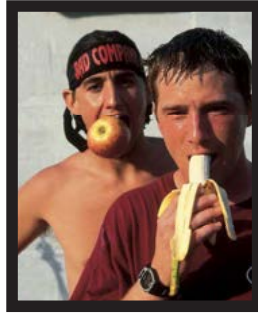
ERIC ROBERTS (US) - Ironmen



BILL ET ADAM GARGDNER (US) - ALL American



TODD MARTINEZ (US) - Avalanche



TOM COLE & CHRIS REMUZZI (US)



ERIC FELIX (US) - Lockout



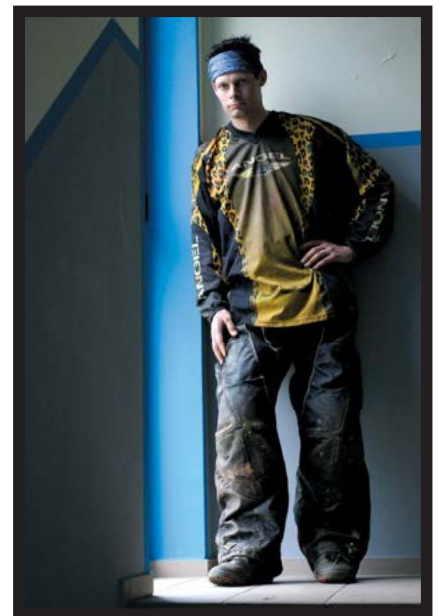
KELLY WATSON (US) - the family



Zack LONG (US) - Bob long IRONMEN



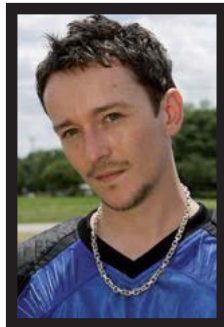
Ku Japon



SEBAN (SE) - Joy Division



JC WHITTINGTON (US) - Arsenal



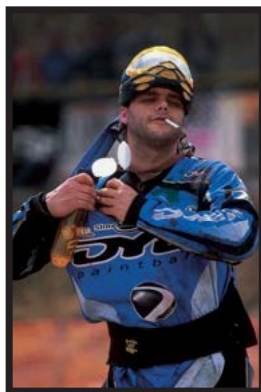
TOMMY "GUN" PENDBERTON



PAUL ALDER (US) - Stange



ANTHONY LEDZ (UK) - Nexus



MIKE BRUNO (US) - Aftershock



MAURICE GIIB "BEE GEES" (UK) - World Cup Orlando



## A vibrant collage of travel-related items. At the top left, a photograph shows the wing of an airplane in flight against a blue sky. Below it, a large, detailed camera lens is prominently displayed. To the right of the lens is a French passport with the text 'Union Européenne République Française' and 'PASSEPORT'. In the center, a black digital camera is shown. To its right is a white 'SUPER 8 MOTEL' sign. Below the camera is a green 'Velvia' film box. To the right of the film box is a yellow 'MEDIA ACCESS' sign. Below the 'MEDIA ACCESS' sign is a white 'Delta' sign with the text 'First Class / World Business Class'. In the bottom left, a photograph shows two people in snow gear, one labeled 'ALL-STAR' and the other 'TORRES'. In the bottom right, a photograph shows a bright green light trail. The word 'TRAVEL' is written in large, white, bold letters across the center of the collage.





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**ENGLAND**





GLOUGLOU - PALS Malaysia - 2009

One of the things that you are going to have to deal with, if you're going to be a player that plays on the international scene, is travel. Traveling is already a hassle after 9/11, going from one place to another is tough, but it's even tougher when you're flying with a paintball gun. They don't look like real guns to us but apparently they do to "normal" people. Add to that a large fiber wrapped tank with a regulator that looks like a bomb and wheee, lots of fun! Some of the other countries don't have the same regulations as we have in America. For instance, if you're going to Germany you have to have a special stamp on your paintball gun; if you don't, when you get there, the customs agents may take it from you. If you have two guns, and they cost a thousand dollars each, then the trip to Germany costs you a lot more than you thought it would.

Traveling is tough, but it's something that you get used to after a while. At least you get used to getting through customs, what you never get used to is getting lost on the way to the hotel from the airport. You never get used to not being able to find the field in whatever crazy place you find yourself. You certainly never get used to turning up without gear because someone lifted it at the baggage reclaim. Finally, you never really get used to the jetlag when you are traveling coast to coast and even less so when you go abroad.

The bottom line is, if you play, and you want to play more or compete, you just cannot avoid the travel. You have to travel to practice, you have to travel to events, and so the sooner you can get used to it or at least get numb to it, the better. Travel is one of the things that weeds out players as they try to become top players; some get burnt out by the traveling along the way. My advice is 'make the best of it and get used to the travel as soon as you can'.



TONTONS (FR) - NPPL Huntington beach - 2008



Once you get to the tournament, there are still all sorts of things to deal with before you even set foot on the field. You walk up to the event and see all of the crazy booths, lots of bright colors and cool stuff. You want to get in the long line at the registration booth but you don't because there are too many cool things to look at. So, you go from booth to booth looking at all of the great stuff, new guns, new gear and so on. It doesn't take long for you to meet people and start chatting. Five hours later and the registration lines are even longer. You finally make it there and wait. Once you've registered, you suddenly remember that you flew all night and haven't eaten. You look for food and this always goes one of two ways: it's either really good or really bad, but it doesn't matter because you're starving.

Everyone plays paintball for different reasons, some want to be the best, some want people to know who they are and feel good about themselves. Regardless of why you get into it, if you're



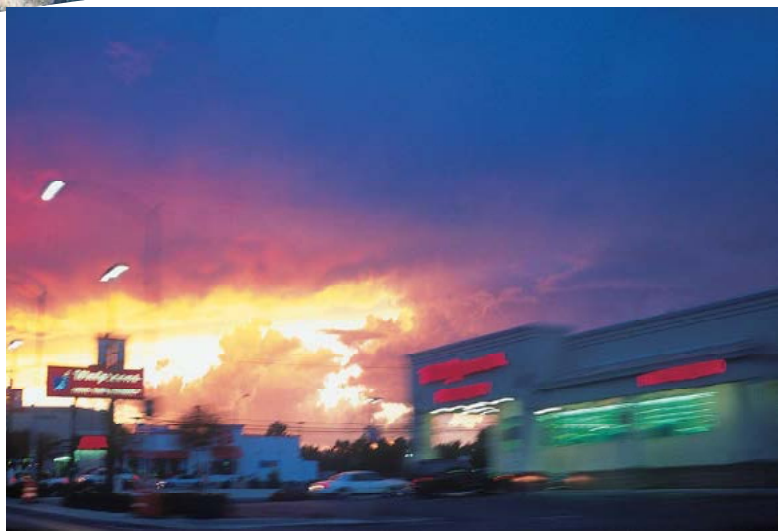
RUSSIAN LEGION (RU) - Joy Masters - 2003



STRANGE BOOTH - PSP Chicago - 2003

good someone is going to appreciate what you do. Paintball fans are some of the best fans in the world, they will support you at the events and online. Of course, they will also tear you down, so be careful what you wish for. I'm still surprised to see a line a mile long when a team sits down to sign autographs. It's awesome that there are so many people that appreciate all of the hard work and dedication that goes into being a pro. You know that you've made it or at least you're on the way when someone asks you for your jersey or you see someone wearing your jersey.

Every event has a player's party or at least it should. This is a chance to hang out with your friends on other teams that you only see at events. On the field they're your competitors but off the field you can be friends. This is also a great time to see some of the hot girls that hang out at the events. On the field they may be grubby and dirty but at the party, watch out, They look slick! The better the event, the



ROAD TRIP - Miami - 2009







PUBLIC - NPPL Boston - 2009



STRANGE (US) - PSP Chicago - 2004



FACEFULL BOOTH - Millennium Toulouse - 2003



SUPER SEVEN FIELD - NPPL Chicago - 2003



FACEFULL ROOM - NPPL Huntington Beach - 2004



PLAYERS PARTY - Mardi Gras New Orleans - 2003





SUPER 7 - NPPL Sand Diego - 2005

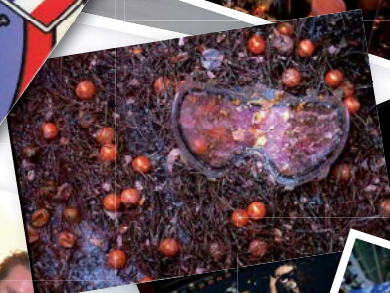


SUP'AIRBALL PARTY - World Cup Orlando - 2009

better the party, the Millennium throws the best of the players' parties, closely following are the NPPL bashes. Both of these leagues put on great parties and it's tons of fun to go and watch everyone go crazy. So, if you're at an event and they're having a players' party, be sure to check it out.

The trip home from an event goes one of two ways, with only one thing making the difference; you either go home feeling like a winner or a loser. Maybe the team won but you had the best event of your life so you feel great. Maybe the team lost but you played badly and you can't get over it. After an event you probably have to get up at the crack of dawn and head to the airport. You often have to fly with some old guy who steals the armrest, a screaming kid next to you or, my personal favorite, a kid behind you kicking the seat. You have to eat crap food and deal with all the travel hassle. If you won or played great, all of this doesn't bother you one bit, you smile as you deal with it because you're a winner, baby, and winners feel good and little things don't bother winners a bit. If you're going home a loser, everything makes you angry because you feel terrible. So the bottom line is, if you want to be a happy traveler, win events, play really well or just get over yourself because there is always another tournament coming up. •







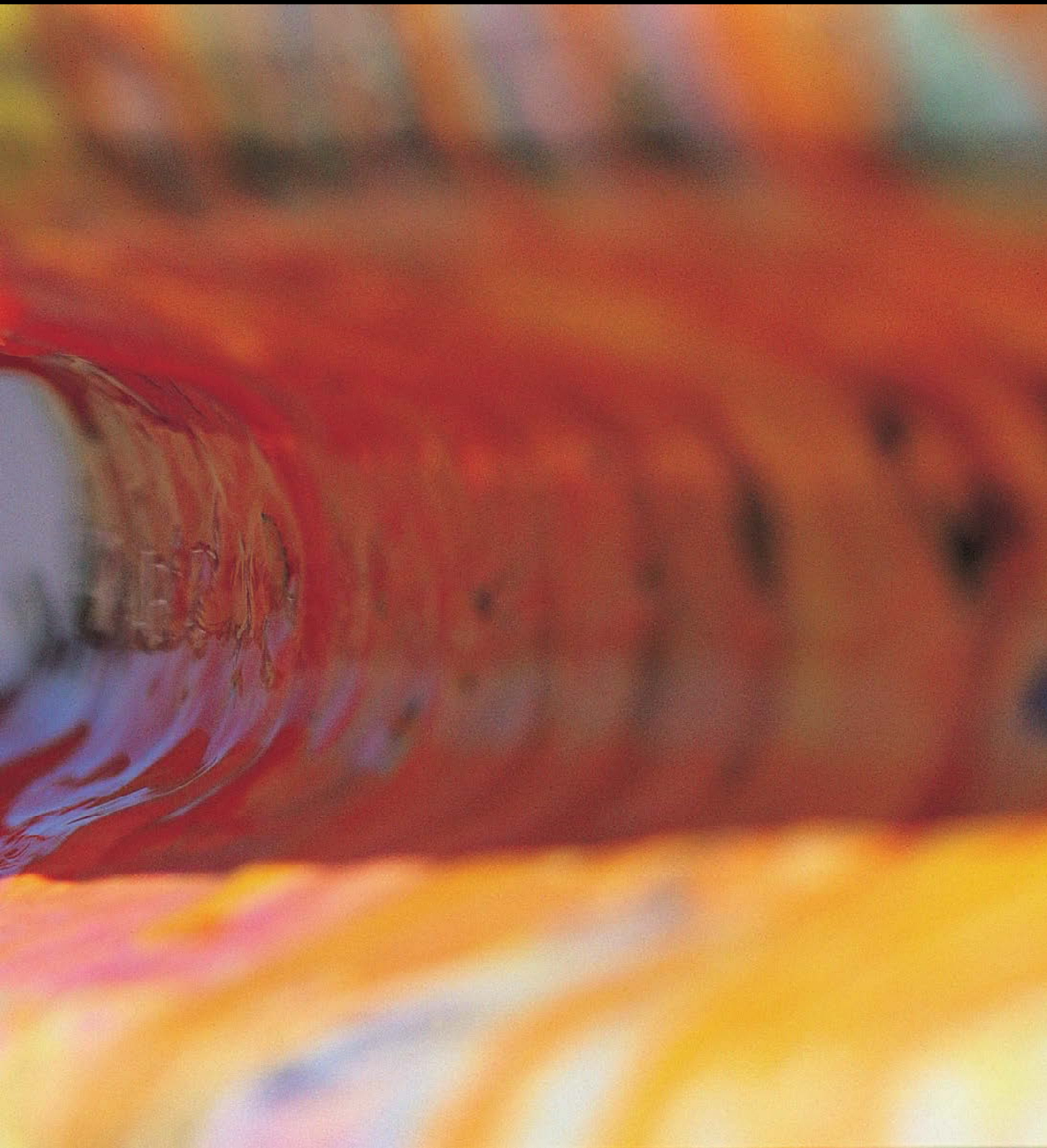




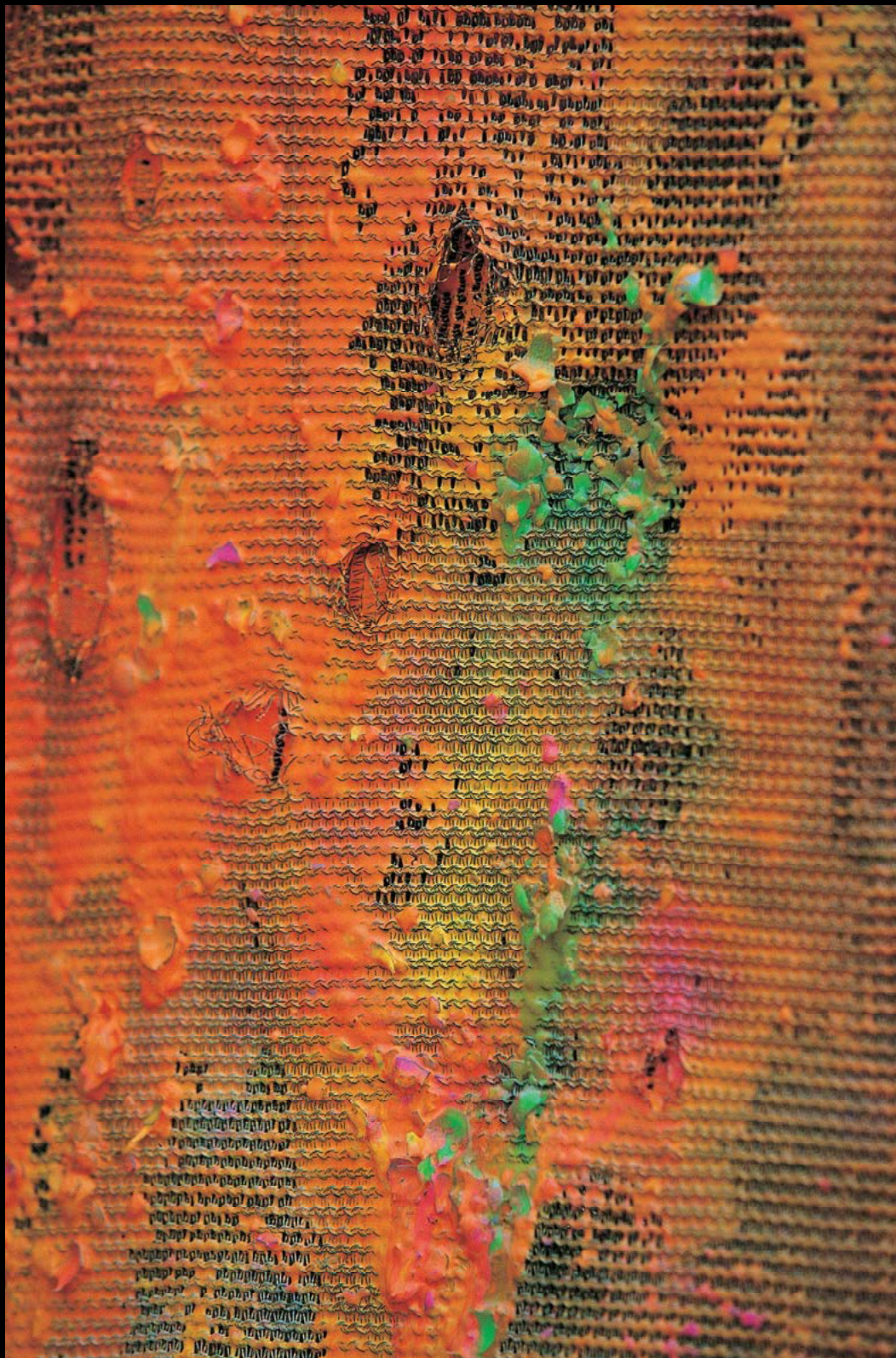


# PAINT





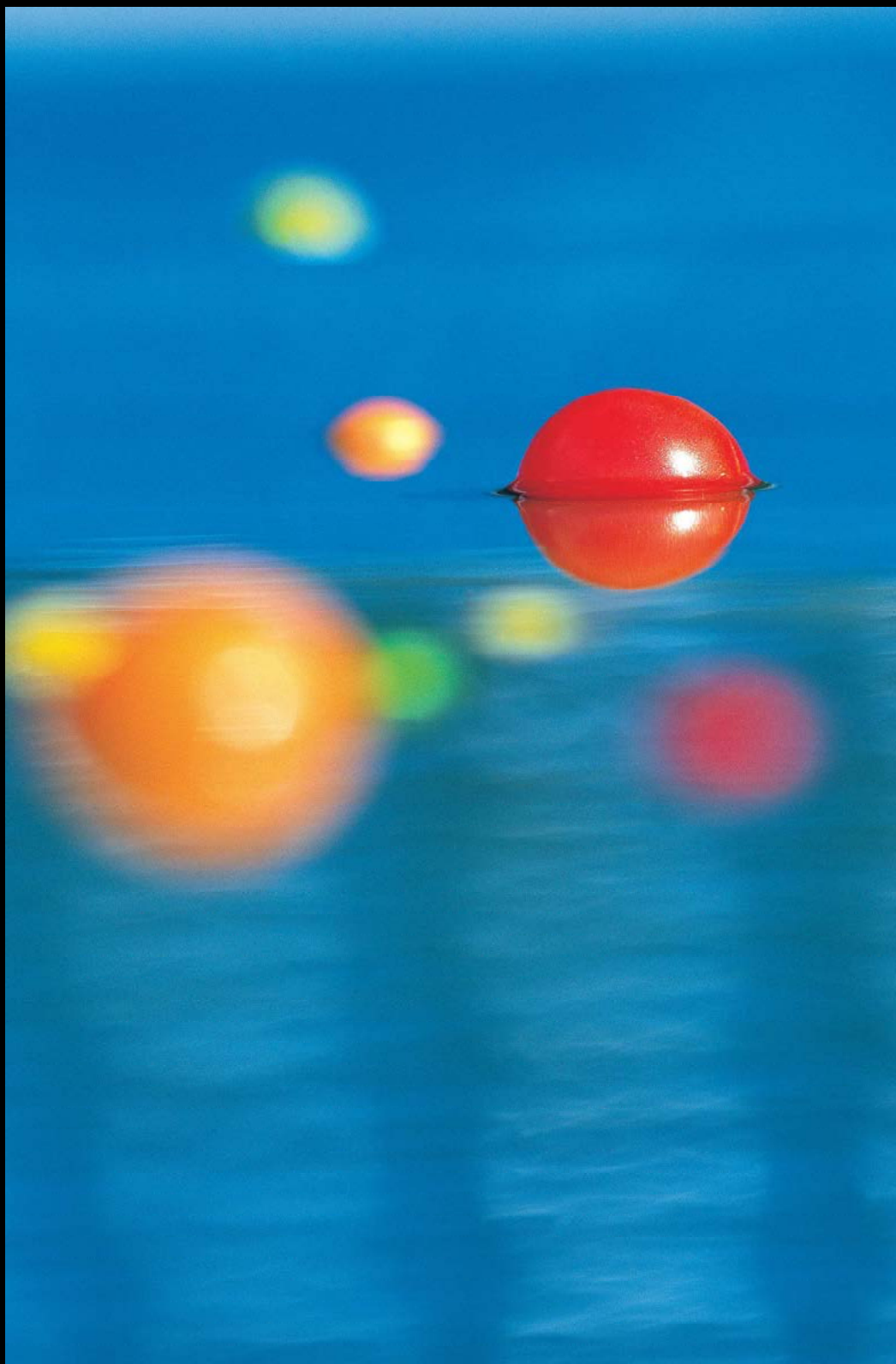


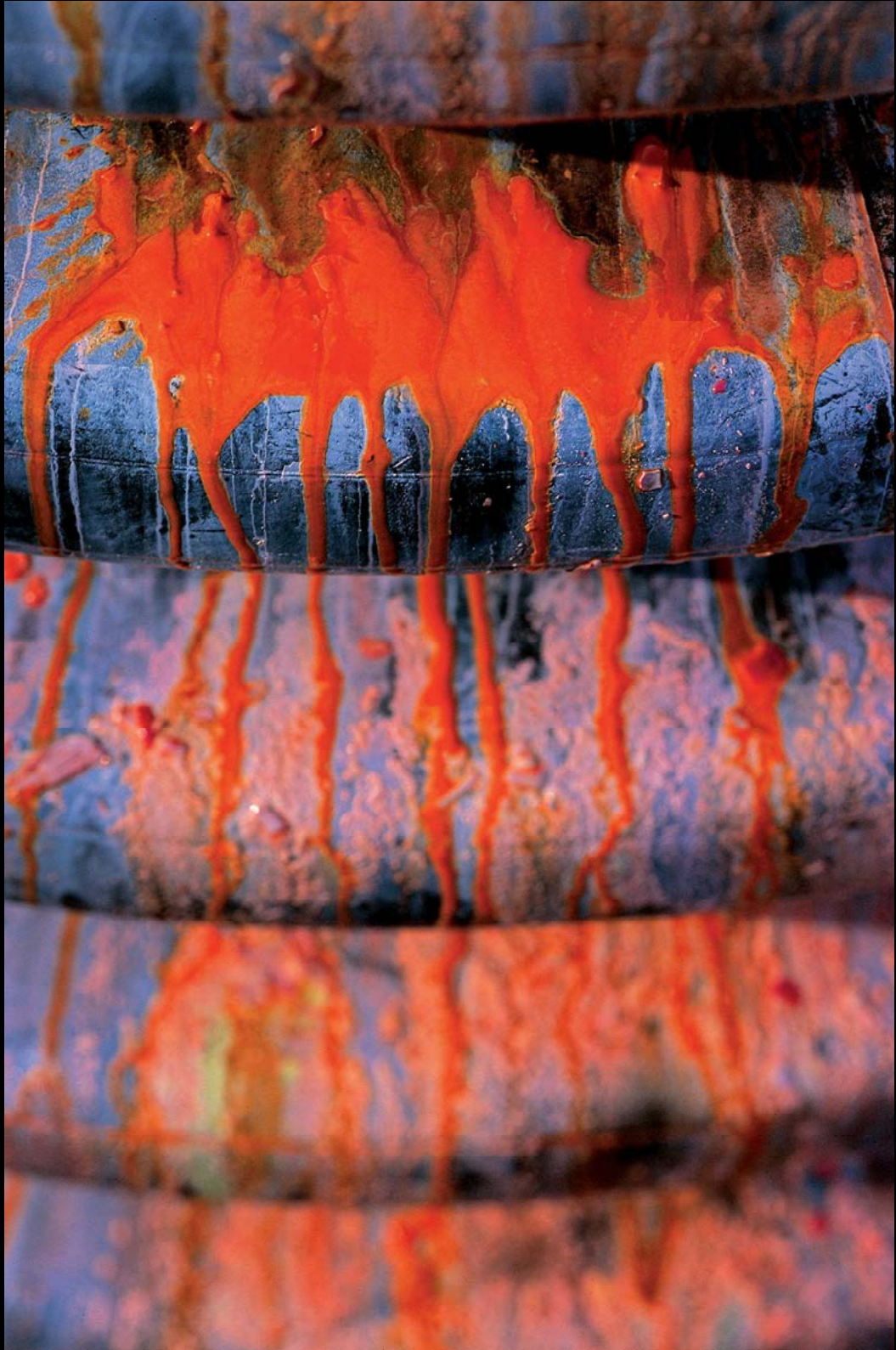




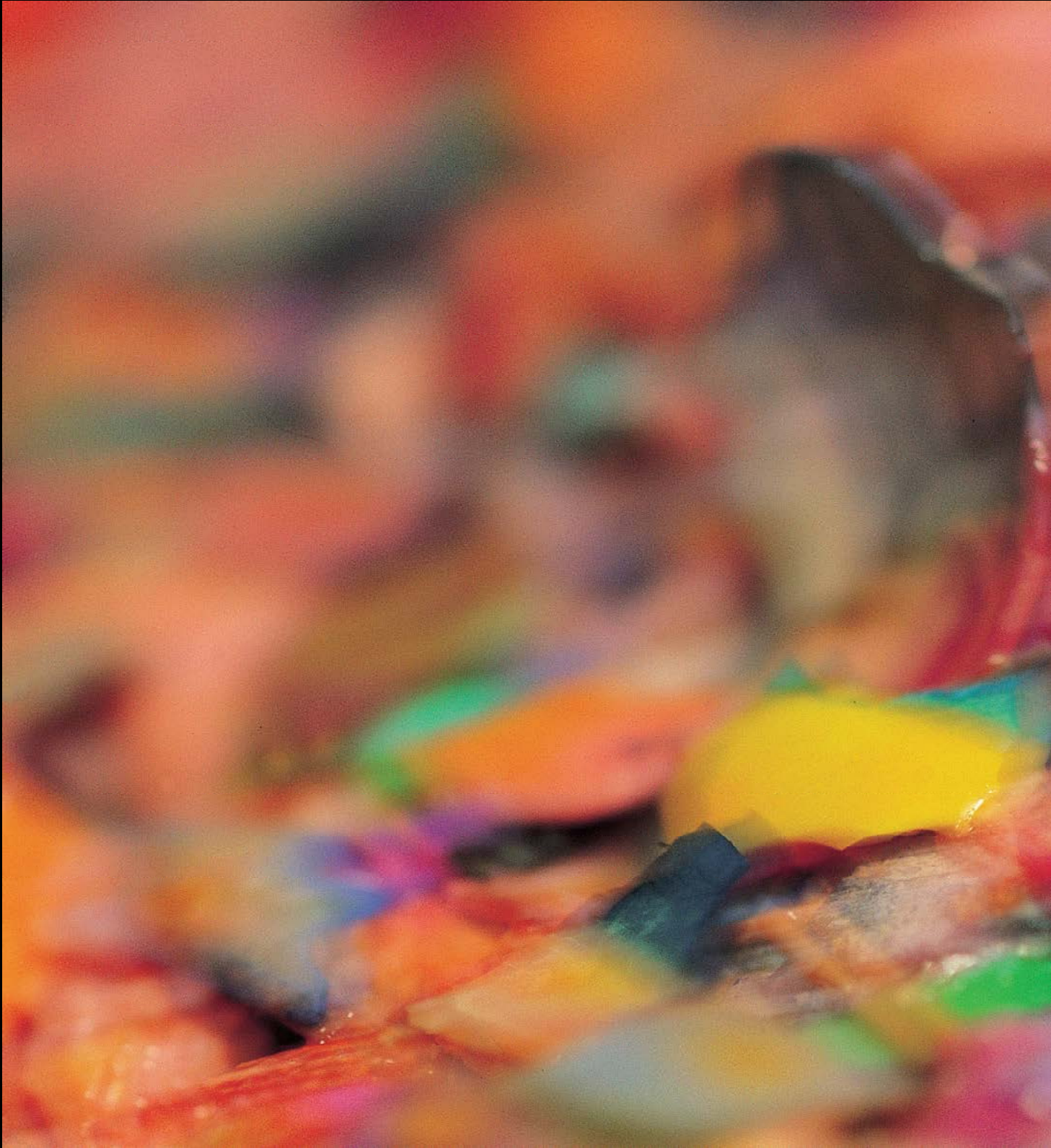




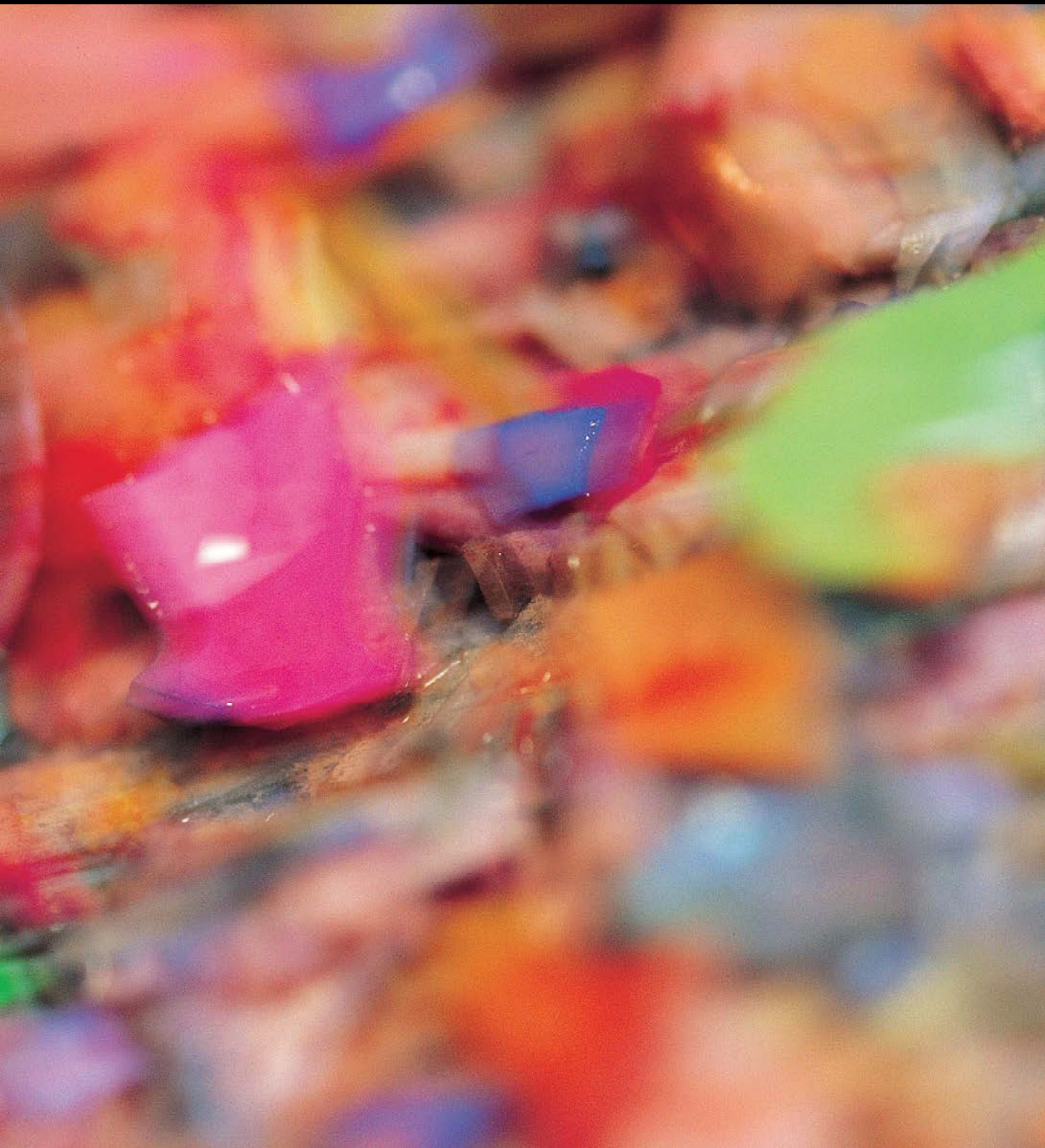






















# THE LAST WORD

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Another event, another flight home. So many times, I've done this and I can't help but recall all the years I've been in paintball and all the experiences I've gone through. I remember my first trip to Europe; I had just started playing with Ironmen, literally just got on the team. They wanted me to go to France. I had never really done any traveling so I didn't even have a passport. I got my passport and got on the plane to Toulouse, which I had never even heard of. I came to discover that it's one of the coolest places in France. I got there and was so excited that I couldn't sleep all week long. I went to the event and it was bigger than anything I had ever seen; with my excitement and feeling slightly nervous, it's a wonder I was able to maintain my focus.

In the States, all the teams hated each other. Well, not really, but they definitely acted like it. If you saw each other at an airport, you just walked by or maybe said hi or nodded. It wasn't the way at all in Europe, they were all really friendly. Even the American teams were friendly there. Things were a little different on the field too. I remember that if one of the guys on our team got shot, the stand went crazy because they wanted the Americans to lose. When we shot one of the Europeans guys, the stands all booed. I was starting to get annoyed with it but then we played Joy Division, they were one of the best teams and we needed to beat them to stay in. They came onto the field and played a great game but we did beat them. I thought, based on what we knew in the States, that this was going to be the start of a long rivalry. I couldn't have been more wrong. After being beaten and knocked out of the tournament, Joy got drunk and sat on the sidelines, and sang and cheered for the rest of the event. It was one of my best experiences in paintball. I learned that we didn't all have to be competitive jerks.

We all start to play paintball to have fun because it is one of the most exciting things we can do. The best of the guys start to compete and then get stuck on the fact that they have to be better than everyone else and start treating each other badly. That is all wrong, I have met some of the greatest people in the world through paintball. You can be one of the best, be on a great team and still be cool person. It's important to try to get to know everyone because paintball players are fun people. One of my best friends, who I only get to see once every five years or so, is the captain of Joy, Magued. I would drop everything and fly across the world for him if need be and there are tons of guys like that in paintball.

Paintball has had its ups and downs, we grew too big, too fast and we paid for it. I feel like we are now entering a renaissance of paintball. We are about to grow again and, hopefully, we have learned from all of our many past mistakes. There was a time when top players got paid and were taken care of for all of their hard work and time. Eventually, the money stopped coming in and the players were the first to feel the pinch. Companies that were making millions of dollars and becoming huge very fast were not giving anything back to the players. Little by little, we are going to work our way back to the point where the players are respected and taken care of, and eventually even compensated. Not just one guy on a team but the whole team and not making millions of dollars but enough to earn a living so that you can do what you love and pass on what you have learned to the next generation. That's really what life is all about: living as best you can, learning from your mistakes and doing what you love, but also being able to pass on your knowledge and experience to future generations, training them to be better than you were, and helping to make the sport a better game and the world a better place.

*Ritch Telford.*

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Except for page 199 : Olivier Marchetti

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SPECIAL THANKS  
Jean Noel Péché  
Damien Thareau  
Fabrice Poujade

THANKS :  
To all the players, Sampiero Cristiani, Céline, Charles, Alexandre and Joan, Jack from loge borgne, Marie Christine and Jean Jaques, Eloïse, Simon, XPXII Cymagina, William, Atomik, El Gara, Laurent Hamet, PCP, François and Patrice from Bigfoot, Dimitar Angelov, Marius, Ged Green, Adrenalinegames, Pauline, Michaël wallet, Danny Bonura, Gilles, Philippe chaume, Brunch, Gouzigouzi, Maxime Gorecki, Vanina and Antoine, Parisperrier and Batman !

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DTB Editions  
Printed in France  
N° ISBN : 9782954334707  
Dépôt légal : Novembre 2012





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