

# RAGE 2005

## FROM THE INSIDE OUT



An independent review by Anton "The\_Basilisk" Lines

**A**S MANY READERS OF NAG Magazine will know from experience, this year's rAge managed to attract its biggest turnout yet. To give a basic indication, all seven hundred seats at the NAG LAN were sold out within 30 days of becoming available at Computicket. In fact, so great was the demand for the event that people were actually scalping tickets.

The LAN itself was everything I have come to expect from the Vaalhooligan Crew. Considering the sheer size of the network, I would have forgiven a little lag here and there, but apart from a few short periods of downtime, the speed was as fast as if there were only ten PCs connected. In addition, power problems did not surface once, setting the benchmark for major events countrywide. The staff, especially ShadowOrphan and Wolenoid, was exceptionally helpful and good-tempered about it too. Attention was paid to small details. For instance, to correct a previous mistake, music was played only at an acceptable volume, and only in the major walkways through the LAN area. A variety of games were played, with servers provided for all of the most popular. Battlefield 2, Unreal Tournament 2004, Call of Duty and Counter-Strike were among the more recognisable.

Joining in the spirit of Quake 4's expected release later this month, the VC staff organised a 128-player Quake III tournament. Taking advantage of the absence of all the top

old-school players, Relic breezed through the competition, defeating the relatively inexperienced Slick in the grand final. Another newcomer by the name of Phr4ntic finished just behind, in third place.

Moving to the ground floor of the expo, one became truly surrounded by the broader gaming industry. Exhibition stands ranged from electronic hardware and software, to trading card games, to anime, to just about anything else you could think of. Telkom and SAFACT managed to set up shop without causing too much of a stir amongst the attendees. Michael James amusingly rolled about on a Segway electric scooter, the badger hunt had people searching in the most obscure locations, and in the centre of it all, the main event unfolded before the public's eyes – the R100,000 Counter-Strike: Source competition.

CS: Source has still not managed to shake the problems that have plagued it ever since its inception as a tournament title. The Source engine, for all its glory, does not make use of dual processors, and thus Arena 77's servers were reduced to half capacity. The tournament administrators were not entirely blameless,







however, as this problem had already been identified as early as May. The long delays in Saturday's play can therefore be partially attributed to carelessness. Complaints about the competence of the staff also shed a dim light on proceedings, with a long and heated debate erupting afterwards on the Arena 77 forums ([www.arena77.co.za/forums](http://www.arena77.co.za/forums)). Len Nery, head of Arena 77, has apologised for the problems and vowed to use the criticism to improve future events.

The spectator facilities at rAge were certainly a step in the right direction. A big screen was set up in front of a grandstand area and running commentary was provided for those sitting down to watch. However, with the finals being played on the stage underneath the screen itself, and the commentator in close proximity, important strategic information was inadvertently given away to the teams as they were playing, compromising the integrity of the matches. To solve this issue, until sound-proof booths are available on stage for the players, the actual game should be played in a location removed from the spectator area.

As for the results, the rivalry between Team Evolve and Identity Gaming was again the main attraction. The final went down to three maps. Identity won the first, 16-14, on *de\_dust2*, in a similar fashion to their WCG victory. But Evolve surged back on *de\_prodigy*, winning 16-12 and taking the championship into a third game. The final map, *de\_train* was tied at 15-15. In the overtime that followed, clutch-play by Identity stars Explicit and Incin gave them a final, hard-fought win and R50,000 courtesy of Rectron. Evolve received R30,000 courtesy of EA for second place and BHB took R10,000 courtesy of Telkom and Look & Listen for third place.

Perhaps even a bigger event for the local competitive community was the presence of Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel, well-known professional gamer and several times world champion. Fatal1ty was in South Africa, along with his training partner Brian "Zen" Grapatin for an ABIT Fatal1ty Shootout, which gave local players a chance to challenge him and win prizes for their efforts. Unfortunately, the Painkiller community in South Africa is virtually non-existent, and so nobody was able

to claim the R20,000 prize, but several ABIT motherboards were handed out as consolation awards. I had a chance to sit down with the two Painkiller stars to ask a few questions about their stay in South Africa and competitive gaming in general.

"The most surprising thing about South Africa for me was that Montecasino doesn't have Texas Hold 'Em (a type of poker)," laughed Johnathan after I asked about his expectations. "Nothing's really been too out of the ordinary so far, but we're going on Monday and Tuesday to see more of the country, so maybe after that."

Brian added, "The pizza's been really good. That surprised me."

It was immediately clear that both Johnathan and Brian are just ordinary young men who happen to be exceptionally good at a computer game. Friendly, considerate and keen to get along with everyone they met, it was difficult to think of them as celebrities. I asked Johnathan if his status ever prevented him from being 'one of the guys'. "Obviously I go out with the guys and party after the tournament is over," he replied. "But before it happens, everyone knows I'm very serious about winning. I stay by myself and train just like any other athlete. Of course I'm not going to go be your buddy-buddy before a tournament."

Travelling the world certainly has its pros, but how does this schedule affect gaming performance? Brian was quick to tell me that playing on home ground is always an advantage: "For CPL Dallas we got to practise at home for once, and we had about two and a half weeks, playing pretty hardcore. But we also got to relax. That's important. When you're in your own environment it's less stressful. Overseas you're jetlagged all the time."

During their stay, the two were provided with a bodyguard. I asked if this was standard practice. "I don't really think about it too much," said Johnathan. "It's mainly my business partners who want me to have a bodyguard to protect their investment. I guess it depends on where we go, but we always have someone taking care of us."

By the end of the weekend, Johnathan had only conceded a single frag in his shootout. Eventually, he started to take on two opponents at a time to keep warm. When asked if the local standard was disappointing, he said: "Obviously it'd be great to play some higher profile gamers, but the Fatal1ty Shootout's all about fun. So far the crowd's been pretty good. When we do shootouts we usually get everyone wired, and that's what it's all about." **NAG**

*See the Cover DVD for more photos from rAge 2005*

## The D-Link Network

The layout of the LAN consisted of 4 x DGS-3324SR connected to each other with a 4-port Link aggregation (1Gbps on each port). The backbone on the main switches D-Link provided was more than 1Gb backbone, in theory it was a 4Gb backbone. On each row they installed either a 24-port or 48-port switch with gigabit ports. The gigabit ports were connected directly to the backbone switches. All the servers in the admin area were also connected to the network with a gigabit connection.

## The results:

700 gamers were playing and copying files 24/7 the whole weekend and all of the above switches were only using between 15% and 20% CPU utilisation. No LAG was experienced on the network and the overall comment afterwards from gamers were that this was the best LAN they ever played on, which was LAG free with low pings, making it very enjoyable for them to play against each other. The network D-Link provided was more than capable of handling 700 gamers and D-Link hope to supply the same network again next year to see if more than 1000 gamers will push up the overall LAN utilisation.

