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Chestnut adds to his hot-dog eating legacy

NEW YORK (AP) — Joey “Jaws” Chestnut extended his reign as champion eater at the Nathan’s Famous July Fourth hot dog eating contest Wednesday, downing a record 74 wieners and buns in 10 minutes to take home the coveted Mustard Belt for the 11th time.

Miki Sudo held on to her title as the top women’s competitor at the annual Brooklyn eat-off, chomping 37 franks and buns to take home the top prize for an unprecedented fifth consecutive year.

Chestnut said he was “feeling good.”

“I found a vicious rhythm,” the 34-year-old Chestnut said after the stuffing session.

But while Chestnut ate 10 more dogs and buns than second-place finisher Carmen Cincotti, a judging error cast initial doubt over their totals after jurists didn’t see the eaters were taking the dogs and buns from two plates.

“Frankly, the judging was just off,” said George Shea, the longtime Coney Island announcer. “Joey said, ‘Look at my plates,’ and Carmen said, ‘Look at my plates.’ We counted the plates that they had eaten and it was 64 and 74.”

Eric Gonzalez, the Brooklyn district attorney, certified the final tally and Chestnut’s record of 74, two more than he consumed last year.

“At the end of the day, Joey Chestnut came in here and ate 74 hot dogs, broke a world record,” said Cincotti, who celebrated his 26th birthday on Wednesday. “Apparently they were good dogs.”

A total of \$40,000 in prize money was up for grabs, with the first-place winners taking home \$10,000 each.

Sudo fell short of the 41 hot dogs she consumed last year but easily beat out second-place finisher Mischelle Lesco, of Tucson, Arizona, who chowed down 28 wieners and buns.

Thousands of attendees, many donning mustard-colored hot dog caps, braved 83-degree temperatures and a heat index of 91 degrees to witness the annual July Fourth competition on the Coney Island boardwalk. The outlandish tradition dates to 1972, though the company has long promoted what a former president acknowledged was a legendary start date of 1916.

Fan Martha Pleasant, of Franklin, New Jersey, said she was attending the competitive eating competition to support her husband, Dwight Pleasant, who “loves wieners.”

“We are trying to knock something off my hubby’s bucket list,” she said.



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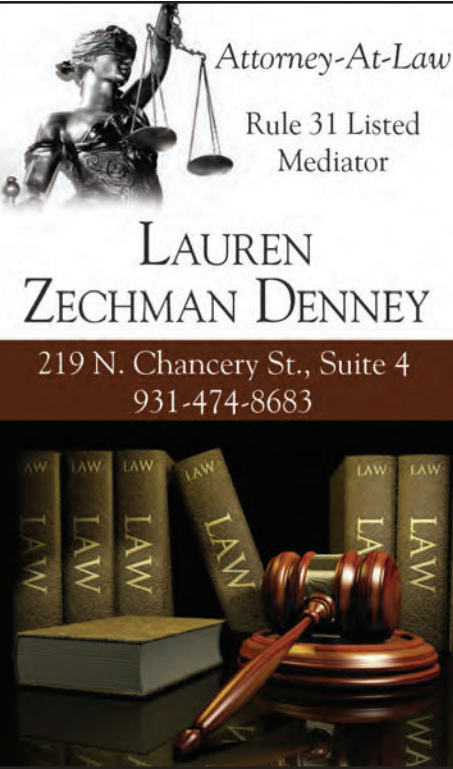
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