

Disciplinary Committee Inquiries

The Disciplinary Committee of the GBGB were in attendance at a meeting held on 15 November 2012:

Mr J Akerman (in the chair)

Dr E Houghton

Mr A Hunt

1. Criminal Convictions

Former Racing Manager Mr JP Ross

On 7 March 2012 at East Dorset Magistrates' Court, Mr John Paul Ross was found guilty of assault and public order offences. He was sentenced to prison for 12 weeks suspended for 12 months. He was also required to pay £250 compensation and £745 costs.

A criminal conviction is a breach of the GBGB Rules of Racing, in particular a breach of Rule 152 (ii).

The Disciplinary Committee took into account the fact that the criminal conviction arose from events which were not directly linked to greyhound racing. However, the offence was of such gravity that a suspended term of imprisonment was imposed.

Taking into account the circumstances of the case and the facts of the conviction, the Disciplinary Committee determined that Mr Ross be disqualified for an indefinite period.

Former Kennelhand Mr S Streener

On 15 August 2012 at Newcastle Crown Court, Mr Stephen Streener was convicted of murder and received a custodial sentence of life imprisonment with a recommendation that he serve a minimum of 18 years.

A criminal conviction is a breach of the GBGB Rules of Racing, in particular a breach of Rule 152 (ii).

Taking into account the circumstances of the case and the facts of the conviction, the Disciplinary Committee determined that Mr Streener be warned off for an indefinite period.

2. Belle Vue Stadium – JULI NICKI- Professional Trainer Mr JB Thompson

Professional Trainer James Brian Thompson was found in breach of rule 174(i)(b) of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a post-trial urine sample taken from the greyhound JULI NICKI at Belle Vue Stadium on 2 June 2012 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of 19-noretiocholanolone and 19-norepiandrosterone, which are metabolites of nandrolone.

Mr Thompson had apologised in advance for his non-attendance at the inquiry. Mr Bob Rowe, racing manager at Belle Vue Stadium and Alex McTaggart, area stipendiary steward were present.

The Committee noted that the 'point of registration' sample, taken from JULI NICKI on 24 May 2012 had subsequently been tested by LGC Health Sciences and had also identified the presence of 19-noretiocholanolone and 19-norepiandrosterone.

The Committee received evidence from Dr Higgins, the GBGB's Independent Doping and Medication Adviser, that nandrolone is available as an injectable, long-acting anabolic steroid that will give anabolic activity for several weeks following a single injection.

The Disciplinary Committee noted the written admission by Mr Derek Loughanane from Dublin, Ireland, a former trainer of JULI NICKI, that he had administered Laurabolin (a proprietary product containing nandrolone) as an oestrus suppressant prior to the greyhound being transported to England and producing the 'point of registration' sample.

Although it appeared that nandrolone had been administered to the greyhound in Ireland before coming into Mr Thompson's care, there was no evidence from the papers that Mr Thompson had made any enquiry of the vendor prior to acquiring the greyhound, nor had he requested an elective test. The Committee was of the view that a responsible trainer would be expected to take such a precaution, particularly given the reportedly widespread use of Laurabolin in Ireland.

The Committee pointed out that the GBGB Rules of Racing impose strict liability on the trainer. Having considered the circumstances of the case and the presence of a banned anabolic steroid in the dog's urine, the Committee ordered that Mr Thompson be cautioned and fined £250.

The Committee noted that an advisory notice in the Calendar on 27 July 2012 had urged trainers to satisfy themselves, as far as reasonably practicable, that greyhounds imported into Great Britain are free of substances that could affect performance or welfare. The Director of Regulation was asked to consider following up the notice by circulating all racing managers with a request that they remind trainers of this advice.

3. GREYHOUND TRAINER APPLICATION – Ms K Tobin

The Disciplinary Committee heard an appeal from former professional trainer Ms K Tobin against the Director of Regulation's initial decision not to grant her a greyhound trainer's licence.

The Chairman advised Ms Tobin that the Committee could only overturn the decision of the Director of Regulation if it concluded that the DoR had acted outside the proper exercise of his powers and discretions as set out in the rules of racing.

Ms Tobin was present accompanied by Mr M Foley. Also present were Jack Robinson, area stipendiary steward, Clive Carr, investigating officer, and Richard Beenham, welfare executive.

The brief background to the case involved the cultivation of cannabis at the home address of Ms Tobin in November 2009 and the subsequent conviction of her partner. Ms Tobin was not charged and no further action was taken against her.

The Director of Regulation brought to the Committee's attention concerns regarding record keeping and compliance with the rules of racing in respect of two retired greyhounds for which she was the registered owner.

During the course of the appeal hearing, and in response to questions from the Disciplinary Committee to Ms Tobin and GBGB officials, clarification of various points and some new information came to light which led to the Director of Regulation reversing his initial decision not to grant Ms Tobin a greyhound trainer's licence. The DoR stated that, in the light of these developments, he was able to grant a licence on a conditional basis.

The Disciplinary Committee urged Ms Tobin to familiarise herself with the rules of racing in order to address matters of concern raised with her by the Committee during the course of the appeal hearing.

4. Hall Green Stadium – AVONSIDE DEMANDA - Professional Trainer Mr CL Andrews

Professional Trainer Craig Andrews was found in breach of rules 152(i), 174(i)(a), 214 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a pre-race urine sample taken from the greyhound AVONSIDE DEMANDA at Hall Green Stadium on 4 June 2012 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of 19 norethisterone and two metabolites of norethisterone namely; 5 α -estran-17 α -ethynyl-3 β , 17 β -diol and 5 β -estran-17 α -ethynyl-3 α , 17 β -diol.

Mr Andrews had been excused from attending the inquiry. Mr Robert Coulthard, racing manager at Hall Green Stadium apologised for his non-attendance. Jack Robinson, area stipendiary steward was present.

AVONSIDE DEMANDA finished fourth in the race in question in a calculated time of 29.71 secs. The local stewards were satisfied with the performance of the greyhound. No unusual betting patterns were reported.

The Committee received evidence from Dr Higgins, Independent Doping and Medication Adviser, that norethisterone is a human hormonal contraceptive permitted for oestrus suppression in greyhound bitches only. This use has been secured through agreement with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate on the grounds that it is under veterinary prescription and with rigorous record keeping. GBGB guidance notes have been issued to this effect.

Dr Higgins also provided written advice that norethisterone is a progestogen derived from nortestosterone and has weak oestrogenic and androgenic properties. He added that no side effects have been reported to indicate the drug has any performance enhancing effects.

The Committee received written evidence that AVONSIDE DEMANDA (a male dog) was kennelled with a greyhound bitch that was prescribed with norethisterone. Mr Andrews stated his belief that an error had occurred in the feeding of the greyhounds by a kennelhand, and that AVONSIDE DEMANDA had consumed the norethisterone tablet that had been intended for his kennel mate.

The Committee heard evidence that a member of the Andrews family, who was involved in the feeding regime, was dealing with a difficult and ultimately tragic family situation around the time of the positive sample, and that this could have led to a lapse in concentration when the dogs were being fed. The Committee accepted that this was a possible explanation in the circumstances.

The Committee heard that Mr Andrews had subsequently taken steps to change his greyhound feeding arrangements in an effort to prevent a recurrence of inadvertent feeding errors.

The rules of racing impose strict liability on the trainer and the Committee found Mr Andrews in breach of the rules. However, taking into account Mr Andrews' good record and the strong personal mitigating factors the Committee ordered that no further action be taken.

5. Oxford Stadium – HONDO COUNTY – former Professional Trainer Mr N Colton

Former professional trainer Nicholas Colton was found in breach of rule 174(i)(b) of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a post-race urine sample taken from the greyhound HONDO COUNTY at Oxford Stadium on 1 June 2012 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of amphetamine.

Mr Colton had given apologies in advance for his non-attendance at the inquiry, as had Gary Baiden, racing manager of Oxford Stadium. Colin Betteridge, area stipendiary steward, and Clive Carr, investigating officer, were present.

HONDO COUNTY finished second in the race in question in a calculated time of 27.24 secs. The racing manager stated that he had no reason to question the performance of the greyhound. No unusual betting patterns were reported.

The Committee heard that the analysis by LGC Health Sciences of a 'point of registration' sample taken from HONDO COUNTY on 14 October 2011 resulted in no prohibited substances being found.

The Disciplinary Committee received evidence from Dr Higgins, Independent Doping and Medication Adviser, who stated that amphetamine is a central nervous system stimulant the effect of which in humans is to increase alertness, energy and excitement. Known as 'speed' amphetamines are Class B schedule 2 drugs. There is no veterinary preparation of amphetamine with a marketing authorisation for dogs.

The Committee noted that no evidence or explanation had come to light to indicate how the prohibited substance had entered the greyhound's system. Mr Colton had been in Ireland in the period leading up to the race in question and had left the kennels in the charge of his staff. He had returned on the eve of the race. Mr Colton had subsequently relinquished his licence and released his staff.

Whilst the Committee could not be satisfied on the balance of probability that Mr Colton or his staff administered amphetamine or had any knowledge of how amphetamine came to be administered or ingested, this greyhound was in Mr Colton's charge and the ultimate responsibility therefore was with him.

Having considered the circumstances of the case and the presence of a banned Class B drug in the dog's urine, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mr Colton be severely reprimanded and fined £750. In fixing the penalty the Committee took into account previous breaches of the rules of racing involving positive samples recorded against Mr Colton.