

APPEAL PANEL OF RACING NEW SOUTH WALES

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPEAL OF LICENSED JOCKEY BLAKE SPRIGGS

Heard at Racing NSW Offices

Appeal Panel: **Mr L. Vellis - Convenor; Mrs J. Foley; Mr P. Losh**
Representatives: **Appellant – Self-represented**
Racing NSW - Mr S. Railton, Chairman of Stewards
Date of Hearing: **3 January 2025**
Date of Reasons and Orders: **3 January 2025**

REASONS FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. On 28 December 2024, licensed jockey Mr Blake Spriggs (**Appellant**) pleaded not guilty to a breach of AR 131(a) of the Australian Rules of Racing (the **Rules**). The particulars of the charge alleged were that the Appellant breached AR 131(a), the careless riding rule, in Race 7 at Kembla Grange Racecourse, the Carlton Dry 3.5 Class 1 Handicap over 1,300 metres in that as the rider of *Scissor Me Timbers*:

"approaching the 1,100 metres he allowed his mount to shift in when insufficiently clear of C'mon Mate, which had to be checked and a result lost its rightful running".
2. The Appellant pleaded not guilty but was found by the Stewards to have breached AR 131(a). Applying the Careless Riding Penalty Template (**Template**), the Appellant was penalised with a 5-meeting suspension, reduced from 7 meetings due to the Appellant's good record during the previous 12 months.
3. The penalty imposed by the Stewards resulted from their assessment that the grade of carelessness involved was "medium". The consequences of the carelessness were assessed as "checked and/or lost rightful running".
4. The Appellant has appealed against the severity of the penalty imposed upon him. He was self-represented at the appeal. The Racing NSW Stewards were represented by Mr S. Railton, Chairman of Stewards. An appeal book containing the transcript of the Stewards' Inquiry, and the Template as completed by the Stewards, was tendered in evidence. Film of the race from multiple angles was also shown to the Panel, and tendered as an exhibit.

5. Mr Railton submitted that Mr Spriggs was insufficiently clear, being 1 to 1 ¼ lengths clear before crossing Mr Bell's mount, *C'mon Mate*, which caused Mr Bell's mount to be checked. Mr Railton also pointed to Mr Bells evidence from the inquiry whereby he said that he thought that the Appellant was 1 to 1 1 ¼ lengths clear when crossing.
6. With respect to Ms Spriggs' evidence that the whole incident occurred over half a second in 1 to 1 ½ strides, Mr Railton submitted that this was not borne out by the film, that Mr Spriggs shifted in when insufficiently clear, did too little too late to avoid or mitigate the outcome of the incident, and that the incident actually occurred over 5 to 6 strides.
7. Mr Spriggs' submissions can be summarised as follows:
 - a. Mr Spriggs is a jockey or 16 years experience and has a good record, with only a 1 day suspension over the past 12 months.
 - b. Mr Spriggs took numerous safety precautions before and immediately after the incident, and while dealing with a challenging mount he reacted as quickly as possible to care for his fellow riders.
 - c. Mr Spriggs' level of carelessness was low rather than medium.
8. Having carefully considered the evidence and viewed the film, the Panel is of the unanimous view that the level of carelessness was medium, in that Mr Spriggs was insufficiently clear of *C'mon Mate* when shifting in, despite having ample time and opportunity to ensure this did not occur. It was this shift which caused *C'mon Mate* to be checked and lose its rightful running.
9. Mr Spriggs took some steps before shifting in to look over his shoulder but these steps did not ultimately assist Mr Spriggs in avoiding the incident. The Panel sees no reason to deviate from the Stewards' application of the Careless Riding Template, which will result in a suspension of 5 meetings.

Orders

10. The Panel makes these orders:
 - a. Appeal against severity of penalty dismissed.
 - b. Penalty of a 5-meeting suspension is confirmed. Such penalty to commence on Tuesday, 7 January 2025, and expire on Friday, 17 January 2025, on which day the Appellant may resume riding in races.
 - c. Appeal deposit forfeited.
