



West Virginia is the only state with active greyhound racing

By: Sam Kirk
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CLARKSBURG, W.Va. — A historic gambling activity is only alive in West Virginia in 2023, with the last track outside the state closing after the 2022 season. Greyhound racing tracks were first built starting around 1920 after the invention of the mechanical lure shifted the sport away from the traditional field coursing where dogs would chase a live rabbit.

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Since their inception, greyhound racing tracks have been known as places for illegal gambling and were illegal across the U.S. until a few states chose to embrace it as a sport in the 1930s. By the 1980s, greyhound racing became legal in 19 states, including West Virginia. According to Britannica, at its height, dog racing was rated the sixth most popular sporting activity in the country.



However, breeders often went on strike and threatened to kill whole litters of greyhounds in the 1970s, and the use of illegal live lures continued to be a problem even into the 2000s, which gathered negative media attention.

Additionally, overbreeding led to a large percentage of greyhound dogs being “humanely destroyed,” according to Britannica. Just one county in Arizona reported killing more than 500 greyhounds in 1990. Further, experimentation on retired racing dogs led to the racing world conducting even more damage control by promoting families to adopt and “rescue” the dogs.



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“Just since 2021, more than a dozen dogs have died. GT’s Cocobolo had a heart attack at the age of three. One-year-old Flying Betty Lou crushed her skull in a practice race. And poor Living Fast died of a seizure. He was just two years old. Other young dogs like Killer Gandalf, One Night Stand and Cry Baby were among the 237 dogs with broken legs in the first half of 2022,” says the organization’s website.