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## Protesters object to treatment of racing greyhounds

By [ELIZABETH WRIGHT](#)  
Posted February 24, 2008 at 7:29 p.m.

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A glimpse of the passion and vitriol the sport of dog racing can stir up could be found Saturday along one of main roads through Bonita Springs.

On the inside of the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track, preparations were under way for an event that would celebrate the track's 50 years in business. A big race that night would leave \$50,000 riding on the running times of a group of elite dogs.

Outside, on the borders of the track's property, several dozens protesters marked the track's anniversary in a different way: lining the sidewalks of Bonita Beach Road with signs berating the sport.

"You bet, they die."

"Celebrating 50 years of cruelty and killing."

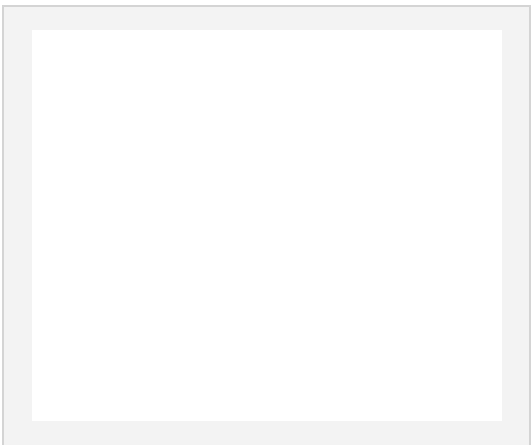
"End greyhound racing now."

Passing drivers honked: some in support, some in disgust.

At the track, a security supervisor was aware of the protest near the track's entrance, but he declined to answer questions. After checking with management, he said the track wouldn't comment on the protesters' claims, citing "trade policy."

Among the protesters, though, opinions flowed freely on what goes on behind the scenes at track kennels.

Judy Paulsen, a part-time resident of Marco Island, joined the protest after hearing



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about it via an e-mail alert from a greyhound group she supports.

She has never been inside the Bonita Springs track, and she couldn't say firsthand what the kennels there are like. But from what she has seen elsewhere, she said, "they're like chicken coops for greyhounds."

Like many at the protest, she said it's common for the dogs to be kept penned up much of the day, and when they're racing, there's the risk of strain and injury.

Other protesters, who have been inside various racing and breeding kennels around the state, say they have been disturbed by what they have seen.

Candy Juister of North Fort Myers used to pick up dogs for adoption from the kennels at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track.

Up until a year ago, she volunteered with a group that facilitated greyhound adoptions there, and at that time, she said there were issues with bad meat and cramped spaces for the dogs. But after one of the group's leaders spoke out about conditions, she said, the group was banned from the site.

Now, with this protest, she said, "we're just trying to make everyone think."

Other protesters raised questions about where greyhounds go once their racing days are over.

One of the protesters, Gisela Rowley of Naples, said somewhere between 5,000 and 8,000 greyhounds are killed a year at tracks across the country, citing numbers from the Somerville, Mass.-based greyhound advocacy organization GREY2K USA.

"It's just plain cruel," Rowley said, adding this shouldn't just be a concern for people who love greyhounds, but for any animal advocate.

As for the protest, she said, it wasn't meant to be confrontational or directed at dog track patrons.

"It's not to anger the people that are there. A lot of the people don't realize," she said.

Naples resident Renee Buongiorno said she had never given much thought to the conditions of the dogs in the sport until she adopted three greyhounds as pets. All had been put up for adoption after short careers in racing, and she's now convinced their lives aren't easy ones.

"It's a horrible thing," she said. "I think a lot of people don't really know."

Her hope is that with this protest, some people in the area will start asking questions, or possibly look into adopting a greyhound.

The Naples-Fort Myers Dog Track does put a number of dogs up for adoption through the group Happy Homes for Hounds, and a Web site for the track advertises that "retired greyhound racers make great house pets."

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<b>Sandpiper's Women's Club luncheon</b> Bonita Bay Club			11 a.m.
<b>Holiday Open House and Trunk Show</b> Petunias of Naples			3 p.m.
<b>Grand Menorah Lighting &amp; Chanukah Festival</b> Coconut Point Mall			5 p.m.

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While none of the protesters would disagree with that claim, adoption can't solve all the sports' problems, some said.

Naples resident Renee Darcy said the real issue is that there are too many dogs bred for racing -- more than ever become stars on the track, and more than will ever be adopted.

"There just aren't enough homes," she said.

But Darcy said she's used to being met with skepticism when she describes dog racing in a negative light.

"I don't know how many people tell me, 'you have it wrong -- they treat the dogs well.' I say, just try to go in to see the kennels. They won't let you," she said.

Christine Dorchak, president of the GREY2K advocacy group, was among the protesters in Bonita Springs on Saturday, and she said the ultimate goal of protests like this one and others at tracks around the state would be to ban dog racing in Florida -- something that most other states already have done.

While her issue is with the quality of treatment the animals receive, not the fact that a dog track is a gambling establishment, she noted that gaming policy can have important consequences for whether dog racing continues into the future.

The sport itself is declining in popularity, and she believes that if tracks weren't allowed to offer other forms of gambling, market forces would bring an end to dog racing. But with recent proposals like one that would add slot machines to tracks here, the tracks could survive.

"Slot machines are like life-support," Dorchak said.

For that reason, she said, "we are opposed to the expansion of gambling when it is used to prop up the industry."

In the hours the protesters spent along Bonita Beach Road, many said they thought the overall response was positive.

But one protester, Paulien Wood, who held her sign at the corner of Race Track Road right where cars exiting the dog track had to pause before turning onto Bonita Beach Road, said she "caught a little flak."

Some drivers just ignored her, but one man leaving the dog track -- Wood guessed he was in his late 20s -- stopped and looked at the surrounding display of signs full of words about death, injury and cruelty.

Wood doubts she helped influence that man's thinking on dog racing.

"He was in the car with some friends, and he just said: 'But it's fun.'"

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February 25, 2008  
7:11 a.m.

### **houndrescue writes:**

It's about time public opinion is revealed. This track has never had their feet held to the fire for the abuse and inhumane conditions to which these racers are exposed. The people of the area have united and now will continue to be vocal. This protest is just the beginning.

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February 25, 2008  
7:12 a.m.

### **pit\_stop writes:**

rename it the mike vick dog track. those dogs are "vicked-ems"

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February 25, 2008  
7:13 a.m.

### **Nplschick writes:**

Close the tracks. End dog racing and its abuse !!!

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February 25, 2008  
7:40 a.m.

### **granitestater writes:**

When humans are treated as are the greyhounds it's called incarceration.

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February 25, 2008  
8:03 a.m.

### **beachykeen writes:**

irishmist: Yours is a silly argument that can be rebutted a hundred ways. However, I'll just post two: greyhounds committed no crime to deserve their "incarceration", and humans aren't bred to race and then killed when they're young just because they may not be winners.

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February 25, 2008  
9:09 a.m.

### **ballarino writes:**

Do your part to get attention and to END DOG RACING today.. the protest was

<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	organized by these nice folks: <a href="http://www.grey2kusa.org/">http://www.grey2kusa.org/</a>
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	Sign up for their email so you can be at the next rally.. I attended, and we had more supportive honks of horns and thumbs up from cars going by than ever expected!  AND PLEASE take the time to post here.. every one posted gets this issue more attention!
February 25, 2008 9:09 a.m.	<b>veggiegirl writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	GatorHater07 - I feel that neither is acceptable, but the article is about a greyhound track. There are no horses kept there.
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 1:28 p.m.	<b>smellycat writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	cheetahtomoh - It doesn't matter where a dog comes from, a shelter or a dog racing track, they all need love and to be treated humanely. No one dog is more deserving of a life than another.
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 1:29 p.m.	<b>ramfan writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	Maybe the dogs got caught with a can of pot or stole a door. That would justify their incarceration.
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 1:30 p.m.	<b>granitestater writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	beachykeen,  I fear you misunderstood my comment. You're exactly right in that the greyhounds committed no crime to deserve the incarceration-like existence they suffer when not racing. We're on the same side here.
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 4:27 p.m.	<b>pit_stop writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	let's let the greyhounds run our local politics and then make all the city councilmen and women run around that track and we'll bet on em. of course, if it's anything about city council people... then the illegal criminals in our city get in free and get to use all services and facilities for nothing
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 7:05 p.m.	<b>violetsky writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	cheetah, It's not a "few" greyhounds that are being killed. It's OVER 10,000 every year that are destroyed to feed this useless industry. They are killed because they are not fast or profitable and there are just not enough loving, caring homes to take them. You are right that there are far too many homeless pets, so let's start fixing this problem where we can -END GREYHOUND RACING
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 25, 2008 8:31 p.m.	<b>ravenhawk writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	Hi Cheetah, here are a few facts for you to read up on regarding greyhound racing. <a href="http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affec...">http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affec...</a>
<a href="#">Reply to this post</a>	
February 26, 2008 6:24 p.m.	<b>beachykeen writes:</b>
<a href="#">Suggest removal</a>	Sorry, Irishmist, you are right.  I apologize; I see your point now!

[Reply to this post](#)

July 9, 2008  
4:16 p.m.

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**WomanHound writes:**

The first time I looked for a Greyhound to adopt I was shocked to discover how many Greyhounds had actually been damaged. From dental cripples, to extremely emaciated, to tick diseases and finally broken limbs and bones...truly...it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand the name of this "game." It is called grab what you can and show no mercy for the Greyhound let alone duty and compassion for it.

It is only the final attempt at finding a permanent adopter to take care of all the wounds but so many are emotionally unstable or unfit for households that the Greyhounds either remain in kennels for years trying to find someone who loves and will care for them...or is easily erased with a gun.

Alabama, alone was recently exposed for killing more than 3,000 Greyhounds with a .22 rifle to "put them into permanent retirement"...how lovely...don't talk about selling collars and dog coats to raise awareness or a few bucks to feed a hound...talk to me about shutting this bloody business down. Most states outlaw it and only those that are poor or backwards or both remain righteously possessive of this cruel and infantile sport. You have to wonder at the maturity and sophistication of those professing a love for this environment...who and what and where did these people come from...and even worse...do they come across your life.

Michelle Young Cuenant

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