



Everything New Orleans

Covington Town Talk: Duck, duck, derby fun at inaugural Tammany Duck Derby

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on July 27, 2015 at 3:02 PM, updated July 27, 2015 at 3:14 PM

Beak-to-beak, paddling furiously, feathers proverbially flew at the Inaugural St. Tammany Duck Derby in the river at Bogue Falaya Park in downtown Covington on July 18 and I was a lucky enough duck to attend.

Sponsored by the St. Tammany Humane Society, the family and dog friendly free admission event benefitted Louisiana's largest non-profit no-kill animal welfare shelter and organization.

What a crowd! Covingtonians took to the event like ducks to water.

"We are really excited about the response from the community, to have all 5,000 rubber ducks adopted by yesterday is amazing," said Interim Director Dr. Michelle Newfield. "Next year we will have to prepare for even more."

Board President Larry Young not only had fun, but also recognized the importance of the benefit event.

"I like working with the people at the shelter. They are a great group of people really dedicated to taking care of the animals. Putting together an event like this for the first time is really fabulous," he said.

Volunteer and Event Coordinator Michele Nazar got her rubber duckies in a row for a splish-splashing, fun-packed day. Gates opened at 10 a.m.

Decorate-A-Duck and face painting helped the little ones duck and cover in the shade. Pluck-a-duck allowed even the youngest duckling to hunt for a prize as they grabbed for rubber ducks in a barrel.

Fans flocked about North American Miss Louisiana 2015, Madison Andriessen of Covington to take a gander as she posed for her royal portrait with a giant inflatable duck. I wasn't the only one having a ducky time. Some of the 108 dogs and cats available for adoption enjoyed the day out, meeting new potential family members while a strategically placed misting station cooled the crowd like water off a duck's back.

Christian Serpas and Ghost Town swung the beat with live music.

A mere one rotation through the food booths caused me to waddle off in contentment. First, Funnel Cakes offered, well, funnel cakes with a dusting of powdered sugar, a great breakfast beginning as I had nothing to eat that morning.

Next Mellow Mushroom provided several kinds of pizza by the huge slice. New Orleans Voodoo Dogs howled with a jumbo hot dog on a jumbo bun piled high with various fixings.

Among the cookies and desserts offered by Nonna Randazzo's Bakery was a special cookie created for the event, a duck shaped and decorated yellow sugar cookie. Now for a cool down, the Yellow Duck snowball was on the menu at Sugar Shack Snowballs and a free pup cup too.

Confronted by the next dilemma, Zea's Rotisserie Grill's Thai ribs and corn grits or Sweet Daddy's BBQ pulled pork taco and chipotle coleslaw, I opted for both. What's a girl to do? By this time the crowd was rocking and the race was ready.

Though the waters of the Bogue Falaya may be muddy, it's a clean race and after testing by the course vet, all rubber ducks must be certified duckweed free.

"Ducks can get their feathers ruffled, when there's a thousand bucks on the finish line," said Board member Dennis Ledet, Head of Duck Security, also billed as Derby Chairman.

Anticipation was keen and expectations were high as 5,000 rubber ducks broke free from the orange starting corral and chugged downstream. Overcome with excitement, spectators waded into the water cheering, "GO DUCKIE!" although apparently at least 3,000 ducks shared that name.

Race officials kept a watchful eye in kayaks nearby, but dramatically a camera drone buzzed the course before crashing into a tree limb. At one point, all ducks turned sideways, face to the bank, as they slid around the bend, a clever speed inducing technique no doubt, or maybe just a cross-current. Nearing the end of the race, the course narrowed to a plastic tube designed to ensure that only one duck could be first. Judges armed with cameras surrounded the tube, in case there was a need for a photo finish, all under the guardianship of Duck Security. Finally, one brave drake, a mallard among ducks, emerged as the winner, but who was this legendary stranger? Was he good? Was he bad? Was he molting?

No lame duck himself, Senator David Vitter announced the winners. Duck Derby Winner "Quacktastic" brought the \$1000 grand prize home to his owner and trainer Donna Melancon.

Rubber duck "Quacktastic" trained at the facilities of event sponsor and distant cousin Pelican Athletic Club, following a strict regime of water aerobics, spin class and a high performance diet of lean fish and quackers.

Owners of the second through ninth place winners, Dee Christina, Terri DeMers, Joann Rucker, Amanda Nevers, Dianna Lozier, Faye Kellison, George Schaeffer and Kim Gwinn, vowed to train harder next year, but happily consoled themselves with prizes including a butane BBQ pit, a gift basket and "Doggy Staycation" from Zorro's Fun Zone for Dogs, a Pelican Athletic Club membership and gas card, Coffee for a Year from The Scotts Coffee & Tapas Bar, and generous gift cards from Gallagher's Grill, IHOP, Impastato Cellars Ristorante, Nonna Randazzo's Bakery, and Rouse's. Prize sponsors also included Dennis & Gail Ledet, Little Bitty Harper, Gail Marcello, Mel Borne,

and Connie Abernathy.

Alas, alack, all good things must end. Will I be there next year? You bet!

All in all, the Duck Derby just quacks me up!

Send all Covington news, events, meetings, interesting stories, and just plain fun to resident Ann Benoit via **CovingtonTownTalk@gmail.com**

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