

Interviewee: Baron David Lipsey, Former chairman of British Greyhound Racing Board

Born 1948 Cheltenham

Father: Businessman

Mother: House wife

Interviewer: Sarah Armstrong

Summariser: Wallace Li

Location: Wimbledon Stadium

Time: 22 Jan 2024

David was a horse racing man and a politician and came to Wimbledon stadium after a political failure in the Labour leadership. Here he met Matthew Oakeshott in 1976 who also had been similarly humiliated in the leadership - later introduced him to a bookmaker.

He lived close to Wimbledon but parents slightly disapproved about greyhounds. The stadium used to be packed on weekend nights which he described the atmosphere as 'extraordinary' and everyone was equal. Also, he mentioned bookmakers were not only in the two stands but also on the first and third bend of the track.

He had a greyhound called 'Park Laddie' who was two spots from a tracking record in a game but injured himself so had to be retired.

In the old days owners were allowed to take the dogs out for two days in a week but not too many times to avoid doping.

He described greyhound as 'best pet on earth' - they sit on the sofa and 20 mins walk a day would be enough and more people are having them as pets.

In the past, only 1/6 dogs were rehomed when they retired (most shot) compared to 95% nowadays. Mentioning his business, he said that his company is responsible for broadcasting at 14 race tracks and passionate about boosting greyhound welfare.

Different sizes of tracks in different stadia.

Derby day - Wimbledon was smaller than White City but atmosphere was good until football took over. Derby Roar - great shout from the whole crowd, 'fantastic' time. Also, they celebrated his wife Margaret's 60th birthday at the restaurant.

There wouldn't have been greyhounds without betting. Long time ago, working men were banned because betting required a special bank account. Things changed since the existence of betting shops.

David said that the reason why he kept coming back to Wimbledon was because of the great times he had 'Fridays after work' and meeting with friends at the stadium.

Cheating with greyhound is very rare in the UK.

Changes in the sport that he mentioned would be the competitions in the betting market (bet on football, snooker etc).

Media helps his company to make profits and keeps it going, distributes programmes etc. In the past only BBC and ITV would show greyhounds when the weather was too bad for horse racing.

Council is very unsympathetic - football is everything and ignores greyhounds. 'Sad but inevitable'.

Almost a 'tv show' for characters.

Came from politics to greyhound and it was a 'relief from politics.'

Future – really, it's a chance for a renaissance. Darts and snooker have improved their audiences and tv coverage and hopes there's going to be something new to bring back the audiences for greyhounds too.

He had another dog called Becky who had no trouble and did nothing naughty on the track, but sadly passed away.

Why get in to greyhound (welfare)- Park Laddie injured and the kennel hand promised to take care of him but never checked. Then joined the greyhound welfare board - took years for people to get on board because it can be expensive to improve welfare. Not much enthusiasm for welfare in the old days.

Changes in facilities at Wimbledon - not much changes except moving the grand stand to the other side of the stadium.

Horses you don't tend to see them very often as an owner but a dog you can keep near you. Also, it's much more expensive for buying and keeping a horse than a dog. He also mentioned that dogs do pay off for themselves if they're good racers.