

7 March 2024

## **DECISION**

### **GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

### **TONY INTERLIGI**

- Date of hearing:** 27 February 2024
- Panel:** Judge Marilyn Harbison (Deputy Chairperson) and Ms Maree Payne.
- Appearances:** Mr Timothy Brook appeared on behalf of the Stewards.  
Mr Tony Interligi represented himself.
- Charge:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule ("GAR") 141(1) states:  
(1) The owner, trainer or other person in charge of a greyhound:  
(a) nominated to compete in an Event;  
(b) presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or  
(c) presented for any test or examination for the purpose of a stand-down period being varied or revoked,  
must present the greyhound free of any prohibited substance.
- GAR 151(3) states:  
(3) Each record of treatment kept in accordance with this rule must be made by midnight on the day on which the treatment was given, and, as a minimum requirement, include the following information:  
(a) the name of the greyhound;  
(b) the date and time of administration of the treatment;  
(c) the name of the treatment (brand name or active constituent);  
(d) the route of administration;  
(e) the amount given; and  
(f) the name and signature of the person or persons administering and/or authorising the treatment.

For the purpose of subrule (3), “day” means the 24-hour period from 12.00am to 11.59pm on any calendar day.

**Particulars:**

**Charge 1: GAR 141(1)**

1. You are, and were at all relevant times, a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.

2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Inter Cyborg”.

3. Inter Cyborg was nominated to compete in Race 6, healesville.grv.org.au, Grade 5 T3, conducted by the Healesville Greyhound Racing Association at Healesville on 16 June 2023 (the Event).

4. On 16 June 2023, you presented “Inter Cyborg” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A post-race sample of blood was taken from “Inter Cyborg” at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Meloxicam was detected in the Sample.

**Charge 1: GAR 151(3)**

1. You are, and were at all relevant times, a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria and a person bound by the Greyhound Racing Victoria Rules of Racing.

2. On 13 July 2023, you presented treatment records for inspection, upon request from GRV Assistant Steward James Jeffery, a person authorised by the Controlling Body, for greyhounds for which you were the responsible person at the relevant time.

3. You did fail to record the minimum requirements for treatments recorded by you, namely those recorded in a notebook, in that you:

- (a) failed to record the time of administration of the treatment; and/or
- (b) failed to record the name of the treatment by brand name or active constituent; and/or
- (c) failed to record the route of administration of the treatment; and/or
- (d) failed to record the amount of the treatment given; and/or
- (e) failed to record the signature of person or persons administering and/or authorising the treatment.

**Pleas:** Guilty

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## **DECISION**

1. Mr Tony Interligi has been a greyhound trainer for 13 years. He is the trainer of the greyhound, "Inter Cyborg". This dog raced at Healesville on 16 June 2023 and won. After the race, a blood sample was taken from the dog and was found to contain meloxicam. Meloxicam is a therapeutic substance under the Rules and must not be present in a dog participating in a race. It is an analgesic and an anti-inflammatory, and has a positive effect on performance, as it creates an artificially pain free state.
2. There are over 70 veterinary products containing meloxicam, mostly prescription products, but some over-the-counter products as well. When the Stewards inspected Mr Interligi's kennels on 13 July 2023, they could find no substance containing meloxicam. There was nothing in its treatment record suggesting that the dog had been administered meloxicam.
3. Mr Interligi told the Stewards that he had regularly fed knackery meat from the Dandenong West Pet Supplies store to his greyhounds over the past nine years without incident. In his report, Dr Steven Karamatic expressed the view that the knackery meat was a potential source of meloxicam. If a dog eats knackery meat with meloxicam residue present, it could produce a positive swab for up to five days after eating that meat, and even longer if the dog had been fed multiple times with food containing meloxicam as it could accumulate within the dog's system.
4. When the Stewards interviewed Mr Interligi at his kennels on 13 July 2023, he said that he was not familiar with this drug and could give no explanation as to how it had come to be in the dog's system. However, when he was later questioned at the preliminary inquiry he considered that it was possible that he had mixed up meloxicam tablets with other tablets prescribed by the vet to another dog. He explained that he had been treating Inter

Cyborg with methionine tablets, but that he had subsequently realised that he had been prescribed meloxicam for another dog who was booked for desexing. He said that he sometimes put tablets in his pocket and it was sometimes hard to remember what dog took what tablet. He may have become confused and fed meloxicam to Inter Cyborg by mistake, thinking that it was methionine.

5. Mr Interligi told the preliminary inquiry that he had not seen any of the warnings on the use of knackery meat published online by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) in 2016 and 2020, as he does not have access to the Internet.
6. During the course of the Stewards investigation into the administration, it became apparent that Mr Interligi’s treatment records were incomplete. During the preliminary inquiry, the Chairman undertook a detailed examination of those records, pointing out some obvious inadequacies. As one example, in many instances Mr Interligi had not recorded the name of the substance given to his dogs, the date it was administered, or the name of the dog treated. Mr Interligi does not have a computer and had prepared scant information in the treatment records in many respects. He has thus also been charged with a second offence of failing to keep proper treatment records. In this case it is not said that there were no records at all, but rather that the records kept were not accurate or complete.
7. Mr Interligi has pleaded guilty to each of these charges. He has told us the following matters which we take into account in setting penalties for each charge.
8. Firstly, we were told that he has been fined previously for a presentation offence. This offence occurred, in August 2016 and related to the presence of a minute amount of piroxicam, which was traced to worming tablets innocently administered to a greyhound. The Stewards did not place significant weight on this prior history.
9. Mr Interligi told us that he had a very bad year last year with a lot of difficult issues having to be juggled at once. He described himself as “not being in a good headspace”. He had originally kept a greyhound as a pet, suggested as therapy by his doctor, but had subsequently entered the world of greyhound racing without any clear idea of the financial obligations this would impose on him. He described his financial woes as arising out of the fact that he now had nine greyhounds. These dogs were not able to race as they were tier 3 dogs and he did not know what to do with them. They could not be sold and were continuing to cost him money in feeding, at a time when he had no way of rehoming them through the Greyhound Adoption Program (“GAP”) to pet homes. He was forced to borrow over \$20,000 to continue feeding them, and he has no source of income.

10. Mr Interligi told us that he had great problems keeping up with GRV notices of rule changes from GRV, particularly because the notices generally come by email, not mail. It is our view that Mr Interligi urgently needs to organise an effective method of finding out about changes to the Rules, given that the onus of knowing about Rule changes is on the participants. Lack of access to a computer is no excuse for failure to comply with the Rules. Changes will continue to be required in the future, because the community's expectations have changed in relation to greyhound racing. The community now expects high standards of professionalism and this must necessarily involve higher standards in keeping records and in administration of substances to greyhounds.
  11. On Charge 1, we impose a four month suspension, which is wholly suspended for 12 months. In addition, there is a fine of \$1,500, with \$1,000 suspended for 12 months. This means an effective fine of \$500 providing that Mr Interligi does not breach the terms of his suspension.
  12. On Charge 2, we impose a \$100 fine.
  13. In addition, Inter Cyborg is disqualified from Race 6 at Healesville on 16 June 2023 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.
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Kathleen Scully  
Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal