

Ballyregan Bob, top dog?

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Edited and re-written from popular dog folklore, by Doug Link. (use only with permission) from www.beginners-gambling.com

The 1980's were a turbulent time for the greyhound racing. However they will be remembered by the legacy of one dog. Perhaps the best greyhound that ever existed, since the beginning of modern greyhound racing. Ballyregan Bob will be remembered for the amazing world record winning sequence of 32 from 1985-86.

The topic of discussing which [Greyhound](#), was or is the best, stirs up emotions and tempers and often results in arguments; or even in occasional physical altercations, especially when the ale flows! However let the facts speak for themselves; and with Ballyregan Bob the facts are amazing.

Trainer George Curtis described Ballyregan Bob as 'the perfect racing machine' and, from early trials at his home track of Hove, Curtis knew he had a very special greyhound on his yard. The only blemishes to Ballyregan Bob's career are the defeats in his early days. In fact his early performances were abysmal, being soundly beaten in his first four outings.

However, as for his later career there is no doubt that Ballyregan Bob was one of **the** greatest greyhounds ever. His great potential was realized on 25 October

1984 when he came from off the pace to win his first race in Britain, this was closely followed by another seven straight wins to finish the year off, including record breaking runs in the heats and final of the William Hill Lead at Hackney Stadium (now no longer). Then came one of his strange defeats and blemishes of his career. He had after his win at Hackney stadium been rested (because of a particularly bad and severe winter), and on return (in March the same year) appeared to have lost that deep mettle; demonstrated when he took a bump at the start and was well beaten into fifth place! Was this a sign of a "race cur" or just a temporary setback ?

It proved to be a temporary setback as, a month later, Ballyregan Bob was to firmly establish himself as a star and future legend. Representing Curtis in the Trainer's' Championship meeting at Walthamstow, he gave the performance of his life. Meeting local champion "Ballintubber One" in the top division of the 475 metres races. It was then that Ballyregan Bob's mettle was really given a good test, but proved sound. Ballintubber One took a couple of lengths lead over Bob by the second bend; but the response by Ballyregan Bob along the backstretch was astounding and legendary. Even by the third bend he was forced to work hard to get past the front-runner, but his superior stamina and gameness won the day; a day that we all knew, a great champion was in our midst!

"Dog men" always believe that just winning is not as important as who you win against. The harder the competition the better the win. Now Ballintubber One himself was one of the best dogs of the 1980's (a decade of great dogs) and went on to win countless races himself, this only emphasized what a truly great dog Ballyregan Bob was.

The last time Ballyregan Bob was to ever lose again came on 15 April 1985 when a battering at the traps saw his chance gone in a race at Wembley (this happens

from time to time in racing and is just bad luck, and should not be used to try and tarnish the record of Ballyregan Bob).

His mettle was further tested in the semi-finals of the St Leger at Wembley. Here severe first bend trouble saw the champion in all sorts of tribulation. Two of the field fell, and Ballyregan Bob literally had to jump one of them to avoid crashing out of the race himself. His littermate, Evening Light was lengths ahead and Bob was facing seemingly certain defeat. However the fanatical cries of support (mainly from the Irish travellers, that were Ballyregan Bob's most loyal supporters) got louder and louder as Ballyregan Bob began to make up ground. He still had a lot of ground to gain with only two bends left. The fans cheered harder and pushed him on with urgency; and being an intelligent dog, he responded with a mind-blowing speed; seldom witnessed even from the like of Ballyregan Bob! To the delirium of the fans packed in the grandstand he won, justifying his place as a true legend.

This feat became even more legendary and elevated him into greyhound mythology, when the next morning; he was found to be badly lame and was forced out of the St Leger Final (if anyone doubts the word "gameness" cannot be used for racing dogs then this should illustrate that it can, running lame, while coming from behind and winning is truly the sign of a deep game dog). Unfortunately this injury was to plague him throughout the rest of his career.

Ballyregan Bob in his complete career set three speed records at Hackney, two at Wimbledon and set new figures at another eight tracks during an incredible racing life. His crowning glory came at Hove on 9 December 1986 when he raced for the last time; and for the new world record. The race, which was screened live throughout the country, and soon became a massacre with, Ballyregan Bob having more than nine lengths to spare over his nearest

competitor.

The following day the newspapers went crazy over Ballyregan Bob. It can be said that Ballyregan Bob gave new life to a struggling 1980's UK greyhound industry (and maybe even saved it from total demise). To sum up Ballyregan Bob in three words we can quote the words of that famous song "**simply the best**".

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