

23 February 2024

DECISION

GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA

and

PAULETTE WEBB

- Date of hearing:** 15 February 2024
- Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson) and Ms Judy Bourke.
- Appearances:** Mr Timothy Brook appeared on behalf of the Stewards.
Ms Paulette Webb did not attend the hearing.
- Charges:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule (“GAR”) 28 states:
A registered person must ensure that any greyhound under the person's care, custody or control does not stray onto any private property without the permission of the owner or occupier of that property, or stray onto any public place.
- GAR 156(h) states:
An offence is committed if a person (including an official):
(h) disobeys or fails to comply with a lawful order of a Controlling Body, the Stewards, or another person authorised by a Controlling Body with official duties in relation to greyhound racing.
- GAR 164(b) states:
An offence is committed if a person (including an official):
(b) refuses or fails to attend or to give evidence at an inquiry (or at any other disciplinary process, hearing or appeal proceeding) or produce a document or other thing in relation to an investigation, examination, test or inquiry (or other disciplinary process, hearing or appeal proceeding) pursuant to the Rules when directed by a Controlling Body, the Stewards, or another authorised person.

Particulars:

Charge 1: GAR 28

1. You were, at all relevant times, an owner registered with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 162148) and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Local Racing Rules.
2. You were, at all relevant times, the owner of greyhound "Madame Pookie" (VHHUD) which was kennelled at your address in Tennyson, Victoria.
3. Madame Pookie was found straying in the Bendigo area on the 25 May 2022.
4. Madame Pookie was taken to the Bendigo Animal Relief Centre on 25 May 2022.

Charge 2: GAR 156(h)

1. You were registered as an owner with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 162148) until 7 December 2022
2. Whilst not registered by a Controlling Body, you were a person by your position or conduct who is connected in some way to greyhound racing and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Local Racing Rules.
3. On 2 February 2023 you were served a lawful order by Investigative Stewards that "You are required to contact Investigative Steward Chris Gawne to arrange a suitable date and time to participate in a phone inquiry concerning greyhound Madame Pookie (VHHUD) entering Bendigo Animal Relief Centre on 25 May 2022".
4. You were to comply with the lawful order by 5pm on 8 February 2023.
5. You failed to comply with that lawful order to provide a suitable time and date for an inquiry. You did not attempt to make any contact with the Investigative Steward as requested.

Charge 3: GAR 164(b)

1. You were registered as an owner with Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) (Member No. 162148) until 7 December 2022
2. Whilst not registered by a Controlling Body, you were a person by your position or conduct who is connected in some way to greyhound racing and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules and Local Racing Rules.
3. You have refused or failed to attend or to give evidence at an inquiry pursuant to the rules when directed by a Steward, in that:
 - (a) On 16 February 2023, Investigative Stewards served a Notice of Inquiry on you at your registered email address for you to attend an inquiry (via telephone) on 21 February 2023.
 - (b) On 21 February 2023, you failed to attend (via telephone) the scheduled inquiry with Investigative Stewards or to inform them of your non-attendance.

Pleas: Not Guilty

DECISION

Ms Paulette Webb has been charged by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) Stewards with three offences. Whilst there has been, at least initially, some contact made by Ms Webb with the Registry, she effectively made it clear that she had no interest in these proceedings and intended to take no part in them. Nevertheless, she has been advised, as best as can be done, of matters such as the hearing date, time and the like. She was a person, being a registered greyhound owner, bound by the Rules.

Ultimately, the case against her proceeded, in her absence, on 15 February 2024. We would repeat that advice as to this had been directed to her. Similarly, relevant correspondence and documents had been emailed to her known email address.

The bottom line is that we find the three charges against her have been proven. We are comfortably satisfied in that regard.

Mr Timothy Brook presented the case on behalf of the Stewards. Charge 1 involved the fact that the dog, "Madame Pookie", of which Ms Webb was the registered owner, was found straying in the Bendigo area on 25 May 2022. It was taken to the Bendigo Animal Relief Centre. The greyhound straying is a breach of Greyhounds Australasia Rule ("GAR") 28.

Charge 2 is that Ms Webb was requested by the Stewards to arrange a suitable time and date in order to participate in the phone inquiry concerning the above. She was to do this by 5pm on 8 February 2023. She failed to comply with this lawful order. This is a breach of GAR 156(h).

Charge 3 concerns a breach of GAR 164(b). This concerns her failure to attend a telephone inquiry on 21 February 2023. Ms Webb did not advise Stewards that she would not be attending.

Thus, what started off as being a comparatively minor offence involving a straying greyhound (which had apparently jumped a fence) escalated into two major Rule breaches. The conduct of registered owners can be important and to simply ignore or otherwise fail to comply with directions of the Stewards and the Rules is, as stated, a significant offence. To do it twice, in quick succession, and to take no part in subsequent proceedings warrants major penalties.

We have had regard to the penalties imposed in the list of like cases provided by the Stewards.

Bearing all of the above in mind, we impose the penalties submitted by Mr Brook as follows:

Charge 1: \$250 fine.

Charge 2: six months disqualification.

Charge 3: 18 months disqualification.

The penalty imposed on Charge 2 is concurrent with the penalty imposed on Charge 3.

Thus, the bottom line is that Ms Webb is fined the sum of \$250 and disqualified for a period of 18 months to commence immediately.

Kathleen Scully
Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal