

**DECISION ON AN INTERNAL REVIEW APPLICATION UNDER
SECTION 91 OF THE *GREYHOUND RACING ACT 2017***

Matters for determination	Decision dated 28 March 2023
Internal review decision date	12 April 2023
Internal review decision by	Mr Brenton (Alby) TAYLOR Chief Commissioner, GWIC
Internal review decision summary	To confirm the original decision/s imposed by the Stewards on 28 March 2023.

REASONS FOR DECISION

1. These are the reasons for the decision following an application by Ms Crystal Pillar (“**Ms Pillar**”) for internal review under the *Greyhound Racing Act 2017* (“**Act**”) of a decision of a Steward/s. The original decision was to suspend Ms Pillar on an interim basis for a breach of Rule 169(5)(c).
2. This is a reviewable decision within the meaning of section 91(1) of the Act. I confirm I was not involved in making the original decision, and I am a qualified person in accordance with section 91(5) of the Act. I lastly confirm I have dealt with this application for review.
3. Under section 91(7) of the Act, an internal reviewer is empowered to:
 - Confirm the reviewable decision the subject of the application; or
 - Vary the reviewable decision; or
 - Revoke the reviewable decision.

Background

4. On the 31 March 2023, Ms Pillar formally requested a review of a decision of GWIC’s Stewards to suspend her on an interim basis due to actions and conduct at the Richmond Greyhound Track on the 17 March 2023 and thereafter.
5. Ms Pillar is registered with GWIC as an Owner Trainer, and has held such registration since the 21 July 2011. In addition, Ms Pillar has a further decade of experience within the greyhound racing industry, having first been registered as an Attendant on the 6 September 2001.
6. On the 17 March 2023, Ms Pillar had a dog entered in Race 12 at the Richmond Greyhound Track (“**Richmond**”), namely “Pillar to Post” (“**Greyhound**”), which jumped from box 2, in a 320 metre race.

7. A review of the video replay of the race indicates that the Greyhound jumped and got away well, as commented upon by the race caller. Approaching the back turn, the Greyhound appears to collide with other dogs affecting her progress. I note the Stewards Report for this race states in relation to the Greyhound:

“Not started for 180 days, trainer advised the greyhound had a seasonal spell.

Came together with another runner at the end of the back straight, losing momentum. Came together with another runner through the turn out of the back straight, losing momentum and tailing off. Underwent a post race veterinary examination revealing no apparent injury”.

8. By the time the Greyhound entered the home straight, the dog in my estimation, from reviewing a video of the race, was approximately 10 lengths behind the leading two dogs. Moreover, after all dogs had past the winning post, the Greyhound was then some 40 to 50 metres behind the dog which finished second-last in the race.
9. Due to the fact that the Greyhound, in the race in question, finished the race so poorly, and finished so distant from the remainder of the field, it was beholden upon the Stewards to make inquiries in relation to the performance of the dog, such that a reasonable person placing a bet on the Greyhound in this race, or its next race, could be satisfied that all things being equal, the Greyhound was and would be competitive in racing. This in my view, is the clear justification for imposing the obligation on Ms Pillar to attend the Stewards Room post-race to discuss the performance of the Greyhound.
10. Following the completion of Race 12 the Stewards directed GWIC’s On Track Veterinarian, Dr Fiona Pinder (“**Dr Pinder**”) to undertake a post-race veterinary inspection of the Greyhound. During this examination, Dr Pinder did not identify any injury to the Greyhound which would explain the poor performance of the dog.
11. Whilst undertaking her examination, there was a conversation between Dr Pinder and Ms Pillar. In a recorded interview between Dr Pinder and GWIC’s Stewards Paul Van Gestel (“**Van Gestel**”) and Emma MacKenzie (“**MacKenzie**”) conducted on the 24 March 2023, Dr Pinder stated that during her post-race examination of the Greyhound and during her conversation with Ms Pillar, that Pillar indicated the examination was ‘*pointless and the dog wasn’t injured*’. Dr Pinder, an experienced greyhound veterinarian, conversationally opined during her examination of the Greyhound, that in her experience, as the dog had not raced for approximately six months, that perhaps the dog was not fully fit yet.
12. Ms Pillar seemingly took offence to this comment from Dr Pinder. Pillar then began shouting and swearing at Dr Pinder. Dr Pinder attempted to diffuse the situation, but her attempts proved unsuccessful. During this conversation, Ms Pillar is alleged to have been abusive towards Dr Pinder, using profanities and swearing. At least part of this conversation was overheard and witnessed by GWIC Steward, Sean Welsford (“**Welsford**”).
13. Dr Pinder then completed her examination and left the room. MacKenzie at this time entered the Veterinary Examination room joining Ms Pillar and Welsford. MacKenzie then tried briefly to calm situation, again without success.

14. About 15 minutes later, MacKenzie directed Ms Pillar to remain at the racetrack and attend the Stewards Office to participate in a video review of the race to consider the performance of the Greyhound in race 12. Ms Pillar indicated her refusal to stay and commenced shouting at MacKenzie, using inappropriate language.
15. Shortly after this Van Gestel attended the car park of the racetrack where Ms Pillar was loading the Greyhound into her car. Van Gestel again issued a reasonable direction to Ms Pillar to attend the Stewards Room for a post-race review of the performance of Pillar to Post, to which Ms Pillar again refused. Again, Ms Pillar began shouting and using inappropriate language this time towards Van Gestel. Van Gestel made an audio recording of part of this conversation before Ms Pillar left the track, driving off in her motor vehicle.
16. It requires noting, that the Greyhound on the 17 March 2023, was one day short of requiring a 'Return to Racing' mandatory race trial in accordance with Rule 135 of the NSW Greyhound Racing Rules, which states:

“135 Restriction on racing if unraced for more than six months

A *greyhound* which has not competed in an *Event* for greater than six months cannot be *nominated* for an *Event* until:

- (a) it passes an approved examination conducted by a *veterinarian*; and
- (b) it completes a *satisfactory trial* pursuant to rule 132”.

Knowing this, prior to the commencement of the race meeting, Van Gestel formally requested Dr Pinder to undertake a more thorough examination of the Greyhound prior to kennelling. Dr Pinder advised that her examination unearthed no obvious issues or injuries.

17. Following this incident at Richmond, Ms Pillar then used the Facebook social media platform to post offensive and derogatory public comments towards GWIC and its personnel.

Internal Review Application

18. Ms Pillar has now applied for an internal review of the original decision of the Stewards, that is the decision to impose a suspension on an interim basis until Ms Pillar's substantive matter is dealt with by the Commission.
19. The internal review has been conducted on the papers and other related materials including audio and video recordings.
20. As the internal reviewer, I have had regard to all the evidence considered by the Stewards who considered this matter following the Race meeting. I have referenced the following materials including:
 - An audio recording of an interview between Dr Pinder and GWIC Stewards;
 - A video recording of Race 12 at Richmond on the 17 March 2023;
 - An audio recording of an interaction between Ms Pillar and Van Gestel on the 17 March 2023 at Richmond;
 - A copy of Ms Pillar's Licence history from the Ozchase database;

- A copy of Ms Pillar's disciplinary history from the Ozchase database. I note Ms Pillar has a prior relevant antecedent (of the 5 February 2020) for breaching then Rule 86(o) for swearing at a GWIC Official, being a Veterinarian;
- Copies of a Facebook post from the account of "Crissy Pillar" posted on or about the 17 March 2023 referencing this matter;
- Copies of email statements pertaining to this matter from Stewards Van Gestel, MacKenzie and Welsford;
- Written submission made by Ms Pillar by email to GWIC Chief Steward Troy Vassallo on the 23 March 2023; and
- Written submissions made by Ms Pillar in her application to GWIC for an internal review of this matter dated 31 March 2023.

Decision

21. Ms Pillar seeks a review of a Steward's decision made on the 28 March 2023 to impose an interim suspension upon her by reason of her behaviour on and following the 28 March 2023 under Rule 169(5)(c) ("**The Decision**").
22. I have had regard to all the evidence, as itemised at paragraph 20.
23. In determining the matter as an Internal Review under Section 91 of the Act, I must consider the reviewable decision under the Act. The decision I consider reviewable in this instance is the decision of the Stewards, to issue an interim suspension upon Ms Pillar pending the finalisation of the Commission's inquiry into the events of 17 March 2023, and related matters which followed the initial events.
24. In coming to my decision, whilst aware of the social media posts made by Ms Pillar, I have not had regard for them in my decision-making process, as these matters may themselves be the subject of a future review application, dependant on the outcome of any future disciplinary hearings.
25. Rather, I have focussed on the fact that participation in sport, in this case, the sport of greyhound racing is a privilege and not a right. The requests made on multiple occasions by the GWIC Stewards for Ms Pillar to attend a meeting to review the performance of the Greyhound in Race 12 at Richmond on the 17 March 2023 was reasonable in all the circumstances. It was incumbent upon the Stewards to undertake such a review as they have an obligation to properly inquire into racing matters. In this instance, the Stewards were acting well within their powers and a greyhound that performs poorly will almost always be the subject of inquiries from stewards. This is an important function of stewards, and if trainers in Ms Pillar's situation are unwilling to participate in these processes, it has the ability to undermine matters of racing integrity.

26. In this instance, Ms Pillar's refusal to attend an inquiry is compounded by her inappropriate behaviour at the racetrack. Abuse of race officials, even to the extent of these allegations, cannot be tolerated.
27. In refusing to attend the Stewards Room to consider these matters and review the race performance of the Greyhound, Ms Pillar in my view has demonstrated that she is not a person who can appropriately conduct herself at race meetings in instances that are relatively usual for a trainer who has had a greyhound perform poorly. In failing to accede to the reasonable request of the Stewards to attend a post-race review, Ms Pillar in my view, has chosen to albeit temporarily remove herself from the responsibilities expected of a trainer.
28. I am only concerned with the suspension imposed on an interim basis. I note that should Ms Pillar face any substantive disciplinary action that this will be done expeditiously. The Commission's disciplinary framework is designed to be protective in nature. When a trainer conducts themselves inappropriately by abusing officials and who refuses to participate in reasonable inquiry processes at race meetings, immediate and interim action is in my view the only appropriate course to protect the industry. This is what was done by stewards in imposing the interim suspension.
29. Considering all the evidence and the submissions made by Ms Pillar, I am satisfied the Stewards have made a correct decision in determining to issue Ms Pillar with an interim suspension.
30. In accordance with section 91(7)(a) of the Act, I confirm the original decision imposed by the Stewards on 28 March 2023.



Brenton (Alby) Taylor
Chief Commissioner