

VIETNAM – THE ISSUES (TECHNICAL & OPERATIONAL)

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INTRODUCTION.

The introduction of a new sport that includes betting options to a country that outwardly discourages gambling raised many Technical and Operational issues all of which needed to be treated in a professional and responsible manner.

The integrity of the sport remained paramount throughout this process.

This paper will detail some of the major technical and operational issues:

RULES & REGULATIONS

Greyhound racing in Vietnam was to be conducted to international standards. In that regard Australian Rules & Regulations formed the basis of the Vietnam Racing Rules, given that the Vietnam track system was modeled on Australia ie: 8 dog fields, inside mechanical lure and a catching pen.

The Victorian Racing Rules and Regulations were selected as those for modeling.

The Vietnam Model is:

*DOG STATUTE
VIETNAM RULES OF RACING – VRR
VIETNAM TOTALISATOR RULES – VTR*

Under the Vietnam Model only the Dog Statute (Greyhound Act) needed to be approved by the Peoples Committee.

The Rules and Regulations are lodged with the Greyhound Review Board and also the People's Committee.

The major modifications accommodated for Vietnam were:

RACING RULES

Kenneling Times

Kenneling of greyhounds allowed up to 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the race to accommodate potential transport difficulties from Greyhound Complex to Stadium.

General Reserves

Incorporated in the rules to reduce the number of greyhounds transported to track.

Greyhound Review Board

A Board of up to five appointed persons to form The Greyhound Review Board, with powers and responsibilities similar to those of Controlling Authorities in Australia. The Company maintained at least two seats on a five man Board.

Power of Stewards

Drastically diminished due to the formative nature of the sport in Vietnam. Stewards were limited to recommendations to the Greyhound Review Board on matters pertaining to a race meeting.

Stewards required to work at race meetings in conjunction with an AUTHORISED PERSON APPOINTED BY THE CLUB. In all cases Stewards decisions at a race meeting required agreement between Chief Steward, Steward, Judge (where applicable) and the Authorized Person. In situations where such parties were not in agreement the matter is then referred to a Greyhound Review Board Member (or appointed representative) for decision.

Stewards retained powers to suspend greyhounds found to have breached rules. (Fighting and/or Failing to Chase)

Suspension periods for fighting failing to chase

These were adjusted downward (from Australian standards) to accommodate the limited numbers of greyhounds available in Vietnam during the formative period.

First Offence	up to 28 days at the track
Second Offence	one month all tracks
Third Offence	three months all tracks

BETTING RULES

Unit of Investment

The unit of investment in Vietnam is 10,000 dong (approximately AUD \$1.10)

Betting Pools

Only WIN, EXACTA and TRIFECTA were initially included, but PLACE was introduced in mid August.

Late Dividend Claims

Up to one month after sale of ticket.

MICROCHIPPING

Micro chipping was considered essential to engineer out the human factor involved in identifying ear tattoos of racing greyhounds. It was also a security measure to reduce the possibility of (inadvertent or intended) greyhound substitutions.

Computer software was developed by Dr John Newell to address this integrity issue, and is detailed in a separate paper to this conference.

All greyhounds were micro chipped prior to leaving Australia.

GREYHOUND PERFORMANCE PARAMETERS & TESTING

To ensure Vietnam received competitive greyhounds of similar abilities, performance parameters were established for suppliers. An independent person employed by SES for the task checked these parameters during public trials.

Moreover to ensure that Vietnam did not inherit unwanted problems all greyhounds sold to SES were drug tested during the public trials. Random drug testing also occurred at the holding kennels during the retention and one-month quarantine period.

Only one greyhound reported positive (Caffeine) during the testing procedure.

The AJC Laboratory acted as the testing authority for SES.

GRADING

A grading policy was devised to maximize the potential of greyhounds imported to Vietnam. The grading policy incorporated five levels (grades) C, B, A, AA, AAA.

Greyhounds are to be progressed through the grades only after they have surpassed certain time criteria on two occasions for the respective grade(s). The objective of the grading policy is to ensure greyhounds of similar abilities are drawn in races, as distinct from the system of simply promoting greyhounds on the number of wins.

Greyhounds may be relegated to a lower grade following three consecutive unplaced runs in a higher-grade race. Only one win is permitted in the lower grade following relegation.

Considerable flexibility was required in the grading policy during the formative weeks of racing due to the small number of greyhounds in Vietnam available for racing. Moreover race times also needed to be assessed under race meeting conditions.

The arrival of additional greyhounds during June July August and September, substantially alleviated the grading situation.

REGISTRATION and FORMGUIDE DATABASE

Registrations.

All greyhounds imported to Vietnam are micro-chipped prior to arrival. Microchip serial numbers are attached to the greyhound registration papers in Australia and also put on computer diskette.

The registration information is checked on arrival and downloaded to the SES computer.

Every greyhound is then re-named (Vietnamese).

Registration ID.

The identification of greyhounds by the microchip software is referred in a separate paper to this conference.

Formguide Database.

Several options were available to SES regarding a racing database.

As all greyhounds imported to Vietnam were from Australia, and therefore registered in Australia and logged to existing databases in various states, opportunity existed to extend those databases to include Vietnam.

Considerable time was spent examining this option but it was finally decided to develop a database in Vietnam.

Local computer engineers developed the SES (Vietnam) racing database.

The FORMGUIDE is consistent with that provided in Australia.

GREYHOUND TRANSPORT

The Greyhound Complex is situated some 30 minutes traveling time from the racetrack. As such a responsible means of transporting the greyhounds to their racing engagements needed to be devised.

A local Bus Company agreed to supply an air-conditioned coach (seats removed) for the purpose. Almost 70 greyhounds are transported by the 'greyhound' bus each meeting.

Additional greyhounds required for the respective meeting are transported by air-conditioned mini vans, similar to those used by trainers in Australia.

TRACK PREPARATION

The maintenance of the track and track equipment, together with race surface preparation was a formidable task under initially by a foreign advisor and three casual employees.

Two permanent track staff were later employed in August 2000

The sand surface is hand watered by local contractors engaged for the purpose.

A heavy roller is used once per week (hired).

A brush system designed by the greyhound advisor is used to level out the track during race meetings. The brush system is towed behind a Jeep after every race.

TRAINING

Tote Staff

Possibly one of the most important tasks undertaken in Vietnam was the training of Operational Staff for the racetrack.

Considering that none of the local staff had ever previously witnessed greyhound racing, seen a greyhound, or been involved with totalisator betting the results from the training effort that ensued over two months, from March 2000 was simply outstanding.

Ninety candidates were originally recruited for Tote training. It was envisaged that approximately 60 operators would be required to be rostered for race night totalisator duties.

Of the ninety candidates only 8 persons either failed to meet requirements or were unable to complete the course due to other commitments.

Three training sessions were held each day.

The results were outstanding with AWA accrediting Vietnam with some of the best (foreign) trained operators.

That training effort, which extended over two months, much of it in the free time of the candidates, provided SES with the nucleus of its on-course staffing needs.

All the operators were retained, with 30 being further developed to act as betting hostesses in various strategic locations throughout the Stadium.

Track Staff

Training for track staff also occurred under similar guidelines as the tote training, expect that the training time was reduced to two weeks. A highly comprehensive selection process assisted SES being provided with candidates with skills and abilities that matched job requirements. In that regard the training process was greatly assisted. Foreign advisors carried out the training of track staff.

Ba Ria Greyhound Complex Staff

In also a similar manner kennel attendants were also recruited and trained at the Greyhound Complex. Originally twenty -eight attendants were recruited just prior to the arrival of the first shipment of 24 greyhounds. A period of four weeks elapsed before any further shipments were received in Vietnam to allow candidates to become familiar with greyhound techniques such as walking, handling, kenneling, and feeding. Twenty-One attendants were ultimately retained from the original group.

Training techniques included Australian produced Videos and practical demonstration by the foreign advisors.

EDUCATION OF PUBLIC

Possibly the most difficult task faced by SES was the education of the general public regarding greyhound racing and betting.

Several educational tools were developed to assist that cause.

Media Conference

Initially it was considered the media should be fully briefed, as an understanding media could assist the overall cause in educating the general public.

A MEDIA CONFERENCE was held in October 1999 in Ho Chi Minh City. A video scripted in Vietnam but produced in Australia by Extra Television Productions, titled “Greyhound Racing – Welcome Vietnam” was the pivotal tool. All media representatives at the conference were provided a copy of the tape for additional viewing. The response was overwhelming. SES received outstanding positive press, and it was obvious that the fun and excitement of greyhound racing, the theme of the videotape presentation, had achieved its objective.

Educational Leaflets

A generic SEE DOGS RACE brochure was later distributed detailing the various aspects of greyhound racing.

Other brochures on How To Bet also followed as part of the education process

On-Course Information Services

Betting Hostesses at the track were also used as a means of educating the general public assisting people to fill out betting coupons and explaining other aspects such as how to read Tote Monitors, and how to read Formguides etc.

Media Information

A number of educational videos were locally produced and shown at the track and also on local TV.

The education process was successful with the Vietnamese quick to understand the system, and they responded accordingly. Tote turnover expanded exponentially in the formative period as people came to further understand the system, and became more confident with their betting.

SATELLITE BROADCASTING, SIMULCASTING and OFF TRACK BETTING.

These opportunities have been examined and remain part of the future development of the sport in Vietnam.

CONCLUSION

To have achieved what has been achieved in Vietnam in such a short period of time was truly a remarkable effort. But while the results are available for all to see, they came at a price. The pathway to success was not always easy, particularly operating in a foreign country with its inherent language difficulties for foreign advisors.

The (training) effort of all concerned, particularly those from Australia, was significant. I refer specifically to AWA trainers (Gary Elliott and Gene Speers), Graeme Brook, Bevan Williamson, Dr JohnNewell and the Foreign Advisors based in Vietnam. (Jim Drysdale, Tony & Lynn Baker and Alf Baker).

But finally, it must be acknowledged, that without the dedication of the people of Vietnam to learn new systems, methods and techniques required to operate, and also participate in, the sport of greyhound racing, all of this just would not have happened in the time frame in which it was ultimately realized.

Congratulations must be afforded to all those that made this happen.