



## **ATHLETE FOCUS: 2009 Maia International Acro Cup Silver Medalists Eirian Smith and Jake Kanavel**

**T**he 12-19 year-old mixed pair of Eirian Smith and Jake Kanavel of San Jose, Calif., and Aerial Tumbling and AcroGymnastics finished second in the Junior Division at the 2009 Maia International Acro Cup in Maia, Portugal, this March. The gymnasts are coached by Linda Meier.

Eirian, nicknamed Ani is 10 (competitive 11) years old and Jake is 16 (competitive 17). The pair competes in the 12-19 year-old division. The age categories were expanded to increase participation and provide experience opportunities for up and coming athletes. Jake and Ani continue to be the brightest hope for a junior mixed pair World Age Group medal in 2010.

The Maia Cup featured more than 200 acrobatic gymnasts from Belgium, Great Britain, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Switzerland and the USA. The event included three days of competition. Qualification competition included one balance and one dynamic exercise for each group. The finals competition allowed age group participants to choose between a balance or dynamic exercise, while junior and senior athletes performed a combined routine. All scores start from zero in finals.

In 2008, Smith and Kanavel earned the bronze medal in the 11-16 year-old mixed pair category, as well as winning the U.S. Level 9 mixed pair title. They are members of the Junior Olympic Team and this was their first international competition in the 12-19 mixed pair category. ✧