9 September 2025

**DECISION**

**HARNESS RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**RYAN BACKHOUSE**

**Date of hearings:** 2 September 2025

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**Panel:** Judge Marilyn Harbison (Deputy Chairperson), Judge Paul Lacava (Deputy Chairperson) and Ms Maree Payne.

**Appearances:** Mr Adrian Crowther appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr John Iuele represented Mr Ryan Backhouse.

**Charge:** Australian Harness Racing Rule (“AHRR”) 163(1)(a)(iii) states:

(1) A driver shall not –

(a) cause or contribute to any

(iii) interference.

**Particulars of charge:** The particulars of the charge being that on the first turn, Mr Backhouse permitted his drive to shift in when not clear of Super Dry and Kardesler NZ resulting in both runners being tightened, contacting marker pegs and losing their rightful racing position.  After considering HRV Minimum Penalty Guidelines, Mr Backhouse had his licence to drive in races suspended for a period of 14 days.

**Plea:** Not Guilty

**DECISION**

1. Mr Ryan Backhouse has been found guilty by the Stewards under Australian Harness Racing Rule (“AHRR”) 163(1)(a)(iii) for causing or contributing to interference. It was said that in Race 2 on 18 July 2025 at Mildura on the first turn, Mr Backhouse, driving “Unethical”, permitted his drive to shift in when not clear of two other runners, “Superdry NZ” and “Kardesler NZ”, resulting in both runners being tightened, contacting marker pegs and losing their rightful racing positions.
2. The penalty imposed was suspension of Mr Backhouse’s driver’s licence for two weeks.
3. Mr Backhouse has appealed the decision of the Stewards to this Tribunal.
4. We have watched the video footage of the race and heard submissions from the Stewards and from Mr Backhouse and Mr Iuele, a representative on his behalf.
5. The Stewards submitted that the race footage clearly showed that each of the other drivers had to grab hold of their horses and were tightened and both contacted marker pegs as a result of Mr Backhouse’s horse crossing down to the marker pegs.
6. Both drivers gave evidence before the Stewards of how the incident happened. There was no contact between horses, but the evidence was that there was definitely pressure on the inside and outside on the other drivers.
7. Mr Backhouse told the Stewards that as his horse came to the corner it gawked a bit. He said that the horse turned its head and appeared to look at something and baulked.
8. He noted that on the footage you can see his horse prick its ears and looks at something and that was the sort of horse it was. He said he did not steer it down and was not pulling the horse’s head.
9. The Stewards say that he either allowed or permitted his horse to shift in approaching the first turn.
10. Mr Backhouse said that he thought that he was clear to go down, but he did not deliberately steer his horse down.
11. Mr Backhouse says that he did not believe he was at fault because no contact was made, and that, in any event, it was the horse’s fault because it gawked. He said that just all of a sudden, if the horse sees something it does not like, the horse is likely to run sideways and that he does not like driving the horse because of this mannerism.
12. It was also submitted on his behalf that Kardesler, an 11 year old stallion, contributed to the incident by shifting in and putting pressure on Mr Backhouse’s drive. It was also suggested that both drivers on the inside also contributed by putting themselves in those positions. It was said that they should not have maintained their positions but fallen back.
13. We do not accept these submissions.
14. We agree with the Stewards that it is up to the driver to control the horse. It is clear from the race footage that no effort was made by Mr Backhouse to steer away when it was clearly moving to the inside, across the path of the horses in positions 1 and 2 and causing both drivers to slow their horses to avoid a collision. His failure to do so was potentially dangerous and is properly to be described as interference.
15. In all the circumstances, the appeal in relation to liability is dismissed and we shall hear the parties on penalty.

**PENALTY**

1. The minimum penalty guidelines for interference is two weeks suspension. Mr Backhouse was previously suspended for interference in November of 2024. He has had 308 drives altogether since that suspension with no further offending. The Stewards considered the interference to be at the lower end and so imposed the minimum penalty which is a period of suspension for two weeks.
2. We have determined to reimpose the penalty of a two week suspension, taking into account Mr Backhouse’s relative inexperience and the fact that he has raced in a significant number of races since his last penalty without further offending.
3. The penalty imposed is therefore a two week suspension, commencing at midnight on 5 September 2025.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal