

# Catching the fever

By Rita DeMontis

*Toronto Sun*

Gary Auerbach figures a major chunk of the world's problems could be resolved if everyone stopped for a moment and tossed a Frisbee. Auerbach, 29, along with his partner Brian McElwain, 33, are world champions in the competitive world of freestyle Frisbee – traditionally the exclusive property of U.S. competitors who relinquished the honor to our heroes this past August in Jacksonville Florida.

"It was such an emotional moment," recalls the handsome Auerbach earnestly. "I mean – we were the first non-U.S. team to win the World Freestyle Frisbee Championship and it really brought into focus how amazing this sport is."

Auerbach has travelled world-wide with his trusty Frisbee, and even while teaching English in Europe and South America, he'd often introduce his favourite toy into the classrooms.

"I remember one group of youngsters in England who were absolutely amazed at what the Frisbee could do," smiles Auerbach. "I would quickly toss the Frisbee out into the crowds, watch it jet out to some youngster – and catch the look of absolute astonishment as the Frisbee gently floated into the hands of this unsuspecting child.

"They kept asking me if I was a magician!"

Frisbee was first introduced in the 1950s in the midst of the flying saucer craze as the "toy with the invisible string." Auerbach explains that today more Frisbees are sold than baseballs, footballs and basketballs combined.

And it's an ideal sport for cross-training since there is no need to change equipment or location when playing the many games. "Frisbee is a performance sport," says Auerbach, who's next getting ready for the World Beach Championships in California.

"It's all about sportsmanship and a true gentleman's game." It combines style, grace and the ability to make split-second decisions based purely on calculated timing.

Auerbach first became mesmerised with the sport after watching a Frisbee tossed around when he was nine years old. Years later, while playing competitively, he realised he could improve his style and technique with extra training.

"So I enrolled in the School of American Ballet in New York City," he recalls. "After graduation, I danced professionally throughout Europe, the U.S. and Venezuela." "I reached my peak when I realised all I wanted to be was a Frisbee player!"

Auerbach quit professional dancing five years ago and turned his attention to Frisbee year-

round, as well as being a member of the Spinning Bees Professional Frisbee Clinics, which provide students, teachers and parents with instructional and participatory programs.

"Ultimate Frisbee is played professionally in over 20 countries with hundreds of teams, leagues and different associations," says Auerbach.

"Ultimate Frisbee is a team game, with rules and regulations It's fast and exciting and a sport you can never have enough of. It keeps you in shape, but ultimately – you create magic with a Frisbee."

**DIET:** At under 6 ft. and 150 pounds, Auerbach admits he doesn't worry too much about what he eats. "I know how to eat well, I eat small, more frequent meals and I just don't indulge in junk food. I must admit my favorite is Thai food."

**FITNESS:** Auerbach says he and partner McElwain are gearing up for the 1996 World Frisbee Championship "so I'm focusing on daily stretching exercises and running. And, of course, using the Frisbee in my routines."

For more information on the sport and for demonstrations, call Auerbach at (416) 778-8199.