

# Mikkel Aaland



*"It's All an Adventure"*

## The Aufguss towel, a wizard's wand

While filming the Sauna Aufguss episode of Perfect Sweat in Italy and Germany, I learned about one of most important tools of the sauna Aufguss meister: a simple bath towel.

With a rhythmical flourish of cloth, the sauna meister propels waves of scented steam around the room, wrapping all the bathers in a heart-warming embrace. Over time a profound connection develops between the sauna meister and his or her towel, a relationship not unlike that of a wizard to his wand. And, as I learned, you don't want to come between the sauna meister and his or her towel!



*Christine Rose performing.*

It was our second day filming the Sauna Aufguss Championships at the Satama spa just outside of Berlin. We were eating breakfast and several Italians ran up and surrounded our table. "Our star contestant is missing his towel," one of them asked breathlessly. "Have you seen it?"

What does it look like? I asked.

"White," came the answer.

"That's all? White?" I asked.

"He has used the same towel for years. It's become an extension of his arms and his soul. It brings him good luck."

"Why are you asking us?" I asked.

"After his performance, he set it down on the bench near one of your film crew. Then it was gone."

All we had to offer were our condolences. With those said, the Italians were off, roaming the dining room and asking others if they had seen the towel.

As a spectator, it's always been clear to me that towel waving was art that required a lot of talent, practice, and strength. Christine Rose-our co-host for the Aufguss episode, and a sauna meister herself-explained to me that the towel is used to both bring hot air down to the bathers and cool air up from the floor. Knowing what to do when is a skill acquired over time and includes keeping a vigilant eye constantly on the condition of all the bathers. If a towel is dropped during competition, points are taken off, but the amount of deduction depends on how smoothly the performer replaces the downed towel with a fresh one. (Picking up a soiled towel from the floor is a no-no and can be grounds for disqualification.)



*A sauna meister signing a spectator's towel at the Sauna Aufguss Championships at the Satama spa outside of Berlin. Sauna meisters are often treated like rock stars.*

The towel searching drama went on for several hours and the Italians came up to me several times during the day and asked if we were sure we didn't know where the towel was. Finally, our director went to our equipment van and pulled out what looked like a common white bathroom towel. He had grabbed it without thinking on his way out of the sauna during a performance and placed it along with some equipment in the van.

"Yes! Yes!" the Italian team cried. "This is it."

When we next saw the contestant, he was smiling and hugging the towel like a long-lost lover.

For more on Aufguss, take a look at my book Perfect Sweat: Sauna Aufguss, which is full of images and stories. You can preview the book [here](#) on Blurb or buy it [here](#) on Amazon.

For more on the Perfect Sweat series, click [here](#). My personal website is found [here](#).