

RP GREYHOUNDS

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▶▶ MAIN MEETING Shelbourne Park 114 ▶▶ OTHER OPENS Reading, Perry Barr, Belle Vue, Henlow ▶▶ BETTING Irish Derby 110

United man Watkins is new GBGB chief

By Paul Brown

MAURICE WATKINS, the high-profile and high-powered solicitor famous as a director of Manchester United, was yesterday announced as the inaugural chairman of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain which is due to come into operation early next year.

The appointment of Watkins, announced by Lord Donoghue, chairman of the Greyhound Racing Transition Committee overseeing the recommendations in his major review of last year, represents a clean break from the past and will raise eyebrows that such an imposing figure could be attracted.

Watkins also holds various other positions, mainly in the sporting arena, and most recently was involved in the selection of the new franchises in Rugby's Super League through his role as a member of the five-strong Rugby Football League board.

He said yesterday: "I've always been interested in the way all sports are run, and my work brings me into contact with many of them. I'm looking forward to being in at the beginning of a new challenge and facing some interesting issues.

"There are a lot of stakeholders in greyhound racing and understanding them all will be very important, so I'll be meeting people and getting to different venues, learning the fundamentals, as quickly as possible.

"Greyhound racing is still the third largest spectator sport in Britain, and I'll be looking to drive the sport forward through consensus with my fellow new directors. I've met both before and I'm sure we'll work well together. I'll be spending the next



Lord Donoghue: "It is a great sport... and deserves the best leadership"

few week looking at the details of the sport in depth, and should be in place as chairman at the beginning of September."

As an independent chairman, Watkins, who says he has attended Belle Vue, effectively his local track, will oversee a new structure embracing the current responsibilities of the British Greyhound Racing Board and National Greyhound Racing Club, whose current executives have missed out on the position of full-time chief executive of the new GBGB.

Instead, that role goes to Ian Taylor, most recently chief executive of London Irish rugby club having previously fulfilled the same role for sportscotland, the national agency for sport north of the border.

Taylor had won Olympic gold for Great Britain at Seoul in 1988 as the goalkeeper of the successful

hockey team.

"I'm a Bromsgrove lad so I used to go to the Birmingham tracks in the old days," he said yesterday, "and at London Irish we used to share Reading's car park so I had a close relation with them.

"It's all very exciting landing the new post. I start full time next week, but I'm still a bit in limbo at present. We're still on the search for offices at the moment, although I understand we're close to getting them.

"For me, the first question will be how to operate without interfering with the good work already in place in greyhound racing. I'll be doing a lot of preparation and a lot of listening. Obviously a lot of greyhound tracks are attractive real estate options, but I'll be looking to work things out with all bodies."

The other position filled yesterday was that of chairman of the Greyhound Regulatory Board, which will fulfil many of the current functions of the NGRC while maintaining independence within the GBGB structure.

This goes to Dr Ian Reynolds, who qualified as a veterinary surgeon in 1975 and is currently non-executive chairman of the Meat Hygiene Service and non-executive deputy chairman of the Foods Standards Agency.

Reynold was also looking forward to his new position yesterday. "I'm very excited at the prospect," he said. "I haven't earned a living as a vet for many years, but I did used to cover for the track vet at Reading.

"There are three factors that attracted me to the position. Firstly the regulatory challenge - that's been my background for quite a while - secondly with my

veterinary background it should be interesting and, thirdly, it's just such a worthwhile sport. It's a tremendous spectacle and I'm sure it will have its day again."

Welcoming the appointments, Lord Donoghue said: "I and my colleagues on the Greyhound Racing Transition Committee are delighted to have such a strong team in place to lead greyhound racing and the Greyhound Board of Great Britain into the future.

"It is a great sport and its new governance and regulatory structure deserves the best leadership, which I am confident these appointments will provide."

BGRB chairman David Lipsey said: "I am delighted that the Transition Committee has attracted and secured such high-calibre and well-qualified candidates for these three pivotal positions in the GBGB. I have every confidence that their vast combined experience will be of enormous benefit to greyhound racing, particularly when complemented by a first-class team of hard-working, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff at the BGRB and NGRC."

An issue is that none of the three appointees hold any significant experience of the sport, and will face plenty of people trying to curry favour. That said, it also means they arrive with no baggage, and can take a fresh look at trying to secure a long-term future for a sport knocked sideways by Walthamstow's current predicament.

Donoghue's blueprint is designed to sweep away all the infighting between promoters, BGRB and NGRC, and instead offer the sport mature and effective leadership when it really needs it.

Campaign march set for next week



FOLLOWING directives from the local police, the planned march of the Save Our Stow (SOS) campaign from Walthamstow Stadium on Saturday week - the scheduled last meeting there - will leave the track at noon, and not 2pm as proposed, writes Jim Austin.

It will then head for the town square, when there will be a rally and speeches from the consortium seeking to salvage the flagship track, plus, it is hoped, reaction from council leaders.

Meanwhile, campaign leader Ricky Holloway is urging all owners, kennelhands and trainers to attend Walthamstow tonight.

"There'll be a 10-15 minute demonstration between racing

when we must unite in the cause of Walthamstow, and greyhound stadia in general," he said.

Holloway and other industry figures again featured on radio and TV on Tuesday.

He said: "There was also a protest by a number of trainers at Wimbledon's Puppy Derby meeting on Tuesday (pictured, above), and we thank them for their support.

"Betfair Radio also highlighted our plight on their regular Tuesday show, as did Radio London, who sent reporters down to the Stow on the night."

▶▶ Organisers of the SOS campaign have launched a website - saveourstow.co.uk.

Cleenas to go for third Select

CLEENAS LADY was yesterday given the go-ahead to seek an unprecedented third straight Betfred Select Stakes victory when the Greyhound Writers' Association members voted unanimously to allot Matt Dartnall's bitch a place in the prestigious one-off at Nottingham on August 19.

The rest of the Select Stakes

field will comprise litter brothers Farloe Reason and Ninja Jamie, Barnfield On Air (m), Droopys Carvalho (w) and Bubbly Totti (w).

The draw takes place live on SIS a week today.

Select Stakes

Betfred: 7-4 Barnfield On Air, 11-4 Farloe Reason, 7-2 Ninja Jamie, 4 Droopys Carvalho, 10 Bubbly Totti, 14 Cleenas Lady

THREE TIMES
A LADY???