

It was a dog day in the park

■ Tampa's "Bark in the Park" on Saturday gave canines and humans plenty to do.

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RC the perky Maltese puppy would have run an impressive race through the obstacle course Saturday, except for a few problems: the obstacles.

RC (Rasputin Cornelius) dutifully trotted behind his owner, 11-year-old Suzanne Fore of Tampa, as she scurried over and under the obstacles at the annual "Bark in the Park" event held at Al Lopez Park.

Then came that plastic hoop tunnel. If dogs had brakes, the screeching sound would have been deafening as RC went rump down and stopped inches from the first hoop.

Suzanne tried crawling through the cardboard box tunnel to show RC what he should do. But the puppy had better ideas, strolling off to socialize with the other dogs.

There were plenty of new acquaintances to sniff out. Hundreds of dogs, and their owners, showed up for the fun and games, sponsored by the Tampa Recreation Department. They did tricks, raced, chased plastic discs and posed for portraits.

Frank Kolsinski of Tampa brought his tiny Toy Yorkshire, Gidget, in hopes of capturing the award for smallest dog. At 3 pounds 6 ounces, Gidget looked like a leading contender.

But how about some tricks?

"This is it," Kolsinski said. "That's her trick. Wandering around trying not to get stepped on or bitten by the other dogs."

Actually, that was no small feat. Participants included Great Danes, bulldogs, rottweilers and a Dalmatian with pink sunglasses.

Judy Guaraldo's Shetland sheepdog, Jenny, impressed judges and the audience by spelling her name — backwards.

For her trick, Jenny sifted through a pile of colorful plastic letters. While up on stage, she sniffed around and came up with a Y, followed by an N, then another

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Canines and humans of all shapes and sizes were at Al Lopez Park in Tampa on Saturday. Above, Nicholas Bolletino, 1, of Tampa, thinks about sharing a cracker with Jake, a friend's Great Dane; and, to the left, Mary Kornoely, at right, tries to persuade her Chow dog Rambo through some hoops on the obstacle course.

Times photos —
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