

Human, Dog Athletes Compete at Wags for Wishes

Three-day dog competition attracts former Olympian Greg Louganis and 2,000 of the country's top dog athletes.

Posted: July 10, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Greg Louganis and more than 2,000 dogs and their owners flocked to Del Mar, Calif., this weekend for the fifth annual Wags for Wishes competition, which attracted some of the country's top dog athletes in areas like agility, flyball, dock jumping, carting, herding, luring, and conformation.

The three-day event is held each year to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which grants the wishes of children with life-threatening illnesses.

Organizers expected the roughly 15,000 attendees to bring in as much as \$150,000, which would help Make-A-Wish's San Diego chapter grant the wishes of 20 to 30 children. Wishes typically include requests for trips to Disney World in Orlando, Fla., or specialized medical equipment, says Make-A-Wish spokesperson Tracy Marks.

"This has become a great event for us," says Chris Sichel, executive director of the San Diego chapter of Make-A-Wish. "It's really exceeded our expectations."

Longtime dog lover and Olympic gold medalist Louganis, co-author of the dog health and training handbook "For the Life of your Dog," appeared with Border Collie Gryff in an agility trial. Louganis, the winner of several Olympic gold medals in diving, is also a dog trainer and breeder.

Disc dog competitor Joel Zucker, of California, told the San Diego Union-Tribune that he and his 4-year-old Labrador Retriever Bailey travel about every other month to attend competitions around the country. His secret for success? "I always try to have at least as much fun as my dog."