22 December 2021

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**LIAM RIORDAN**

**Date of hearing:** 15 December 2021

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

**Appearances:** Mr Sam Cochrane appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Matthew Hyland represented Mr Liam Riordan.

Mr Liam Riordan attended the hearing.

**Charges:** Australian Rule of Racing (“AR”) 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 charges:** Rider Liam Riordan (Very Shamus) was found guilty to a charge of careless riding under the provisions of AR131(a). The particulars of the charge being that near the 800 metres he permitted his mount to shift in and in doing so failed to leave sufficient racing room for the runners to his inside, those runners being Gojazz (Robert Beattie), Ozone (Joe Bowditch) and Swing With Junior (Chloe Azzopardi), resulting in Gojazz and Swing With Junior being tightened for room and Ozone being tightened for room and checked. Liam Riordan had his license to ride in races suspended to commence midnight 20 December 2021 to expire midnight 3 January 2022 a total of thirteen meetings (5 Metro/8 Provincial). In reaching penalty, Stewards took into account the racing manners of Swing With Junior at this stages of the event, his record in relation to this breech and deemed the incident to be in the midrange.

**Plea:** Not Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Liam Riordan, you are appealing against a suspension imposed by the Stewards after the running of Race 8 over 1100 metres at Wangaratta on Saturday, 11 December 2021. The charge was careless riding and the penalty was one of 13 meetings.

You were riding “Very Shamus”. Other relevant jockeys and horses were Ms Chloe Azzopardi on “Swing With Junior”, Mr Joe Bowditch on “Ozone”, Mr Robert Beattie on “Gojazz” and Ms Kiran Quilty on “Dissedge”. The alleged interference occurred in the vicinity of the 800 metre mark. The main victim of the interference was Mr Bowditch.

I have viewed the video of this race many times – before, during and after the hearing. The situation is not helped at all by the absence of any head on vision. To some extent, conclusions have to be reached by reference to shadows and the like. Shortly prior to the interference, Ms Quilty was on the outside of the leader. Ms Azzopardi was behind the leader and on the rails. Her mount was racing ungenerously and throwing its head around. Mr Bowditch was to her outside. Mr Beattie was on his outside. Viewing the video taken from slightly behind the leaders and taking a line through the shadow of the running rail and the positions of the horses generally, you, whilst having the leading pair to your inside, were at least four horses wide.

At a point thereafter, you moved to three wide. The issue becomes whether that move forced Mr Beattie onto Mr Bowditch, who, with the horse inside him racing ungenerously, was forced to ease back.

Doing the best I can with the video material available and taking into account, for example, the amount of the outside running rail that can be seen between the horses, I cannot be comfortably satisfied that you crossed Mr Beattie when not clear of him and forced him onto Mr Bowditch.

Indeed, on the basis of what can be seen, it appears to me that the interference to Mr Bowditch by way of being sandwiched between Mr Beattie – three wide – and Ms Azzopardi – rails – occurred before you crossed to take up your position four wide outside Ms Quilty. The argument of Mr Hyland is that the interference occurred when you were comfortably clear of Mr Beattie and before you crossed to the three wide position. My repeated viewing of the video, including pausing it many times, would support that proposition. I would repeat that the absence of head on vision made the task that much more difficult for the Stewards.

I would also point out that, from the outset you asserted that you had crossed Mr Beattie comfortably – “no worries” – and were not dictating his line inwards. You denied taking him in at all. Indeed, you were initially unaware that an incident had occurred.

In summary, I cannot be comfortably satisfied that a charge of careless riding has been made out. The appeal is upheld and the charge is dismissed.

Mark Howard
Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal