7 August 2020

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MS LAURA LAFFERTY**

**Date of hearing:** 30 July 2020

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

**Appearances:** Mr Peter Ryan appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

 Mr Alf Matthews appeared on behalf of Ms Lafferty.

**Charge:** Australian Rule (AR)131(a) states a rider must not, in the opinion of the Stewards:

1. engage in careless, reckless, improper, incompetent or foul riding;

**Particulars of charge:** Laura Lafferty (Simkin) - pleaded guilty to a charge of careless riding under the provisions of AR131(a), the carelessness being that approaching the 1400m she made insufficient effort to prevent her mount from shifting ground inwards when insufficiently clear, resulting in Reggae Roc being tightened for room and having to check and Blondes Day Out having to be steadied when tightened for room between Reggae Roc and Irubi. Apprentice Laura Laffertys permit to ride in races was suspended for a period to commence at midnight 1 August 2020 and to expire at midnight 10 August 2020. (9 race meetings, 2 metropolitan, 7 provincial). In assessing penalty Stewards deemed the incident to be in the low range and took into account her guilty plea and record.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Ms Laura Lafferty, you have pleaded ‘guilty’ to a charge of careless riding. It concerns your ride on Simkin in Race 9 over 1600 metres at Echuca on 26 July 2020. Other jockeys and horses involved were Daniel Moor (Blonde’s Day Out), Alana Kelly (Irubi) and Jake Duffy (Reggae Roc). The principal recipient of any interference was Jake Duffy on Reggae Roc.

I have viewed the video several times, parts of it having shown at least four or five times during the conduct of the hearing.

The 1600 metre start at Echuca is an awkward one and the size of the field is reduced to 10 accordingly. I appreciate Mr Matthews’ argument that jockeys are careful at all times, but the fact remains that some starts and corners are trickier than others. The 1600 metre start at Echuca has a false rail for a very short distance before that brief chute links up with the course proper and the horses are almost immediately then on a turn.

What occurred on this occasion is that you, Ms Lafferty, were jumping from the outside gate. Jake Duffy was from gate 6. Your horse jumped well. After about 50 metres or so, you commenced to cross the horses on your inside. True it is that Ms Kelly’s horse, Irubi, which jumped well from gate 4, may have moved out marginally towards Daniel Moor, from Gate 5, so that the space between his mount and Jake Duffy narrowed. However, the bottom line is that you crossed Duffy’s mount and caused it to be checked quite noticeably. As Jake Duffy said in the post-race Stewards’ interview, “its pretty evident really…I had to just put my troubles onto Mr Moor”. When asked by the Chairman if he had to check his mount, his simple answer was “yes, sir”.

I have gone into this in some detail because, even though there is a guilty plea, Mr Matthews’ argument was essentially that very little blame should be attributed to you and the penalty should reflect this.

In my opinion, the interference is quite clear. It may be that, as was suggested by Dean Yendall, who was called in to assist you doing the enquiry, you had anticipated the horses going in towards the rail, rather than holding their lines or coming out. The bottom line is that what you did was careless. You crossed Jake Duffy’s mount when not clear of it, causing him to have to check his mount quite noticeably and some contact was made with Daniel Moor’s mount.

In relation to penalty, you are a very promising apprentice and have already had just under 400 rides and with considerable success. You are obviously a very talented rider. However, your record is not good. You have had two previous suspensions for careless riding in the last three months, one for eight meetings and one for nine meetings. You have also received three severe reprimands for careless riding at different times.

I bear all this in mind. The Steward’s guidelines on the penalties for careless riding are just that – guidelines. However, they can be a useful tool and represent an attempt to have consistency in penalties and give jockeys some idea as to what to expect.

In my opinion, the penalty imposed by the Stewards in this case was both fair and appropriate, particularly bearing in mind your recent record. The result is that, despite Mr Matthews’ best efforts and eloquence, the appeal is dismissed.

Mark Howard
Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal