

# Stefano Pelinga

by Tom Shaw

He sits in the car with his partner, watching the night owls of Rome, cruising up one street after another. The cackle of the radio breaks the silence and he quickly finds himself involved in a high speed chase through the winding street and traffic circles of the city and then into the suburbs, lights and siren going.

A day in the life of a pool player.

It is, anyway, if you're Stefano Pelinga, who has been a member of the Italian State Police, trained in high-speed driving for The Flying Squad since 1985. Between pedal-to-the-metal chases and more normal beat patrol, no one can call it a dull occupation.

Pelinga first picked up a cue at twelve years old, "because I wanted to emulate my all-time favorite singer-actor, Dean Martin. I never did get to meet the guy, but I sure learned how to play pool."

When he was a kid (he was born May 11, 1964) there were no pool



tables in Italy so they used to play pool games on the Italian billiard tables with their high wall cushions and small holes. "That definitely sharpened our aim," he said, "but hurt your position play. I love Straight Pool (14.1) and had a high run of 107."

Most Italian players rejected pool when it was introduced in the early '80s, feeling it was too easy. "They didn't understand its potential," Pelinga said, "and I had the everyday problem of finding good opponents, even into the late 80s. On TV I saw Paul Gerni, who later became a friend, and who showed me trick shots. It was my solution, because I could do them by myself."

By 1989 he was a trick shot pro, giving exhibitions and traveling under the sponsorship of Longoni Cues. "Renzo Longoni is recognized worldwide as one of the greatest experts on woods, and his son Pierluigi is a smart, hard working



*Italy's Stefano Pelinga travels Europe, Asia and North America doing exhibitions and playing in tournaments.*



