

Inaugural hot dog eating contest attracted a mere three contestants

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We have a wiener!

Tim Arthur of Westerville emerged victorious Aug. 7 in the inaugural Acme Hotdog and Sausage Co. Columbus Hot Dog Eating Contest. Joey "Jaws" Chestnut isn't looking over his shoulder and the Nathan's Famous Hot Dog people aren't exactly quaking in their buns. An estimated 40,000 people turned out to watch as Chestnut claimed his fourth straight "Coveted Mustard Yellow Belt" in the Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest. He downed 54 hot dogs and buns in 10 minutes, well shy of his world record of 68 set a year earlier.



Aaron Brink dresses Cleo as a Shaggy Dog, topped with yellow and white yarn, one of the styles of hot dogs offered at the Acme Hotdog & Sausage Company.

By contrast, roughly 30 people were on hand at the Columbus Baptist Temple on Cleveland Avenue to watch the three contestants who signed up for the Acme Hotdog and Sausage Co. competition. Arthur won by consuming 10 hot dogs in a dozen minutes. Second place went to Darius Tisdale of the Northland area. He ate nine. Worthington area resident Mark Buckingham came in third with seven dogs and buns devoured. "Everybody's a winner," Acme Hotdog and Sausage owner Mark Weilbacher said as he passed out foam crowns to all three competitors. "My stomach feels like it's going to explode," Tisdale said moments later. "I wanted to eat at least two a minute, but that didn't work out," Arthur admitted. Still, count him in for next year's hot dog eating contest. "Definitely," Arthur said. As the noon hour approached and no contestants had yet emerged from the gathering small crowd, Weilbacher walked among them trying to round up someone interested in competing. "Everybody wants to be a watcher," he complained. Then Tisdale showed up. "I'm going to go ahead and try," he said, and there was much cheering. It was, Tisdale said, his first eating competition, but he's a regular customer at Acme and a big fan of hot dogs. "Pretty much so," he said. "I like eating contests," Arthur said after signing up. "They're fun." He looked like he was having something other than fun after getting on the outside of 10 hot dogs and buns. "I've done one other, but I was in college," Buckingham said of eating competitions after taking his seat at the competitors' table. "I was more hungry then." "This is an exciting event for us," Weilbacher told the spectators before the eating commenced. He thanked the Rev. Paul Gabriel of the Columbus Baptist Temple for hosting the event in the parking lot next door to his restaurant. Although Weilbacher admitted he was hoping for more than three contestants, there will be a second annual competition. "We're committed to doing this every year," he said. With three volunteers from the crowd assigned to count as the hot dogs and buns went down the hatches, the contest began. "Everybody's got a different technique, I see," Weilbacher observed. Arthur dipped his in water while Tisdale followed most bites with a sip. Buckingham occasionally tore off hunks of his dogs. All three began like they'd never been so hungry in their lives, but early enthusiasm soon wavered. Still, to a man, they munched on. "Twelve minutes is a long time to eat hot dogs," a man in the crowd commented. None of the contestants would have argued with that sentiment.

Held in conjunction with the hot dog eating competition was a canine costume contest put on by Acme Canine of Lewis Center. The pets were to be dressed as one of the items on the Acme Hotdog and Sausage menu.

"We had three participants," Acme Canine owner and founder Laura Pakis wrote in an e-mail.

They were Woofie, a giant schnauzer dressed as the Hula Dog with a hosta leaf skirt, paper bag wristlets, leis and a flower; Cleo, a cockapoo, who came as the Shaggy Dog topped with yellow and white yarn "and a sweet smile"; and Spike, Pakis' own dog who has his own blog. He sported tin foil alien antennas to make him the Area 51 Dog. The judges, Aaron Brink, Brittany Babb, Kailey Satolli and Stephenie Phillips, voted for Woofie as the winner, according to Pakis.

The dogs got to eat some of the leftovers from the eating event, Pakis indicated. "They could have won the contest," she wrote.