



Quadzilla

By Ron Reich

Qut on the field Ron Despojado is a flyer to be reckoned with. In his very first competition, the 1991 California Open, he finished second, beating out the reigning dual-line world champion, yours truly.

In real life Despojado is a mild-mannered 40-year-old architect. About the same time he got interested in kiting he was working on the architectural remodeling of Belmont Park at Mission Beach in San Diego. His other talents include graphic design—in fact, not only did he win the 1996 AKA quadline championship, he also won the AKA's convention logo contest.

Despojado says that as a child he considered himself a klutz with no hand-eye coordination. His stunning performance at the '96 AKA convention proved not only that he's a gifted athlete but that he's the flyer of the moment on the quadline scene.

Since Despojado and I live in the same town I took the opportunity to corner and quiz him about his newfound fame.

Ron Despojado

caps a monster season

with the 1996 AKA

Quadline Grand

National

Championship



Ron Reich: How did you get interested in kiteflying?

Ron Despojado: Back in 1989 I kept seeing these kites flying while I was driving next to Mission Bay Park in San Diego. I thought they were a beautiful sight. The image that sticks out most is a stack of Hyperkites and their long tails. Eventually I went to a kite store and bought a low-end stunt kite.

RR: How did that turn out?

RD: I didn't know any better so I thought it was a pretty good kite. Then I got kind of bored with that one and bought another one that was a step up. That process repeated itself a few more times until I saw someone flying a bow-tie-looking thing with four lines that said something like "Ned's Omega" on it.

RR: [Laughs] You mean Neos-Omega, right?

RD: Right. I was watching the guy fly it and was wondering if he was the one making the kite do all those maneuvers. The next night I went to the store and asked about the kite. It was closing time and I just couldn't make up my mind. They were very patient with me and what finally convinced me to get it was the fact that they only had one left and it was in the window. Thus I got my first Revolution 1.

RR: How was it going from two to four lines?

RD: Very frustrating! My first day I saw

the same guy and set up next to him. While he was doing his thing I was helplessly backing up, picking up the kite, clearing the lines, all the while trying to read the manual with both hands on the handles. I thought there must be a mistake with the instruction manual or lines. At that time the tops were about 7 inches longer than the bottoms. I even tried switching the top and bottom lines. I looked pretty spastic. I had made up my mind to return it to the store.

RR: *Did you?*

RD: Well, I didn't get around to it that week so I gave it another shot the following weekend. Still no success, so the next weekend I tried again and, wouldn't you know it, that Sunday afternoon I finally got it to get some airtime. I only had about a half-hour of flying time left so when I went home I was totally excited for the next time I could get out.

RR: *What was the problem? Did you think it was a difficult kite to fly?*

RD: It was the classic crossover situation, going from two to four lines. I always tell people it's the difference between an airplane and a helicopter, with very few skills or reflexes in common. At the time there weren't a whole lot of Rev flyers around and Revolution hadn't included a training video yet so I was basically left to figure it out on my own. But very quickly after that the learning curve shallowed out.

RR: *That was still early in Revolution's production. But wasn't there a sudden mass of Rev flyers soon?*

RD: Oh yes, there were about four or five of us who met regularly on weekends. Sometimes all of us would be there, other times it was only myself. But I tell you one thing, for the first year I practiced, I'd say, 48 out of the 52 weekends of the year. I

just couldn't get enough.

A short time later Revolution asked three of us to fly at a benefit—the Hadzicki brothers had a prior commitment. Flying team was like the next level, the next challenge.

RR: *Did you like flying as a pseudo-team?*

RD: Actually, not really. Though it was fun, we never had any consistency and no one really took it seriously. But we had a lot of laughs. I was ready for the next challenge.

RR: *Can we guess what the next step was? Competition?*

RD: [Chuckles] Yep, that was it!

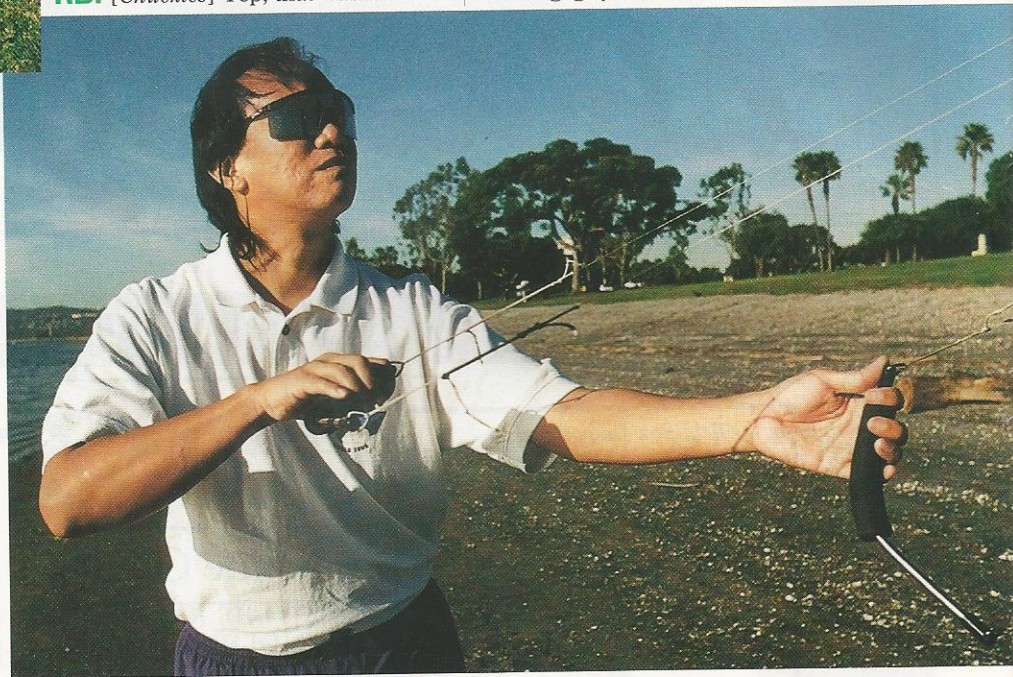
ing like a car needing a front-end alignment. I'm surprised I didn't throw up.

RR: *How did you do?*

RD: [Smiles] I remember Joe Hadzicki's wife, Kirsten, asking me if I'd seen the results yet. I told her no. She said that I'd be happy with the standings. Well, I finished second, right behind Scott Aughenbaugh. I even outscored the reigning dual-line world champion, Ron somebody.

RR: [Laughs] *Gee, I wonder who that could have been! After that were you convinced to keep competing?*

RD: I think I was hard to be around at that time—first time out, mixing it up with the big guys and doing extremely well.



RR: *What made you enter that first competition—the 1991 California Open—and how was it?*

RD: Just flying at the park, people were always amazed at the kite's control. Periodically they'd ask me if there were competitions with kites and the Cal Open was right around the corner. For some reason I was curious to see how I stacked up against the world's best. It was like wanting to know if I just wasn't a big fish in a little pond. I was totally intimidated! My goal was just to not be embarrassed. It was my first time even being at a competition so I had no clue as to what to expect.

Well, I was first in the flight order to boot! When I got onto the field I was shak-

Yes, I wanted more. But that was almost my last time competing.

RR: *Why?*

RD: About two weeks after the Cal Open I was attacked and robbed in a parking lot. I was stabbed four times and pretty much left for dead. I obviously had a few other priorities in my life at the time. But the next competition, Berkeley, was about a month away and it was my goal to fly there.

RR: *How was your road to recovery?*

RD: The most frustrating part was my hand-eye coordination was off. I couldn't do what I knew I could. I had some very serious stitches and scars across my chest,