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Friday December 3, 2010

Injuries remain high at racetrack

by **Billy Wolfe**
Daily Mail staff

WHEELING, W.Va.--Greyhound injuries at Wheeling Island Hotel-Casino-Racetrack remained high in October, despite a large-scale construction project aimed at improving safety for the dogs.

In fact, records filed with the West Virginia Racing Commission show injuries actually increased in the weeks immediately following the track renovations.

In August, track officials announced they were shutting down to complete a \$400,000 track overhaul that would make the track safer for the dogs, which they referred to as "star athletes."

Records at the time showed that the average number of injuries jumped from 19 per month in 2009 to more than 27 per month during the first seven months of this year.

Jim Simms, president and general manager, told the Associated Press in August that the increase in injuries was an "alarm bell."

"It was approaching double the normal level," he said at the time.

The track reopened Sept. 20 after crews had finished their work.

From Sept. 18 through the end of October, there were 41 reported injuries, according to the records.



The Associated Press
Records filed with the state Racing Commission show that greyhound injuries remained high in late September and throughout the month of October, despite a large-scale project aimed at improving safety for the dogs.

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At least 22 of those injuries involved broken legs, the records show. Four dogs had injuries so severe that they had to be euthanized.

Sixteen injuries occurred in the last two weeks of September. The other 25 occurred in October.

One dog was put down in September. The other three were euthanized in October.

Repeated phone calls to Simms' office were not returned. Phone calls to the track's manager of gaming operations and marketing director also were not returned.

Lori Bohenko is the state veterinarian at the Wheeling track. She said the uptick in injuries in October and late September was expected, but that the figures for November show promise that injuries are now on the decline.

Bohenko, who has extensive experience treating both greyhounds and racing horses, said the dogs faced

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a "period of adaptation," after the new track was installed.

"We initially had a spike in injuries," she said.

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