

America's Fastest Chihuahuas Compete

This year's Labor Day weekend "marathon" featured 15 fleet-footed Chihuahuas.

By Roger Sipe

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As the racers nervously prepared themselves in the starting grid, more than 26,000 spectators waited breathlessly in anticipation of that magical single word: "Go!" And when it came, the world's best were off in a flash, and in only 1.9 seconds, the winner crossed the finish line, crushing Olympic world-record holder Usain Bolt's time of 9.69 seconds, set in Beijing, China, earlier this summer.

The speedy sprinter's name was Tiger, he's from Bakersfield, Calif., and he's ... a Chihuahua!

This past Labor Day weekend saw the 4th annual PETCO Unleashed National Chihuahua Race finals, held in San Diego, Calif. The event was held in PETCO Park in downtown, just after the 1st inning of the San Diego Padres-Colorado Rockies major league baseball game (which explains the large crowd, most of which watched on the giant scoreboard). The "track" was set up in the attached Park at the Park, a 2.7-acre park located just behind the stadium's outfield.

In all, 15 Chihuahuas legged it out down the 35-foot-long track (which explains the "record" time), including Brownie (Orlando's regional champion), Cricket (Dallas), Mia (Denver), Poppy "Papageorgio" (Washington, D.C.), Cuppycake (Boston), Bones (Chicago), and 2007 national champion Maddy (New York).

Second place was taken by Minut Sanden's Piccole (the Houston regional champion), from The Woodlands, Texas, and Pancho Villa (Seattle's regional champion), owned by Samantha Patrick from Lopez Island, Wash., finished third. In addition to a great trophy, Tiger will receive a one-year supply of Royal Canin Chihuahua dog food and a \$300 PETCO gift card. Not bad for less than two seconds of work!

Tiger is no stranger to fame. The 4-year-old flyball athlete was also the 2006 national Unleashed champion. After the race, Tiger's manager/owner Cathy Smith said, "It's absolutely wonderful to have him win again. I feel like we have redeemed ourselves after losing last year."

PETCO and race sponsor Royal Canin hosted the event to encourage all animal enthusiasts to consider adoption as a first option when adding a pet to their family. All the finalists had a ball thanks to the generous support of American Airlines, the Omni San Diego Hotel, and the San Diego Convention Center and Visitor's Bureau.

For more information about this year's regional finalists, video footage of the race, and information about next year's regional events, visit PETCO's website.

Roger Sipe is the editor of Dogs for Kids magazine and the Popular Dogs Series.