



Goldfish Racing Champion: My Greatest Accomplishment

I'm not very athletic. Somehow balls seem to gravitate towards my head, volleyballs, baseballs, basketballs, dodge balls...You name it, it hits me. So, the number of championships, medals and titles I hold is limited, to say the least.

A while back, my friend Erin asked me to pick her up from the train station at 10pm (since this is far past our parents' bedtimes.) When she suggested we hit up a dive bar to see a friend before our celebratory Taco Bell trip, I reluctantly agreed. We traveled to Saddle Bar which had probably 10 people in it total. I handed my ID to the bouncer as the delicious flavors of Crunchwrap Supreme loomed over my head.

As we entered, the bouncer asked us, "Are you here for goldfish racing tonight?" While just hearing a man of his size utter the phrase "goldfish race" was chuckle-worthy, the visual of drunk people using straws to blow cheesy crackers across a table made me laugh out loud.

While my initial thought was probably skewed by my panging hunger and love of fake cheese, Erin and I were surprised to learn that goldfish races involved REAL GOLDFISH.

I should stop here to tell you a little bit about Erin. She has a doctorate in Marine Biology. She can basically speak to fish. If anyone was going to win a goldfish race it would be her.

The only thing standing between us and a \$50 bar tab winnings was the \$5 entrance fee and the thought of how much Taco Bell that could buy.

So while we may have been deterred by the entrance fee, our investment-savvy friend offered to pay it if he got the \$50 bar tab winnings (not that he expected us to win.) After some minor negotiations Erin and I headed over to choose the champion fish.

As we were waiting to race, it seemed as though 50 more people came into the bar and 100 more signed up. It soon became apparent that this was a serious tournament-style race that would take far more time than we wanted to spend in the bar.

Finally, it was time to start and a squirt bottle was thrust into Erin's hands. Our investor advised her to, "Squirt the shit out of it!" It was at this point that we (mainly Erin) realized how cruel this was and that most of the goldfish would die of shock before the end of the competition.

As Erin headed to the starting line with some serious doubt, I wondered whether she would grab the bucket of fish and make a run for it. To my surprise, she stood patiently at the starting line as our competitors cruelly sprayed their fish in the holding corral. When I frantically told Erin to get our fish pointing in the right direction Erin kept muttering, "Kill 'em with kindness." It was at this point I knew we wouldn't make it through the first round and could start to taste a Crunchwrap in my mouth.

But we did.

The Fish Whisperer pulled through and we made it past the first round, and the second; and because we stayed patiently by the "racetrack" and were too cheap to buy another drink we got a by on the third. Somehow we were still standing when there were only three fish left.

So we raced Super High Guy, a late entry who was named by the announcer because of the stench wafting off its human. The race started and it was a close one. Our fish, entrusted in the loving hands of The Fish Whisperer, was doing swimmingly with only minimal encouragement from the spray bottle. Super High Guy, on the other hand, was getting the shit sprayed out of him--another strategy that seemed to be working. We won by a nose--or a snout, or whatever fish have. When it came time to scoop up our fish, Super High Human said, "Oh, that guy's done for," while looking down at his lifeless fish floating at the end of the track. Yes, we had just won a race by a nose against a dead fish.

Our accomplishment (or lack thereof) was short-lived because next it was time for the finals against a girl who was a seasoned veteran and had won the races three weeks in a row. She also employed the "spray the shit out of 'em" strategy. While our nontraditional "Kill 'em with kindness" approach was not favored, our fish was alive and kicking. So, our lively fish swam happily all the way across the finish line first.

Now I may not have been racing the fish, I like to think I had a great part in the win. With my official role defined as head cheerleader, I claimed one of my few competitive titles...Goldfish Racing Champion.

And let me tell you, Taco Bell tasted even better as a champion.