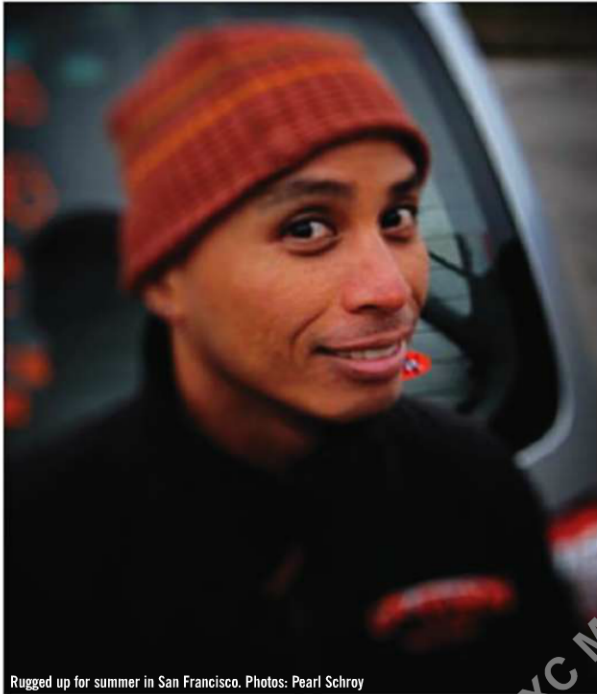


# Future Heroes

## NOVA DASALLA

He's on the way up, and has all guns blazing. Ed Ewing talks to the US's number one acro guy



Rugged up for summer in San Francisco. Photos: Pearl Schroy



**N**ova Dasalla takes no prisoners. A resident of California, earlier this summer he caused a rucus in the acro world by claiming to be the first US pilot to perform the ultimate acro move, the Infinite Tumble. He then took a swipe at the Green Twins, who claim the same thing. Feathers were ruffled everywhere.

**What's your name and where are you from?**

I'm Nova Dasalla and I live in San Francisco. I fly at a coastal site called Mussel Rock in Pacifica, just seven miles south of San Francisco. Many people know it as The Dumps.

**What do you fly? And why?**

I fly the U-Turn Thriller because it's the best acro wing in paragliding.

**When did you learn to fly?**

I started learning in late 2004 but really started flying in 2005.

**What's your day job?**

I'm manager of sales development for a high-tech, social media company.

**You're an acro pilot. How did you learn?**

After taking a few SIV courses with Enleau and Ann O'Connor, I told them, "Hey, I'd like to get into acro, would you start teaching some?" So, in 2007, I started going over the water and getting towed a lot. I'm sure I funded a lot of their vacations that year!

**What do you love about acro?**

Acro is a form of self-expression and a way to push my limits. I love being able to control the wing, which shows me that I can control my mind, body, and, most importantly, my fears.

**You recently learnt to Infinite Tumble and say you are the first US pilot to do this. But the Green Twins, US acro pilots who live in France, also say they are the first US pilots to Infinite. Who's right?**

Hmmm... I get asked this a lot. What I can say is that in 2009 the FAI defined an Infinite Tumble as making a minimum of three, 180-degree rotations above the canopy.

Now, most of the guys felt that just because you could do three turns, by no way did it mean you could actually call it Infinite Tumbling – it's called the 'Infinite' for a reason. I had always felt that the definition that all the top pilots would agree on and have no question saying, "Yeah, he's done it" is at least 15-20 turns. So that number was always my goal.

When I posted a video in May last year called, 'Nova Dasalla: five high turns in Tumble', I was very careful not to say that I had done an Infinite Tumble, but instead said I had done a 'Competitive Infinite'.

Then, in June, the Green Twins posted an edited video of Anthony doing six or seven turns entitled 'First Infinite Tumble by an American!' I only made my claim to Infinite Tumbling after I'd done 15 turns at the Wings Over Bear Lake Competition in Utah in June.

**All of which means...**

If you go by the official FAI definition you'll get an answer. If you go by the unofficial definition by the most respected acro pilots in the world, you'll get another. Personally, I measure my accomplishment against the latter standard, but some would say I covered the former one, too, in 2009. Regardless, I think the Green Twins are great pilots, so how about we say that Anthony is the first one to make it in France, and I was the first one to do it in America?

**In a Wild West shoot-out between you and the Green Twins, who would win?**

Well, if you're talking synchro, I wouldn't stand a chance. They're awesome at that. But in solo, I like my chances better!

**You had a crash last year. What happened?**

I was doing a Misty-to-Helico too low and too close to the North Side at Point of the Mountain, Utah. Even though it's a trick I've done hundreds of times, it just takes that one mistake which gets you into trouble. I got twisted a few times, auto-rotated, tried to fix it, then threw the rescue too late. As soon as it started to inflate, I slammed right in. Luckily, my legs hit first which is why I'm still alive.

**Injuries?**

I broke both legs, back, and shoulder putting me in the hospital for a month and a half.



In action. Photo: Nova Dasalla

**How much metal is there in your body?**

A lot! I have titanium rods in both lower legs, spine, and a plate in my left shoulder. I was on a trip recently and didn't set off the metal detectors at the airport ... I was bummed!

**How mentally strong do you have to be to take a whack like that, and then come back to flying acro?**

My recovery from the accident was very difficult because I couldn't tell if I'd ever improve. All I had control of was my attitude and every day I was faced with the decision to be positive or negative about my situation. So, I simply chose to be positive. With that, I knew I'd fly again and do acro. In fact, I never doubted that I would since I'm an acro pilot – it's who I am. So, I don't know if I'm mentally strong, but I do know that I chose to be positive all the time. I think this was absolutely key in my recovery.

“ I simply chose to be positive it was key to my recovery ”

**What are your goals in acro and flying?**

I'd definitely like to finish in the top 10 of an APWC event, but need to pay better attention to the many competition nuances and subtleties.

**Describe your perfect routine.**

SAT-to-Helico, Twister-to-Twister, Helico-to-SAT, Rhythmic SAT-to-Infinite, Misty-Helico, Twister. I've done most of this before sans the Infinite, which I've just learnt. It blends all the dynamic and sensitive tricks into one routine.

**Do you do synchro?**

I haven't been too interested in synchro since I have nowhere to train it and no one to train it with. Recently, Marcell Schrittwieser, the acro pilot from Austria, came to visit me and we made some very nice synchro helicots at Mussel Rock. We've talked about it, so maybe we'll do synchro in the future and find some spots to go hunting!

**What other sports do you do?**

I enjoy mountain biking, Krav Maga [hand to hand combat], snowboarding, poker, pool, scuba diving, skydiving, and my newest hobby – tarp surfing! [Honestly, YouTube it – it's skateboarding on a giant tarpaulin so it looks like you're surfing a wave.]

**Any sponsors to mention?**

U-Turn, GoPro, Coveritalco (a small clothing design company at home) and, in the past, Ozone, who supported me early on.

**What's the US acro scene like?**

While there are many who dabble I don't know anyone else in the US who has the time, dedication,

desire, and money to compete internationally at, let's say, an Acro Paragliding World Cup event. It's not so easy to just work eight months of the year so you can go to Europe and do the Acro Tour for the entire summer!

**Where's your favourite place to fly?**

Flying has taken me to Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Indonesia, Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, Spain and Norway. My favorite place to train the non-dynamic tricks is at my home site of Mussel Rock – there's nothing like having San Francisco in the background and listening to Electronica music while making acro next to the Pacific Ocean. It's a magical place.

**There are only 24 hours until the end of the world. What do you do?**

I'd finally return Kate Beckinsale's calls and tell her, "Okay, I'll go out with you, but just this one time!" 📺

*Nova has competed in Paranoia Acrobatixx, AcroAria, the Nissan Outdoor Games and the World Air Games. He's ranked number 45 in the world and number one in the USA.*