

Grey Hounds: Relief for Buckley as ailing Noel set to recover

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The mystery which surrounded Droopys Noel's very poor performance in Sunday's North West Derby final at Lifford was cleared up yesterday when a leading vet diagnosed an aggressive form of meningitis.

When trainer Pat Buckley took the dog from his kennel he was clearly ailing and the track vet was called. Within minutes he appeared to improve and he was given a thorough check by the vet before it was decided to let him take his chance.

However, Droopys Noel, winner of the BCR Easter Cup, was clearly unable to do himself justice and trailed by a distance behind the field.

The dog was examined by well-known Abbeyfeale vet John O'Connor yesterday and the problem was diagnosed. A full range of tests were taken but the true cause of his illness was found. Thankfully, meningitis is treatable and the dog is expected to recover quickly.

The €35,000 Lifford prize was won by the Willie Atcheson-trained Eden Brett which came through on the run-in to beat Oran Legend by a length and a quarter in 29.91, with Longrange Shot a half length back in third.

Record

New puppy star **Colorful Champ** produced another big performance when winning the semi-final of the Munster Puppy Cup at Clonmel on Sunday, winning by four lengths from Killacolla Glory in 28.33, just 10 spots outside the record he set a week earlier. The other semi was won by Tom O'Neill-trained Kevins Star in 28.65.

The Clonmel final will be run next Sunday, as will the final of the Moran & O'Donnell Oaks at Newbridge. Despite both being beaten in the semis, Maireads Fantasy and Tyrur Liz will battle it out for favouritism in that event with Cabra Tiny also very much in the equation.

The most valuable race of the week will be the Vetsearch Irish Grand National final at Harold's Cross on Friday. Unfortunately, the favourite, Toomaline Jack, will not be able to line up. He tore a gracilis muscle in the semi-final and Dolores Ruth reports he has to be rested.

Last year's winner Distant Legend comes into the final as a reserve and has a big chance of completing the double. Lisacaha King and Bigstrongpup look the main threats.

The semi-finals of the Red Mills Masters will be run at Waterford on Saturday with Derby runner-up Oran Classic, Laurels winner Sevenheads Bay and local qualifier Lifes Funny joining the nine qualifiers from the first round.

Irish Independen

