

How Tyrese Maxey went from watching the National Dog Show to taking part in it: ‘That’s the most nervous I’ve been’

The Sixers guard, a noted dog lover, ran a pair of pups through the agility course at this weekend’s show in Oaks.



Sixers star Tyrese Maxey at the National Dog Show in Oaks on Saturday. A. Hoersch / National Dog Show

by Ryan Mack, Published Nov. 16, 2025, 12:50 p.m. ET

[Tyrese Maxey](#) plays in the NBA. He has already reached the pinnacle of his sport. The 76ers guard has been named an All-Star and started several playoff games, including some in hostile environments like Boston and in New York’s historic Madison Square Garden.

However, there’s one thing that has made the 25-year-old star more nervous than any of that: the National Dog Show.

The 24th annual dog show was held at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks this weekend and will air on NBC and Peacock at noon on Thanksgiving, an annual tradition. However, a not-so-annual thing happened right after the agility competition and before the main course of the weekend.

Maxey was there with two dogs to take them through the course in an exhibition. He is no stranger to big crowds, nor dog courses, having completed them with his own puppies. However, doing it on the big stage gave him more nerves than anything he had done before.

“I’ve been on the course with no crowd. So that was my first time with the crowd,” Maxey said. “I played in a lot of playoff games. I played in both the Gardens. I played in Miami. I played in Brooklyn — and that’s the most nervous I’ve been to go through something.”

The anxiety quickly faded. The first dog, Howie, waited to start the course and before long, dashed through the hoop before ducking into the tunnel. Maxey was right by Howie’s side the entire time, running with a toy in hand.

In the middle of the run, Howie jumped on Maxey, reaching for the toy. With the toy in Howie’s mouth, the two embarked on a little tug-of-war before the dog relented and finished the course.

“I think that was probably my favorite part, the tugging,” Maxey said. “That was really fun to improvise, but definitely fun.”

This marked the first time Maxey had been at the dog show, and the event reminded him of his childhood. He reminisced about watching dog shows when he was a kid, and being able to do it on his own was like a dream come true.

The show wasn’t on his radar until recently. Maxey had seen clips of the show that has terriers, bulldogs, and pugs strutting on stage in front of a crowd and for millions of people on TV. People from his team who were aware of his love of dogs helped him get the opportunity.

So how was his experience?

“The experience is amazing,” Maxey said. “I really like dogs. [I] really liked watching dog shows when I was younger. So for me to be able to go out there and actually put two dogs on a course is really fun.”

Growing up, he had a tiny dog named Max. Unfortunately, Maxey’s mother eventually gave the dog away to one of his cousins, which devastated him.

When Maxey got to the end of his time at South Garland High School in Texas, his mother got another dog, a Rottweiler named Zoe. She still lives with Maxey’s mother.

Now Maxey has three dogs: Apollo, Aries, and Arrow.

Apollo, a 5-year-old Cane Corso, was a gift to Maxey as a rookie from one of the veterans on the Sixers. He got Aries and Arrow, both Bernedoodles, during the summer and has been working on his training skills for more than a year.

Maxey was still nervous Saturday, as he had not been in the dog show environment before.

“I can go out there and play basketball every single night,” Maxey said. “I’m used to it. I practice it every single day. That is something that I’m not used to doing. But it was fun.”

His second go-around was much like the first. A different puppy, named Spike, ran the course with Maxey running along, but once the back end of the course came around, some improvisation was needed. Spike became fixated on the toy in Maxey’s hand, jumping intently to snag it.

That never happened, despite the numerous attempts before Maxey threw the toy through a hoop and Spike followed through immediately. While Maxey went to talk to a reporter at the conclusion of the event, Spike continued to chew on the toy.

Maxey was appreciative of the opportunity.

“It’s amazing, man. It’s a really cool experience,” Maxey said. “The places that the world can take you. I’m blessed.”