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## Nothing says celebration better than racing cockroaches

*Posted: Oct. 10, 2003*



Whoever came up with the name "Madagascar hissing cockroach" did a pretty good job of conveying just about all the information about this bug that the average human would care to know, though, for the sake of completeness, I might have added the words "huge" and "disgusting."

They are about the size of an Almond Joy and, according to the people at Batzner Pest Management, have no eyes (but super-size antennas), nor wings (but feet equipped with both sticky pads and hooks); they hiss by forcing air through breathing ports, called spiracles, on the side of their bodies.

### Crocker Stephenson

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Seemingly tangentially, Batzner's Customer Service Week celebration ends today.

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The New Berlin company has sought to boost the spirits of its employees - and deepen their sensitivity to the Batzner customer - with daily customer service-related activities. Today it's with a customer-service crossword puzzle.

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situation."

The best Batzner Customer Service Week activity was the Madagascar hissing cockroach race. Company president Jerry Batzner owns a nice little collection of these oddities of nature, as well as an 8-foot track for them to race upon.

Six roaches from his collection of more than 50 were selected for the contest. The task of painting numbers on the back of each bug with Wite-Out fell to office manager Sue Armstrong, who did not seem to mind.

Each bug represented a team of eight or nine Batzner employees. The captains of each team were given plastic drinking straws to use should their bugs require gentle encouragement. The roaches were then deposited behind a cardboard barrier at the starting line, someone yelled "Go!" and the barrier was lifted.

Most of the roaches saw no reason to prefer one end of the table to another, and so they ambled around the starting line, hissing.

Except for roach No. 2. For some reason, roach No. 2 scurried down the track as fast as its shiny black legs could carry it. It zipped over the finish line and kept going. It might have gone all the way to Waukesha had a Batzner employee not - yuck! - picked it up.

Roach No. 2's remarkable performance had lasted but a few seconds. This created a little vacuum of time, which the Batzner people filled by staging a re-match.

### A Day At The Races



*Photo/Mary Jo Walicki*

Shirley Gay<(from left), Melissa Weisling and Dana Olson, Batzner Pest Management employees, cheer for their cockroaches during a race Monday at Batzner.

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Once again, roach No. 2 crushed the competition.

Not literally, of course.

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