



# Hot Dawg!

These handsome dudes and their adorable dogs are so ready for summer

By MICHELLE LEE RIBEIRO and TRACY MARCELLO | Photography by STEVEN MARTINE

## JOHNNY and TONY

A year ago, fans of the *Bachelor* TV franchise watched Johnny DePhillipo fall in love and get engaged on *Bachelor in Paradise* (BIP) after bowing out of contention on *The Bachelorette* just a few months prior. It's no surprise the ladies loved him—he's laid-back, quietly confident, a little shy, and a whole lot of handsome. But by the time the BIP reunion aired in the fall, the engagement was over. As he struggled through a very public breakup, DePhillipo, now 26, managed to handle himself with poise, grace, and an impressive dose of emotional maturity, reflecting on the heartbreak as a learning experience.

"It was pretty awful, it was draining," he says of taping the BIP reunion show in November and dealing with everything that comes with your love life being aired on national television. "But honestly, I learned a lot from that relationship, and I feel like I'm all around a better person because of it. It taught me that you just need to walk away when there are red flags, or when you have a gut feeling about something. You have to have self-respect. I know what I want in a woman now, what I'll tolerate and won't tolerate. If you don't want to be in my life, then go."

Born in Scottsdale, Arizona, DePhillipo moved to southern New Jersey when he was 5, where he and his family lived in the coastal town of Margate City for the next decade. It was there that he developed his love of surfing, hitting the waves at a very young age. His parents—Elizabeth, a nurse, and John, a real estate agent—both surf, so it was a natural hobby for DePhillipo and his three brothers. "When I say it's a beach town, I mean everybody surfs," he says of Margate City. "We used to hang out at the surf shops and things like that."

When he was 14 or 15, his family planted roots in Palm Beach

Gardens, where he admits he went through a few rebellious teenage years. "I was a terrible kid, a problem child," he says. "I rebelled and was kicked out of a lot of schools." The private schools his parents first enrolled him in just weren't for him, and he ended up graduating from Dwyer while spending his free time surfing and playing team sports including hockey, lacrosse, and football.

He went to community college for two years and eventually earned an associate's degree from Palm Beach State College. He'd been working in the restaurant industry on and off since high school—bar-backing at Cucina and bartending and serving at local spots like The Woods, Hog Snappers, and Le Bar—and after college, he got both his insurance and real estate licenses, working in the fields with his brother in Scottsdale and his dad here in Florida. Eventually, though, he decided he wanted to be a paramedic, so he enrolled in school and was doing rounds at fire stations and hospitals in the area. But four months in, ABC came calling....

"I was at school and I got an email from someone at ABC, and I was like, what is this?" he recalls. "I thought it was a joke, like my friends were pranking me." Apparently, his friend Perry had secretly submitted him to be a contestant on *The Bachelorette* to help him get over a breakup. "I had been seeing someone for four to six months or so, and we had broken up and I was kind of bummed out about it," says DePhillipo. "My friends were over it and were like, this dude needs to perk up. So that's how it happened."

He decided to put paramedic school on hold and give it a shot, and in March 2022 he flew to Los Angeles to tape *The Bachelorette*, followed that summer by *Bachelor in Paradise*.

Taking off so suddenly meant leaving his new buddy, Tony, behind



for a bit. DePhillipo had just gotten the French bulldog about a month before he had to leave for the show. Luckily, he comes from a family of dog lovers, and Tony was able to stay with his parents (and the family's two boxers and Australian shepherd) in Palm Beach Gardens while he went off to pursue love.

Tony is actually DePhillipo's second Frenchie. He first had Kilo, but sadly lost him within a year. "The vet said he must have somehow drank contaminated water outside [dogs can be exposed to harmful substances in things like environmental pesticides, contaminated groundwater or rivers, and animal urine in puddles], and he ended up passing away from leptospirosis," he says.

But now there's Tony—who, fittingly, being part of the Italian DePhillipo family—was named after pasta. "We were eating pasta, and my dad just started calling him Rigatoni, so it was Tony," says DePhillipo. Tony loves going to the beach and swimming in the ocean (pretty much the perfect little buddy for a guy who loves to surf), and to DePhillipo, he's just the right mix of energy and chill. "They're small dogs but have the biggest personalities," he says of the breed. "They're up by 8 a.m. and energetic, they take naps, and they put themselves to bed by 10 o'clock, wherever they are. Their eyes get all heavy, and they start stumbling around. They're just cool, happy, loving dogs."

When he's not hitting the beach with Tony, DePhillipo really enjoys cooking a good meal at home, which he often posts video clips of on TikTok. It was his Italian grandparents who he says taught him his way around the kitchen. "I used to help them cook when I was super young, making pasta from scratch," he says. His favorite dish to make is homemade gnocchi.

He's incredibly close with his family, and he loves spending time with his grandparents in New Jersey whenever he can. "My grandfather loves to stay busy, he's always building something," DePhillipo says. "He

keeps me busy too, putting shelves in his shower and little projects like that, and there's always a lot of eating whenever I'm there."

In May, he was off to Jersey to visit with his grandparents for a while. There was also the possibility he'd be heading back to the beach in Mexico to tape another season of *BIP* (which typically premieres in late August or early fall). At least, at press time, he said he wouldn't rule it out: "There's a chance you'll see me down there."

In the real world, he prefers to meet potential dates naturally. "I just like to meet people out, at restaurants, events, wherever," he says. "It's the best way." When he does meet someone who sparks his interest, he plays it a little cool and tries to get a vibe before making a move. "I feel like I'm shy, so I don't pursue very hard or aggressively," he says with a laugh. "I just say, 'Hi, I'm Johnny,' and if I feel a connection and am sensing she's into me too, then I shoot my shot and ask for her number. I'm not that intense."

He says he'd prefer to be more established with his career before considering engagement again, but if true love comes a-knockin', he'll open the door. "When I do find someone I want to be engaged to, I'll know," he says. "If I meet someone down-to-earth who's ready to rock with me, is a down-to-ride girl... If I found the right one and was head over heels, I would do it for sure."

But his main priority right now is getting his professional life on track. Come end of summer, he expects to be back in paramedic school in South Florida. "My mindset now is to get a career going, that's my focus," he says. "I don't want to get lost in the sauce, as they say, and in 10 years be like, what was I doing? I want to finish school and build a career here." —Michelle Lee Ribeiro

Follow Johnny on Instagram: @johnnydephillipo

## Dog's Life: Tony

**Endearing trait:** "He snores—not very loud and, like, lying full out on his back. I don't know why, but it's kind of cute."

**Favorite treat:** Sweet potatoes and apples

**Nickname:** "I call him Little Man because he's like a grown man but he's little. He eats like one, he sleeps like one, he doesn't like to be annoyed when he's angry, and he's got beefy little forearms."

**Favorite toy:** "Right now, it's this Wiffle ball he keeps trying to fit in his mouth, but it's way too big for him."

**Local hangout:** The beach. "He loves the water."

**Fun fact:** "He's the smallest, but he's the pack leader of all the family dogs. It's the craziest thing ever. The two boxers play kind of aggressively, and one is 140 pounds, but Tony isn't afraid of him at all. None of the dogs will start their day until Tony does. He's the man."

