

Disciplinary Committee Inquiries

The Disciplinary Committee of the GBGB were in attendance at a meeting held on 11 June 2013:

Mr K Salmon (in the chair)
Mr R Woodworth CBE
Mr R Coughlan
Dr AJ Higgins*

(*denotes where Dr Higgins was present in an advisory capacity as Independent Doping & Medication Adviser)

1. APPLICATION – MR B McBRIDE

The Disciplinary Committee heard an application from Bernard McBride for a professional trainer's licence.

On 11 September 2006 Mr McBride was convicted of an offence of causing unnecessary suffering to a greyhound he was transporting from Ireland to Great Britain. For that reason Mr Donnelly, the Director of Regulation, opposed the granting of a licence and referred the matter to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee regards the welfare of racing greyhounds to be of paramount importance and would not authorise any action which might threaten the welfare of racing greyhounds in any way. The Disciplinary Committee shared Mr Donnelly's concerns regarding the 2006 conviction and agreed that, given the nature of the offence, Mr McBride's application should be subjected to the closest scrutiny.

Having said that there were a number of factors which militate in Mr McBride's favour, namely:

1. The offence was committed in 2005.
2. On all the information currently available it seemed that the offence concerned transporting of a dog in a box that was unsatisfactory. The Disciplinary Committee noted that since 2005 the regulations for transporting dogs have been made more stringent.
3. The NGRC was aware of the conviction in 2006 and took no action despite there being a prima facie breach of rules 152 (i) and (ii).
4. On 1 July 2011 Mr McBride appealed to the Disciplinary Committee who refused his application for a professional trainer's licence but agreed that he should be encouraged to apply for a kennel hand's licence.

5. Mr McBride was granted such a licence and has worked as a kennelhand in kennels licensed to Christopher Stringer. It emerged during this application that Mr McBride in fact was solely responsible for the kennel and was effectively acting as a greyhound trainer.
6. Mr McBride produced glowing references from Dave Stow, the racing manager of Swindon, and Karen Blackmore, a veterinary surgeon at Swindon Stadium. The Disciplinary Committee was in no doubt that not only are there no welfare concerns regarding the greyhounds in Mr McBride's care, but that he maintains exemplary welfare standards. This was confirmed by the area stipendiary steward Colin Betteridge and accepted by Mr Donnelly.
7. Apart from the 2005 incident leading to his conviction Mr McBride has an exemplary record.

In all the circumstances, the Disciplinary Committee by a majority (Dr Andrew Higgins dissenting) recommended that Mr McBride be granted a professional trainer's licence subject to any conditions which the Director of Regulation considers necessary.

The Disciplinary Committee was concerned that Mr McBride had been acting as a greyhound trainer whilst holding a kennel hand's licence and recommended that the Director of Regulation investigate this practice as a matter of urgency.

2. APPLICATION – MR I BRADFORD

The Disciplinary Committee heard an application from Ian Bradford for a kennel hand licence. They heard evidence from the Director of Regulation (who did not oppose the application) concerning the background to the case and also heard from Mr Bradford himself. Having heard the application the Disciplinary Committee decided in all the circumstances that they were content for a conditional licence to be granted.

3. APPLICATION – MR G TIGHE

The Disciplinary Committee heard an application from George Tighe for a greyhound trainer's licence.

The application was referred to the Disciplinary Committee because on 12 July 2007 Mr Tighe was disqualified and fined £1,000 for breaches of rules 49 (iv), 152 (i) & (ii), 174 (i) (a), 216 and 217 following a positive test for methylprednisolone.

Mr Donnelly, the Director of Regulation, objected to this application on the basis that Mr Tighe was not a fit and proper person, lacked integrity and had not provided sufficiently supportive references.

He relied on the disqualification on 12 July 2007 pointing out that this was a deliberate breach with implications for greyhound welfare and the integrity of the sport.

The Disciplinary Committee noted Mr Donnelly's reservations and agreed with them. The Disciplinary Committee also noted that Mr Tighe had three other significant breaches recorded against him including the deliberate administration of nandrolone.

The Disciplinary Committee did not consider Mr Tighe to be a person of integrity not least because during the course of this application he deliberately lied regarding the reasons for the non-payment of the £1,000 fine imposed in 2007 but not paid until 26 October 2011

So far as the two references he provided were concerned these did nothing to reassure the Disciplinary Committee that he should be granted a licence.

In all the circumstances the Disciplinary Committee recommended that his application be refused.

4. *Yarmouth Stadium – SPLENDID BLUE – Professional Trainer Mrs E Samuels

Professional Trainer Erica Samuels was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i) (a), 214 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound SPLENDID BLUE at Yarmouth Stadium on 27 February 2013 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of ranitidine; and that she allowed a substance to be administered that could affect the performance and/or well being of the greyhound.

Mrs Samuels was in attendance accompanied by her husband. Marcus Westgate, racing manager of Yarmouth Stadium, and Adrian Smith, area stipendiary steward, were also in attendance.

The Disciplinary Committee noted the opinion of Dr Andrew Higgins (Independent Doping and Medication Adviser) that ranitidine is a histamine H₂ antagonist used to reduce histamine-induced gastric acid production. It is also used to treat stomach ulcers, and inflammation and other conditions of the gastro-intestinal track. Human preparations include Zantac. There is no product containing ranitidine licensed for veterinary use in the UK so the drug must be prescribed under the veterinary cascade. Dr Higgins commented that in his opinion ranitidine was unlikely to affect the performance of a greyhound.

The Disciplinary Committee found that Mrs Samuels had allowed the administration of ranitidine to the greyhound SPLENDID BLUE. They noted that ranitidine had been prescribed to a puppy in her care and accepted that the drug was administered inadvertently. They noted that this was not a deliberate administration of ranitidine and that she made a statement on 18 April 2013 setting out the circumstances of this incident. They also took into account the fact that there was only one previous breach of the GBGB rules of racing recorded against her which related to contaminated feed. However, the breaches under consideration involved a degree of carelessness on her part.

Having considered her explanation together with the circumstances of the case, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mrs Samuels be cautioned and fined £200.

5. *Sittingbourne Stadium – PENNYS PLATE – Professional Trainer Miss M Dennis

Professional Trainer Maria Dennis was found in breach of rules 152 (i), 174 (i)(a), 214 and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound PENNYS PLATE at Sittingbourne Stadium on 16 March 2013 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of cyclizine; and that she allowed a substance to be administered that could affect the performance and/or well being of the greyhound.

Miss Dennis was in attendance and accompanied by her mother Ms Joan Kenney. Lorraine Sams, area stipendiary steward was also in attendance. Jess Packer, racing manager of Sittingbourne Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance.

The Disciplinary Committee noted the opinion of Dr Andrew Higgins (Independent Doping and Medication Adviser) that cyclizine was a sedating antihistamine used in humans to treat, inter alia, nausea, vomiting, some balance disorders and motion sickness. It may cause drowsiness in dogs and could therefore affect the performance of a greyhound.

The Disciplinary Committee found that Miss Dennis had allowed cyclizine to be administered inadvertently to the greyhound PENNYS PLATE. They accepted that this was not a deliberate administration. Miss Dennis's mother Joan Kenney had been prescribed cyclizine for many years and it would appear that on the balance or probability one of these tablets came to be ingested unintentionally by the greyhound PENNYS PLATE. The Disciplinary Committee took into account all of the circumstances, but took the view that this breach arose from Miss Dennis's carelessness.

Having considered her explanation together with the circumstances of the case, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Miss Dennis be cautioned and fined £200.

6. *Newcastle Stadium – NIGHT TIME BOXER – Professional Trainer Mr D Spraggon

Professional Trainer David Spraggon was found in breach of rules 174 (i)(b) and 217 of the GBGB Rules of Racing in that a urine sample taken from the greyhound NIGHT TIME BOXER at Newcastle Stadium on 26 February 2013 was analysed by LGC Health Sciences as containing the presence of 6 α -hydroxy stanozolol, a metabolite of stanozolol.

Mr Spraggon was in attendance. Alex McTaggart, area stipendiary steward, was also in attendance. Paul Twinn, deputy racing manager of Newcastle Stadium, apologised for his non-attendance.

The Disciplinary Committee noted the opinion of Dr Andrew Higgins (Independent Doping and Medication Adviser) that stanozolol is an androgenic anabolic steroid used as a derivative of testosterone. Inter alia it promotes build up of protein and increases erythropoietin production. Stanozolol has been widely abused as a performance enhancing drug and is banned from use in most human and animal sports competition. It is available as tablets for daily oral administration or as a longer acting aqueous suspension for injection.

The greyhound NIGHT TIME BOXER was bought by Kevin Lax from one Donal Brennan of Co. Carlow. Mr Lax asked Mr Spraggon's advice before buying the greyhound and was told he should enquire whether the greyhound had been injected with steroids, which he did only to be assured by Mr Brennan that the dog had not been administered with any improper substances.

A sample taken on 26 February 2013 tested positive for a metabolite of stanozolol. The point of registration sample taken on 17 January 2013 was then tested. That too tested positive for the same metabolite of stanozolol. The Disciplinary Committee was satisfied that on the balance of probabilities that stanozolol was administered in Ireland prior to Mr Lax buying the dog and that Mr Lax and Mr Spraggon had made all reasonable enquiries prior to purchase.

Some of the GBGB Rules of Racing impose strict liability on the trainer or registered sales agent. Having considered his explanation together with the circumstances of the case, the Disciplinary Committee ordered that Mr Spraggon be cautioned.