

Ducks Take Flight In Dome Sunday

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Vermillion Rotarian Kathy Chandler fires a volley of rubber ducks Sunday afternoon in the DakotaDome on the University of South Dakota campus.

David Lias/Vermillion Plain Talk



Last year, the Vermillion Rotary Club was able to utilize the lazy river in the Prentis Plunge aquatic center to hold its annual duck race to raise funds to support local charitable events.

This year, the club found itself in a quandary. The coronavirus forced the City of Vermillion to limit park activities for a time and to keep the Prentis Plunge closed, meaning a race of the small yellow toy ducks wasn't possible.

The Rotary Club's Board of Directors found a solution to the problem, in part, by taking aim at the issue in a different way. Instead of a duck race, they found a way to reach the Rotary Club's goals by instead holding a duck "shoot."

The event was held Sunday, Aug. 2, and members of the Rotary Club gathered not at Prentis Plunge like last year but at the DakotaDome. Once they got on the turf of the gridiron, they put a piece of artillery from the University of South Dakota's ROTC Department to good use.

It was a cannon, to be exact. An air cannon. The kind used to shoot t-shirts into the stands during sporting events at the Dome.

"Cannoneers," as Rotarian Gregory Huckabee describes them, took turns firing five of the yellow ducks turned projectiles from the end zone toward the 50 yard line of the DakotaDome.

While the object of last year's duck race was to see what rubber duck would first cross the finish line, the goal of Sunday's event was to see which duck would fly the farthest.

As Huckabee noted in an email to Rotarians participating in the event, "We have an official referee (with shirt and whistle - Cameron Wilson) who will provide legitimacy for the shoot. We would like you to be a cannoneer shooting off one of the volleys. We practiced shooting these puppies in the ROTC parking lot and they do fly an incredible distance. Casualties were not overly significant."

Sixteen volleys of five ducks each were fired and Mark Yockey, Dan Van Peursem and Nick Oyen provided color commentary at the event.

Each duck had been "purchased" by a member of the community with the funds helping the club provide financial assistance this year to the Patriots Plaza project currently being constructed east of the Al Neuharth Media Center on the USD campus.

The "owners" of the three ducks that flew the farthest during Sunday's shoot each received a cash prize.

The cannoneers at Sunday's event included Kelsey Collier-Wise and daughter Aurora Wise, Scott Pohlson and his two sons, Will and Henry, Tim Schorn and his son, Kamil, Rhonda and Andy Howe, Dawn Plitzuweit, Kathy Chandler, Ted Muenster, Ross Dickenson, Nick Oyen, Greg Huckabee, and Susan and Doug Tuve.