

## Dog Lovers Celebrate Michael Vick Animal Awareness Day

**Baseball fans and pet owners celebrated dogs and protested Michael Vick at a California minor league baseball game.**

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Now that one of Michael Vick's co-defendants has pleaded guilty to dogfighting charges and his sponsors and endorsements are dropping like flies, the Atlanta Falcons' quarterback's name couldn't be more soiled. Or could it? Dog lovers and baseball fans celebrated Michael Vick Animal Awareness Day during the Long Beach Armada baseball game in Long Beach, Calif., on Sunday afternoon, complete with a potty area for dogs littered with Vick jerseys.

For the 2 p.m. game at Blair Field, baseball and animal fans alike entered the ballpark and some who brought their dogs with them could sit in a special dog section of the stands. Dogs of all shapes and sizes showed up to celebrate. Terriers and retrievers made their feelings about the high-profile Vick case known, with some even wearing T-shirts with Vick's name and jersey number crossed out in bright red ink.

The former Long Beach Ice Dogs' Bulldog mascot Spike showed up wearing a Vick jersey with the number 7 crossed out while dog owners tried to get their dogs to relieve themselves on the Vick jerseys that had been set out — a bit of sweet canine revenge.

After their team secured a comfortable lead by the fourth inning, Armada fans enjoyed Dachshund races along the third-base line that resembled more of a Dachshund free-for-all as some dogs took off toward the dugout and other scampered toward the pitcher's mound.

Operation Santa Paws, a Long Beach-based organization that collects dog toys and supplies for dogs in shelters, was on-hand to collect donations. "It's a great way to celebrate dogs. This really is a dog's day. It's a chance to celebrate the importance of dogs in our lives — the exact opposite of what Vick and people like him have been accused of doing," says Justin Rudd, the founder of Operation Santa Paws and Haute Dogs, a local community of dog lovers.

Inspired by Sunday's event, a St. Paul, Minn., minor league team will give away 2,500 Michael Vick dog chew toys with the player's number and team colors on them at an upcoming game.