31 December 2019

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MR JASON BALDOCK**

**Date of hearing:** 30 December 2019

**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson)

**Appearances:** Mr James Hitchcock appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

 Mr Dean Pettit appeared on behalf of Mr Baldock.

**Charge:** Australian Rule 131(a) states a rider must not, in the opinion of the Stewards: (a) engage in careless, reckless, improper, incompetent or foul riding;

**Particulars of charge:** Mr Jason Baldock at the time pleaded guilty to the charge of careless riding under the provisions of AR131(a) in that he allowed his mount to shift out near the 400m when not sufficiently clear of Georgina Louise resulting in Georgina Louise being tightened for room, blundering and dislodging its rider Jack Hill. Jason Baldock’s license to ride in races was suspended for a period of 25 meetings (7 metropolitan and 18 provincial) to commence midnight Wednesday 26 December 2019 and to expire midnight Saturday 18 January 2019. In assessing penalty Stewards took into consideration Jason Baldock’s riding record and at the time guilty plea.

**Plea:** Not Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Jason Baldock, you have pleaded “not guilty” to a charge of careless riding in race 5 at Colac over 2000 metres on 21 December 2019. You were riding Centenary Shot, which ultimately ran third. The Stewards charge centres upon an incident near the 400 metre mark. I have viewed the video material.

There had been two tearaway leaders who appeared to be coming back to the field. Your mount was running approximately 5th on the rails in a group of horses closing in on the tearaway leaders. You were immediately behind Josh Cartright’s mount, which was racing approximately ½ a horse off the fence and at times racing ungenerously. To his outside was Stephen Vella. To your outside, and perhaps just a length back was Jack Hill, three wide. To the outside ahead of Jack Hill, was John Robinson’s mount.

I accept that Jack Hill had called to John Robinson about his mount potentially moving in, but did not call to you. It is also apparent to me that John Robinson thereafter maintained a straight course and did not contribute to what occurred. You moved off the rails in an endeavour to take a run to the outside of Josh Cartright and between his mount and John Robinson. In my opinion, you did this when not sufficiently clear of Jack Hill. His mount was tightened for room, blundered, and dislodged Jack Hill. It was a nasty fall, but, happily, Jack Hill suffered no injury of any consequence and was able to take part in the post-race Stewards interview.

The bottom line is that you pushed out to get around Josh Cartwright when not sufficiently clear of Jack Hill. Mr Pettit, on your behalf, referred to other “one percenters” that were operating, but I repeat that the bottom line is that, in my opinion, you shifted out in an attempt to take a run when not sufficiently clear of Jack Hill and caused the fall. I am comfortably satisfied that your riding was careless and caused the fall.

The appeal against the decision of the Stewards is dismissed. I shall hear the parties on the question of penalty.

**PENALTY**

Mr Baldock, in this matter, you originally pleaded “guilty” and the Stewards took into account your plea. Mr Hitchcock, on behalf of the Stewards, stated that the normal range of penalties in a situation when there has been a fall is between 28-30 meetings. Mr Pettit, on your behalf, effectively agreed with this. Because you pleaded guilty, the Stewards decided upon a 25 meeting suspension. However, today you changed your plea to “Not Guilty”.

Falls in racing are very dangerous occurrences. They put at great risk the well-being of jockeys and horses. Happily, in this case, neither horse or jockey appear to suffer any significant injury. However, the potential for significant injury certainly existed and I can understand why the Stewards imposed the penalty which they did. Again, it was in the context of a “guilty” plea.

I understand the financial burden that this will place on you and your family. You are a very busy jockey and race at a wide range of mainly country meetings. Your record is best described as fair or reasonable. I appreciate those matters, but in my view the appeal against the penalty should be dismissed and that is my decision.

Mark Howard
Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal