28 July 2025

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**WILL GORDON**

**Date of hearings:** 16 July 2025 and 21 July 2025

**Date of decision:** 25 July 2025

**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson) and Ms Heidi Keighran.

**Appearances:** Mr Marwan El-Asmar appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Damian Sheales appeared on behalf of Mr Will Gordon.

**Charges and particulars:** **Charge 1 of 2: AR 116(1)**

AR 116(1) reads as follows:

**AR 116 Jockeys and apprentice jockeys not to have an interest in horses**

1. A jockey or apprentice jockey is not permitted to own, take a lease or have any interest in any unnamed horse or named horse.

…

**The particulars of the charge**

1. At all relevant times, you were a licensed jockey with Racing Victoria, subject to the Rules of Racing.

1. On 4 March 2025, you attended the William Inglis Premier Yearling Sale at Oaklands, Victoria, where you purchased the filly, Doubtland x Fore (Lot 644) (the Horse) for $14,000, paying a total of $20,050, which included associated fees.

1. Between 4 March and 25 March 2025, you held an interest in and/or ownership of the Horse.

**Charge 2 of 2: AR 118(1) (in the alternative)**

AR 118(1) reads as follows:

**AR 118 Jockeys and apprentice jockeys not to have an interest in horse transactions**

1. A jockey or apprentice jockey must not, without the express written permission of the PRA that has licensed that person, have any interest in or be otherwise involved in the buying, selling, trading or leasing of thoroughbred bloodstock.

…

**The particulars of the charge**

1. At all relevant times, you were a licensed jockey with Racing Victoria, bound by the Rules of Racing.

1. On 4 March 2025, you attended the William Inglis Premier Yearling Sale at Oaklands, Victoria, where you purchased the filly, Doubtland x Fore (Lot 644) (the Horse) for $14,000, paying a total of $20,050, including associated fees.

1. Between 4 March and 25 March 2025, you were involved in the buying, selling, or trading of thoroughbred bloodstock.

 **Pleas:** Not Guilty to Charge 1.

Guilty to Charge 2.

**RULING**

In this matter, Mr Damian Sheales on behalf of Mr Will Gordon. Mr Marwan El-Asmar appears on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Gordon faces two Charges. We say at the outset that he is pleading guilty to Charge 2. In relation to Charge 1, a serious offence, Mr Sheales has submitted that there is no case to answer and that the Charge should be dismissed. Mr Marwan El-Asmar has argued to the contrary. Thus, this Ruling concerns only Charge 1.

This preliminary dispute proceeded by way of oral submissions essentially relating to documentary material.

Mr Gordon is a licensed professional jockey. AR 116(1) basically prohibits a jockey from owning, leasing or having an interest in a racehorse. That is the crux of Charge 1.

The events that give rise to Charge 1 essentially took place at the William Inglis Premier Yearling Sale (“the Sale”) at Oaklands, Victoria, on 4 March 2025. Mr Gordon attended the Sale, accompanying his partner, Ms Taige Weir. Ms Weir is a licensed pre-trainer. It is alleged that Mr Gordon purchased a filly by Doubtland, paying a total of $20,050, including associated fees. It is alleged that, between 4 March 2025 and 25 March 2025, he had an interest in and/or ownership of that filly, an interest that does not extend beyond 25 March 2025.

As stated, Charge 1 is a serious offence. It requires determination by this Tribunal.

Insofar as Charge 1 involves a question of law, such question has been determined by the Chair, but with invaluable assistance from Ms Keighran.

We say at the outset that we are of the view that there is a case to answer.

We find that there is no real dispute concerning the following:

* 1. As stated, Mr Gordon is a licensed jockey.
	2. He attended the Sale on 4 March 2025 with his partner, Ms Weir.
	3. Ms Weir is also a licensed person, being a pre-trainer.
	4. Ms Weir wished to purchase a horse for future training.
	5. Ms Weir had limited finances and Mr Gordon agreed to provide the necessary funds, at least on a temporary basis.
	6. They attended on each day of the three days.
	7. Mr Gordon registered as a purchaser and provided to William Inglis his bank account details and the like. His registration, presumably signed, was in documentary form.
	8. With the assistance of bloodstock agent Mr Jeremy Rodgers, they compiled a list of possible purchases.
	9. Mr Gordon in fact made a successful bid for lot 644, a filly by Doubtland.
	10. Funds provided by Mr Gordon, in the sum of $20,050, (including a purchase price of $14,000), were used to pay the purchase price. This amount was paid to William Inglis on 4 March 2025.
	11. Mr Gordon signed the relevant documentation for the purchase of the horse.
	12. Mr Gordon was listed as the purchaser on the William Inglis website.
	13. Two persons representing the Roll the Dice Syndicate had some discussion, primarily with Ms Weir, but with Mr Gordon also present, this taking place on the same day and very soon after the horse had been knocked down to Mr Gordon.
	14. Subsequently, on 21 March 2025, the Roll the Dice Syndicate purchased a 50% share in the horse. The amount was paid by transfer of funds from Roll the Dice to Mr Gordon’s bank account.
	15. On 25 March 2025 full ownership of the horse was transferred away from Mr Gordon. That marks the end of the alleged ownership by him.

The argument of Mr Sheales on behalf of Mr Gordon is essentially that at all relevant times he was acting as the agent of Ms Weir and at no time over the brief period involved acquired ownership as such of the horse or had an actual interest in it.

We are of the view that those are factors that constitute the basis of an unanswerable Charge. They could be summarised as being those involving Mr Gordon registering as a prospective purchaser, making the successful bid at the auction and paying for the horse.

Of course, we are assessing such factors in the context of a “no case to answer” dispute. The situation in relation to a full contest, with the Stewards bearing the burden of proof, could well be different.

In summary, Mr Gordon does have a case to answer on Charge 1.

We shall now proceed to the hearing of the case.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal