29 November 2024

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MELINDA McDONALD**

**Date of hearing:** 14 November 2024

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

**Appearances:** Mr Ibrahim Gundogdu appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Ms Melinda McDonald represented herself.

**Charge:** 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 charge:** Ms Melinda McDonald, rider of Charming Assassin pleaded guilty to a charge of careless riding under the provisions of AR131(a), in that near the 300m, she permitted her mount to shift out when not sufficiently clear of Evening Harmony, which was bumped and taken out onto Mexican Fiddler, resulting in Evening Harmony having to be checked and Mexican Fiddler being hampered. Ms McDonald had her license to ride in races suspended for a total of 2 picnic race meetings, with the period to commence on Sunday 10 November 2024 and expire on Saturday 23 November 2024. Accordingly, Ms McDonald will be able to return to ride on 24 November 2024. In assessing penalty, account was taken of her guilty plea, good record and that the incident was in the mid-range category.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Ms Melinda McDonald, you are appealing against the penalty imposed on you by the Stewards in relation to your ride on Charming Assassin in Race 2 over 1008 metres at the Balnarring picnic race meeting on 9 November 2024.

This penalty was imposed for alleged interference in the vicinity of the home turn and approximately 300 metres from the finish. Other horses directly involved were Mexican Fiddler, ridden by Ms Debbie Waymouth and Evening Harmony, ridden by Mr Ray Douglas. Another horse possibly involved was Highland Run, to your outside.

The penalty imposed by the Stewards was a 2 meeting suspension.

You have pleaded guilty to the Charge and are appealing solely in relation to penalty.

I have viewed the video of the race several times. The interference is clear to see. You did shift out when not clear of Mr Douglas, who was in turn forced out on to Ms Waymouth. There may have been some pressure from your inside, but in my opinion its contribution was not great. You also said that your horse was very green and wayward.

In this hearing, you did take considerable responsibility for what occurred, although, as stated, also alleging some contribution, to a lesser extent, from Highland Run on your inside.

You have pleaded guilty to the Charge. Your record is not unblemished, with a couple of suspensions for careless riding in the last few years. You have been riding at picnic meetings for approximately five years.

In my opinion, you were the major contributor to the quite noticeable interference to Mr Douglas and Ms Waymouth and that interference could quite fairly be described as more than minor. As stated, both of the other horses suffered noticeable interference.

Your record is not unblemished.

In all the circumstances, the penalty of suspension for two picnic race meetings seems to me to be a fair and proper penalty. The appeal is dismissed.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal