



IML Returns And CHC Is Ready To Celebrate

From the Program Chair

After three years, IML is making a triumphant return to Chicago this Memorial Day weekend! IML weekend has always been one of the busiest weekends of the year for the Club, and 2022 won't be any different.

If you find yourself wandering around the Congress Hotel, and are feeling a little parched, come wet your whistle with CHC! Join the Chicago Hellfire Club for our annual IML Cocktail Hour in the Oxford Room, on Saturday May 28th from 3 pm–5 pm.

Also, make sure to come and say hi at the CHC Booth in the IML Vendor Mart.

For guests who have a sponsor for CHC parties, we'll be back to our normal IML play parties on Saturday and Sunday. Our new party hours will be in effect, but we are opening up what would normally be the demo hour for another hour of the dungeon. The parties will run from 7 pm–1 am, with doors open from 6:45 pm–10 pm

As a reminder, all CHC parties require proof of vaccination to attend. We are using the CDC definition for fully vaccinated, which means it must be two weeks after your final dose in the vaccines primary series. This means that boosters are not required to attend.

We hope to see you all in Chicago over Memorial Day!

In Brotherhood,

Theo E. | Program Committee Chair | program@hellfire13.net



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His Secret Weapon, Or, How to Win IML

'Tis the season. Recently at the Cicatrix offices/dungeon, we e-sat down with Associate member Joe Gallagher to ask him about his experience as an IML contestant.

What year did you become a CHC member?

I think it was February 1997...

What year did you first attend IML? 1994

What road did you take to the IML contest?

I lived in Manhattan, so I wanted to be Mr. Leather New York. The guy I viewed as the epitome of a Leatherman was Henry Romanoski. He was the first Mr. Leather New York. He died a couple years before I ran for that contest in 1995. I came in second runner up. I went back in 1996, and I won. And it turns out I was the last Mr. Leather New York. I won in April 1996, and I went to compete at IML a month later.

Why did you run in the first place?

It seemed like a good way to be more like my idol Henry.

Talk about the time in which you ran. What was going on in the world that comes to mind? Any personal anecdotes about what was going on in your life?

When I was competing for IML, the biggest news was the Spanner case in England, where men were actually jailed for consensual SM. And then locally in upstate New York, there was an SM couple, the name they used was the "Houghtons." They claimed that their children were taken away from them because of their activities in SM. After I won, they wanted me to help them raise money. But they would not meet me in person. They claimed they needed to maintain their secrecy. So I declined to help them. Because it just didn't smell right. And it seems that my sense of smell was good. Because it looks like they were actually just scamming the whole leather community.

My life at the time was absolutely perfect. My partner and I had a beautiful co-op in Chelsea. I had a great job, he had a great job; we were living the life. I was working at a famous household brand, Simplicity pattern company. Life was golden.

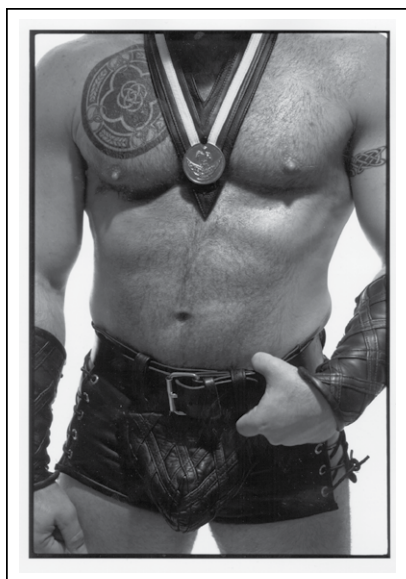
Did you have crushes on other contestants/any bones you wanted to jump (feel free to name names, or not!)?

Antonio Sanchez, from Barcelona, Spain, was Mr. Leather Europe. And I'm pretty sure he was the hottest guy to ever compete at IML. His ass was a force of nature. I wanted him badly but did not get a piece of that. And Mr. Michigan Leather was so damn sexy. I think we could have played but competing was challenging.

Reflect on what you learned about yourself after you completed the IML contest.

Most of the lessons I learned from IML, took me many years to absorb. Winning the contest gave me an opportunity to see myself without shame. It also allowed my ego to do lots of damage, and that took many years to work through. I am a totally different man today than I was when I arrived in Chicago for IML in 1996.





What advice can you give to contestants for this year?

Be true to yourself. Faking an image and trying to win IML by pretending to be who you think the judges will pick, is a shitty way to compete, and it will bite you in the ass. Be you, honest, and true. 'Cause if you win faking it, the year will destroy you. It changed me so much, but at least I was myself.

What were your IML contest venues?

1996 was the last year without a Saturday Night Contest event. So the contest involved picking our numbers on Friday night. The pre-judging was Saturday all day and Sunday morning. The Friday night number selection was at the Congress Hotel, and the Sunday night contest was at the Congress Theater. I think it was a better system for the contestants because they only had one night on stage.

Tell us about that reveal onstage (you told me this in Dallas recently).

Let me start by saying, that my introduction as contestant #42 was one of the most awesome experiences I ever had in public. That year, the stage was set up with a runway out to the audience. And then the contestants were brought on stage. We were on stage as a group to watch everyone's introduction. And the announcer would announce contestant #XX from this or that city, and the crowd would roar. Some of the contestants would wilt under this attention. They would give a small wave and do their required walk out in the crowd, turn around and walk back. A couple guys really worked it, and the crowd responded well to them. So by the time they got to me, #42, the announcer said, "Mr. Leather New York from New York City, Joe Gallagher," the crowd gave me their all, and I was overwhelmed with a desire to win this contest, forget that NYC never wins, I was gonna bring this home. I have a big tattoo on my back that no one had seen, and I was wearing my David Menkes chaps (that I still wear), so I walked out into the crowd, and I could hear my partner Joel and my boy Doug screaming for me from the balcony. I hit the end of the walk and turned around and planted my foot on the stage and raised my arms in victory, and the crowd went wild. I had never had that much confidence in my life, and wow it felt GREAT!

IF there had been a Saturday night contest, I do not think I would have had such a powerful introduction.

How do you remember feeling that IML weekend?

It was overwhelming. Contestants were trying to impress the judges, and I think some of them were trying to psych each other out. I was just trying to be ready. Prejudging for me was on Sunday morning, so I had all day on Saturday to not freak out. I did not succeed...I freaked out, I melted down, I felt like a fraud, it did not matter that I was an experienced SM bottom, it did not matter that I was involved in the leather community with GMSMA. Nothing but my fear mattered. My partner Joel and Doug my boy did their best to be there for me...I think I kept it private and did not show my personal mess in public. At least I hope so.

Did you get enough sleep that weekend?

I never get enough sleep at IML, but that was a year with even less sleep.

Any memories that stick out that are maybe more adjacent to that IML weekend?

I refer to Doug as my boy, he was my boy from January to early May 1996, but trying to get ready for IML was difficult for my partner Joel. And Doug and I had assured Joel he could end us if he needed that. So in early May 1996, he asked me to not have Doug as my boy anymore. I understood, and Doug was a good man about this. And we ended that





part of our relationship. But when you read about my introduction on stage, and that I could hear Joel and Doug together in the balcony, I was so filled with love for both of them, and hopeful that Doug would be back with us. So right after I was announced as the winner, I am standing on the box, and Joel jumps up and tells me he wants to talk. I was like sure, be fast, what is up. He said, "I know Doug loves you as much as I do and you love him, I want him back" my heart about burst, this was better than that gold medal I was wearing. I said, "you go get him and bring him back. And remember I love you." So Doug was my boy again starting that night.

Where did you stay that weekend?

At the host hotel, the Congress Plaza, we had an adjoining room with Rob Heigl, my buddy who was Mr. Lure, and my boy Doug, so the door was open between the rooms most of the weekend.

What gear did you wear that weekend as contestant?

All the gear I wore was by David Menkes, who still does custom leather in NYC. David Morgan did my IML head shot (for winning not for contestant). He was famous for his White Party pics and he did the ads for 2exist underwear back in the mid and late 90's.

In the time frame in which you ran, how did you identify as a kinkster (Dom, sub, switch, furry, boy, Alpha, slave, pup, etc.)? What kinks rose to the top for you at that time in your life? And how do you identify now?

I was mostly an SM bottom at the time and presented that way. I was into flogging, belting, whipping...

Now I am vers, way vers, I don't bottom too much in SM, but fucking and fisting I am a very Daddy pig! Fisting has changed me so much, I am much more open [ha!] and ready to try new things...

What's on your agenda for this year's IML? And what's a fantasy scene for you like at IML? Our readers want to know, for reasons...

I have learned that IML is a really bad place to try and make plans ahead of time, and after this many years, you would think I would have learned. But I have not. I do have a ticket to the CHC Sat night party, so I am hoping to get some SM and Fisting in there.

But my ultimate fantasy is to do a 69 fist with one of the guys I have already scheduled to play with. I've done it once with my good fist bud here in SF and I want more!!!

Also, another great thing is happening this year, my original boy, Doug is coming to IML this year, and we are gonna get a chance to hang out and then sit together at the contest. My heart is so damn happy.





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