

Skechers Defends Super Bowl Ad Featuring 'Cruel' Greyhound Racing

Laura Stampler | Jan. 10, 2012, 9:22 AM |  1,426 | 11



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More than 43,000 people have signed a [Change.org](#) petition requesting that Skechers alter a Super Bowl commercial that supposedly "support[s] the cruelty of dog racing."

A board member of the greyhound protection non-profit [GREY2K USA](#) got word that Skechers filmed its Super Bowl commercial at Tuscon Greyhound Park (TGP) in November. Grey2K's president Christine Dorchak told Business Insider. The ad allegedly features jersey-clad greyhounds racing — and losing to — a small dog wearing Skechers. (Mavericks owner and [Skechers partner](#) Mark Cuban is also said to be in the commercial).

"We can't understand why Skechers would choose to promote dog racing in any capacity," Dorchak said. "This is like hiring OJ Simpson to advertise Hertz."

Although greyhound racing is waning in popularity, it still incites a hotbed of controversy. Over the last ten years, greyhound tracks have decreased from 50 tracks in 15 states to 22 tracks in seven. But Dorchak emphasized that it is still a prevalent problem.

According to the Arizona Department of Racing, TGP — the backdrop of the Skechers commercial — was charged with [multiple cases of animal cruelty and neglect](#). A recent [video investigation](#) into TGP also revealed greyhounds' questionable living conditions and diet of 4-D meat, which is the meat deemed unsuitable for human consumption.

TGP did not return Business Insider's request for a comment.

"Of all the places to go, it's a wonder," Dorchak said. She continued that even though the ad only features a mock race, it is unethical to glamorize the pastime to such a large audience. The Super Bowl attracted 111 million viewers last year, making it the [most watched television event in history](#).



Mike Hewitt/Getty

See Also:



[BIG MISTAKE: Target Splits With Ad Agency That Drove \\$4 Billion Sales Increase](#)



[What Is This Angry Baby Selling?](#)



[Google Intensifies Its Guerrilla War Against The TV Business](#)

At this time, Skechers has yet to announce a 2012 Super Bowl commercial and [has been absent from lists featuring confirmed sponsor](#).

TGP's [November newsletter](#) confirmed, however, that "A full cast of 30—including Dallas Maverick's Owner Mark Cuban—was on hand last Sunday filming a National television commercial for Skechers Shoes. The Tucson Greyhound Park was used as the primary backdrop for the commercial shoot. The 30 second spot features Tucson Greyhound racing and will air during the Super Bowl February 4 from Indianapolis."

TGP will also be hosting a "huge" Super Bowl party at the track to celebrate the ad's premier.

While it is unconfirmed whether the greyhounds filmed came from TGP or another source, Robert Smith of Homestretch Greyhound Rescue in California told Business Insider that he was offered \$10,000 by Los Angeles Animal Services, a company that provides animals for motion pictures and television, to supply nine or ten greyhounds to be featured in the commercial. While Animal Services did not specify that Skechers was the company that was involved, Smith told Business Insider that their description matched that of the ad that has come under scrutiny.

"I told them that that was a really bad idea and that there would be backlash," Smith said. "I told them to tell the company making the ad that they should change the concept, but I don't know if they had."

Skechers declined to comment about the nature of the commercial, but a spokesperson forwarded Business Insider a letter from Cheryl Kearney, the director of post production, that confirmed that the American Humane association was on set during the filming of the "above referenced commercial," continuing that "no animal was harmed in the making of this commercial."

- See the letter below.

Dorchak received the same response to her plea to pull the ad, along with an assurance from Skechers svp/global ad director Gary Patrick that they followed the Humane Society's provisions, do not promote the practice of dog racing, and was unsure which clips filmed would make it into the final commercial.

Skechers didn't tell Business Insider if they still planned to air that portion of the ad during the Super Bowl or otherwise.

The shoe company's commercial last year featured Kim Kardashian breaking up with her personal trainer. Given her recent divorce, maybe it's time to nix the dogs and go for a sequel.

See the letters below:



GREY2K USA

November 22, 2011

Directors

Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President

Michael Trombley, CPA
Vice President and Treasurer

Valarie L. Wolf
Secretary

Tom Grey
Stop Predatory Gambling

Eric Jackson
Greyhound Companions of New Mexico

Charmaine Settle
Galgo Rescue International Network

Caryn Wood

Karyn Zoldan

Directors Emeritus

Dr. Jill Hopfenbeck, DVM

Kevin Neuman
Kansas City REtired Greyhounds as Pets

Carey M. Theil
Executive Director

Organization Listing is for Identification Purposes Only

Michael Greenberg, President
Gary Patrick, Vice President of Media
Skechers USA, Inc.
228 Manhattan Beach Boulevard
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Dear Mr. Greenberg and Mr. Patrick,

My name is Christine Dorchak and I am the president and general counsel of GREY2K USA, a national, non-profit organization working to pass laws to protect racing greyhounds. Since our formation in 2001, the dog racing industry has been cut in half. Forty-eight tracks in fifteen states have now been reduced to just twenty-two in seven. One of these remaining tracks is Tucson Greyhound Park (TGP), the subject of this letter.

It has come to our attention that Skechers has chosen TGP as the backdrop for a paid commercial. We ask you to reconsider this concept for humane reasons.

At TGP, greyhounds are kept confined in small cages which are barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. They are fed raw 4-D meat, the meat of downed, diseased, disabled or dead livestock. This was documented in a recent video [investigation and in news reports available on our web site at: http://grey2kusa.org/action/states/az.html](http://grey2kusa.org/action/states/az.html)

While racing, greyhounds face the risk of serious injury. According to the Arizona Department of Racing, nearly 1,000 greyhound injuries occurred between January 2007 and November 2009, the last year such records were made available to the public. To read more about [injuries and Arizona greyhound racing in general](http://grey2kusa.org/pdf/AZ2011.pdf), please see our 128-page report at <http://grey2kusa.org/pdf/AZ2011.pdf>

For the sake of Skecher's reputation and its standing in the community, we request that no advertisements featuring TGP nor any promotion of dog racing be aired.

I look forward to your reply and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.

PROTECTING GREYHOUNDS NATIONWIDE



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www.americanhumane.org

December 5, 2011

RE: **Skechers: Underdog (11/20/11)**
AHAD 02854

American Humane Association was on set for the filming of the above referenced commercial, which used a dog. After reviewing the reports, we believe that the *Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media* were followed and that no animal was harmed in the making of this commercial.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of any further help, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Kearney
Director of Post Production

Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2011 3:27 PM
Subject: Skechers commercial

Hi Christine,

I am in receipt of your letter of 11/22/12.

Please note that Skechers is not promoting dog racing in any way.

While we shot some footage at TGP, we don't even know if that footage we ever appear in a commercial.

We were very careful in our approach and the attached letter from the Humane Society outlines the care and respect we took in our efforts.

I hope you and your family and organization have a happy holiday season.

best regards,

Gary Patrick
Skechers USA

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