

Stewards' Report

Date: Tuesday, 16 July 2024
Panel: Mr S Fletcher
Person: Mr George Hagicostas
Rule: GAR 83(2)(a)
Charges: Mr George Hagicostas presented the greyhound Irish Spice to compete in Race 3 at the Ipswich Greyhound Racing Club on 3 November 2017 when it was not free of a prohibited substance
Substance: Amphetamine and Methamphetamine
Penalty: Nine (9) month disqualification

On 16 July 2024, the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards concluded an inquiry into analysts' findings that the permanently banned prohibited substances Amphetamine and Methamphetamine were detected in a post-race urine sample collected from the greyhound Irish Spice when it competed in, and won, Race 3 at the Ipswich Greyhound Racing Club on 3 November 2017.

Evidence was tendered by Mr George Hagicostas as the licensed trainer of the greyhound Irish Spice at the relevant time, together with Mrs Angela Hagicostas, during the inquiry.

After considering all of the evidence, Stewards issued a charge pursuant to Greyhounds Australasia Rule 83(2)(a), which provides:

The owner, trainer or other person in charge of a greyhound, nominated to compete in an Event, shall present the greyhound free of any prohibited substance.

The specifics of the charge were as follows:

That Mr George Hagicostas, as the trainer of the greyhound Irish Spice, did present that greyhound to compete in Race 3 at the Ipswich Greyhound Racing Club on 3 November 2017 with prohibited substances in its system, namely Amphetamine and Methamphetamine, as detected by the Racing Science Centre and confirmed by Racing Analytical Services Limited in the post-race urine sample collected from the greyhound on 3 November 2017.

Mr Hagicostas entered a plea of not guilty to the charge and made further submissions in respect of his plea.

Stewards considered Mr Hagicostas' further submissions and subsequently found the charge proven, with Mr Hagicostas then providing submissions in respect of penalty.

In determining the matter of penalty, Stewards considered the following:

- Mr Hagicostas' plea of not guilty to the charge;
- Mr Hagicostas' time in the greyhound racing industry as a trainer, being approximately forty-two (42) years;
- Mr Hagicostas' disciplinary history, noting one (1) prior breach of the same rule;
- Mr Hagicostas' personal circumstances, and his ongoing health issues;
- the nature of the permanently banned prohibited substance, Amphetamine and Methamphetamine, noting that the substances are a permanently banned prohibited substance across all codes of racing and therefore a clear message needs to be sent to the industry that any breach involving permanently banned prohibited substances is serious and cannot be tolerated;
- the need to maintain the integrity of greyhound racing and to ensure a level playing field for all participants;
- the need for both specific deterrence to Mr Hagicostas and general deterrence to the wider industry; and
- relevant penalty precedents;

Accordingly, the Stewards imposed a penalty of a nine (9) month disqualification effective from 17 July 2024.

Acting under the provisions of Greyhounds Australasia Rule 83(4), Stewards directed that Irish Spice be disqualified from Race 3 at the Ipswich Greyhound Racing Club on 3 November 2017 (1st place).

Stewards ordered that the placings be amended accordingly and Mr Hagicostas was advised that all prizemoney associated with this event must be returned to Racing Queensland.

Mr Hagicostas was advised of his right to a review of the decision.