3 February 2025

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**ROCKY CRISAFI**

**Date of hearing:** 30 January 2025

**Date of Decision:** 30 January 2025

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Ms Heidi Keighran.

**Appearances:** Mr Anthony Pearce appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Rocky Crisafi 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.

**Particulars of charge:** 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 “Ruben Rhode”.

3. Ruben Rhode was nominated to compete in Race 5, SB SANDOWN CUP THIS FRIDAY, Mixed 6/7, conducted by the Sandown Park Greyhound Racing Club at Sandown on 20 May 2024(the Event).

4. On 20 May 2024, you presented Ruben Rhode at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A pre-race sample of urine was taken from “Ruben Rhode” at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Betamethasone was detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Rocky Crisafi is a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) and bound by the Greyhound Australasia Rules (“GAR”). He has been licensed for approximately 50 years.

Mr Crisafi has been charged with breaching GAR 141(1), which is known as a presentation charge. Mr Crisafi is the trainer of the greyhound, “Ruben Rhode”. The greyhound was nominated to compete in Race 5 at Sandown on 20 May 2024. The greyhound was presented at the event not free of a prohibited substance, given that a pre-race sample of urine detected the prohibited substance, betamethasone.

Mr Crisafi pleaded guilty to the charge.

In a report dated 27 August 2024, GRV Chief Veterinarian, Dr Steven Karamatic, reported that the finding of betamethasone in the sample confirmed the presence of a prohibited substance. Betamethasone is capable of affecting the condition, behaviour or performance of a greyhound, and any effect on performance is more likely to be positive by producing an artificially pain free state. Dr Karamatic said that betamethasone can be ingested and may be used as topical treatment for skin disease in humans and so there is a risk of inadvertent exposure. He referred to the warnings provided to participants in the industry as to personal medications and the risks involved with the feeding of knackery meat.

On 9 July 2024, a kennel inspection was conducted at Mr Crisafi’s property. He cooperated with the inspection. Mr Crisafi could identify with the substance. He said that he was prescribed a cream, which may contain the ingredient betamethasone for a medical condition. The cream was produced to the Stewards. On 11 July 2024, in an interview before the Stewards, Mr Crisafi was informed that GRV had received a certificate of analysis from Racing Analytical Services Limited (“RASL”) confirming the presence of the prohibited substance, betamethasone. The seals were intact, and the samples arrived in good condition. There was also a letter and referral document from Racing Science Centre confirming the presence of betamethasone. Mr Crisafi said that his doctor prescribed a cream for his condition, to be applied twice per day. He was washing his hands after using the cream, but said that he did not realise that he also should have been wearing gloves. He said he did not realise that washing his hands was not good enough. He said that he was devastated and embarrassed. He has been in the industry for approximately 50 years, and this was only his second positive swab. As a result of this incident, he no longer trains greyhounds, but would like to obtain a few pups to maintain his interest in the industry.

In imposing a penalty, we take into account Mr Crisafi’s guilty plea, his cooperation with the Stewards and the importance of general and specific deterrence. We also acknowledge the importance of maintaining a level playing field by having a drug free industry. We take into account penalties in recent cases as a guide. We acknowledge the submissions of the Stewards in relation to penalty.

In all the circumstances, we impose a penalty of a fine of $1,500, with $500 suspended for 24 months and a three month suspension, wholly suspended for 24 months. The suspension and $500 fine will only be activated if a relevant offence is committed during the next 24 months.

In addition, “Ruben Rhode” is disqualified from Race 5 at Sandown on 20 May 2024 and the finishing order is amended accordingly.

Kathleen Scully

Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal