

LIVING

Skechers Super Bowl ad has animal activists barking mad

Anti-dog racing group wants Skechers to yank an ad featuring a pack of greyhounds

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LISA SALLIE FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Wall Street, an ex-racing greyhound, was recently rescued from a Florida track. The use of these speedy dogs in an upcoming Super Bowl ad for footwear company Skechers has sparked an outcry by the nonprofit greyhound protection group GREY2K USA.

Swapping the racy [Kim Kardashian](#) for racing dogs during the Super Bowl is a major fumble.

So says an anti-dog racing group that's calling for Skechers to yank an ad featuring a pack of greyhounds that is set to air during the high-profile game.

More than 50,000 people have signed a [change.org](#) petition calling for a boycott of Skechers and for NBC to ban the ad.

The questionable spot features the jersey-clad dogs being outraced by Mr. Quiggly, a scrappy French bulldog sporting a quartet of red GoRun Skechers. The footwear company used the reality TV queen to plug its line during last year's Super Bowl.

"This is a thoughtless promotion of greyhound racing," said [Christine Dorchak](#), co-founder of GREY2K USA, a nonprofit greyhound protection group based in Massachusetts. "It's not a joke."

Dorchak worries the spot will glamorize a "cruel and inhumane sport" that is not sexy by any means, and one that costs thousands of gentle dogs their lives every year.

But Skechers marketing chief [Leonard Armato](#) maintains the commercial is “inspirational” for the underdog. The ad will air during the Super Bowl on Feb. 5 as planned, he said, just minutes before halftime to an estimated 100 million viewers.

The sneaker giant also says it’s unfair to judge the commercial without having seen it.

“It might even put a smile on the face of the protesters,” said a company spokesperson, who declined a request to view the ad.

But Dorchak isn’t smiling. She started the petition after being tipped off the ad was being filmed at the Tucson Greyhound Park — Arizona’s last operating dog track and a hotbed of controversy.

An Arizona Department of Racing report said the track was charged with multiple cases of animal cruelty and neglect.

A recent video investigation revealed the greyhounds lived in dark, cramped conditions, were caged 22 hours a day and ate a diet of meat consisting of the 4Ds — dead, dying, downed and diseased — and unfit for human consumption.

[Robert Smith](#) of Homestretch Greyhound Rescue in California estimates 25% of the 70 dogs a year he rescues from that track are injured.

“It is unconscionable that Skechers would shoot an ad at this notorious dog track,” Dorchak said.

Greyhound racing has been on the decline in recent years.

Since 2001, 26 tracks around the country have closed. Only 22 dog racing tracks remain open in seven states — with none in New York.

The Long Island Greyhound Transfer, a rescue group based in Hicksville, takes most of its retired racers from tracks in Florida, which still has 13 tracks, said its secretary, [Ellen Graff](#). The dogs are available for adoption at www.ligreyhound.org.

Graff said she signed the petition because it always bother her when greyhound racing “is used frivolously to make a statement about speed without people knowing all the negatives that go with that.”

Many of the dogs are euthanized or are left homeless after they can no longer win and make money for the track, she said.

Still, Some greyhound advocates are reserving judgment for game day.

[Lisa Sallie](#), a Giants fan and founder of the L.I.-based rescue group Grateful Greyhounds, is hoping the positive exposure greyhounds will get from the ad will cause people to take an interest in the “wonderful breed.”

She suggests Skechers add a blurb about greyhound adoption at the end of the commercial or on its website.

Meanwhile, four hounds her group recently rescued from a West Virginia racetrack are up for adoption at www.gratefulgreys.org.

The retired racers, who can hit up to 45 mph, are known to make excellent companions. In fact, greyhound experts say that life at the track prepares the world’s fastest dogs to be top-notch city pooches.

“Once off the track, they just like to snooze,” Sallie said.

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