

MR PAUL RUSSO- INQUIRY CONCLUDED

AUGUST 10 2020

Harness Racing New South Wales (HRNSW) Stewards have concluded an Inquiry that commenced on 7 July 2020 in relation to a report from the Australian Government National Measurement Institute (NMI) that Cobalt above the threshold of 100 micrograms per litre in urine had been detected in the urine sample taken from A PASSION FOR ACES following its win in race 8, the NATIONAL TROTGUIDE ONLINE CLAIMING PACE (1609 metres) conducted at Tabcorp Park Menangle on Tuesday 17 September 2019.

The 'B' sample was confirmed by the Chemcentre (RASL) in Western Australia.

Licensed Trainer Mr Paul Russo was present with his legal representative Mr Matthew Hammond and provided evidence to the Inquiry. Mr Damian Sheales of Counsel was also present via audio/visual conference.

HRNSW Regulatory Veterinarian, Dr Martin Wainscott, was present and provided evidence to the Inquiry. Dr Derek Major provided evidence on behalf of Mr Russo.

A number of documents were entered into evidence at the Inquiry including the Certificates of Analysis in relation to the post-race urine sample and the analytical results for samples of feed and other products obtained by HRNSW Stewards during stable inspections conducted at Mr Russo's registered training establishment.

Mr Russo pleaded guilty to a charge issued by HRNSW Stewards pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule (AHRR) 190 (1), (2) & (4) as follows:

AHRR 190. (1) A horse shall be presented for a race free of prohibited substances.

(2) If a horse is presented for a race otherwise than in accordance with sub rule (1) the trainer of the horse is guilty of an offence.

(3) If a person is left in charge of a horse and the horse is presented for a race otherwise than in accordance with sub rule (1), the trainer of the horse and the person left in charge is each guilty of an offence.

(4) An offence under sub rule (2) or sub rule (3) is committed regardless of the circumstances in which the prohibited substance came to be present in or on the horse.

Mr Russo was disqualified for period of 3 years and 9 months effective immediately.

In considering penalty Stewards were mindful of the following;

- The submissions on behalf of Mr Russo;
- Mr Russo's involvement as a trainer in the harness racing industry since 1982/83 season;
- Mr Russo having had 1070 starters since that time;
- Mr Russo's third prohibited substance related offence;
- Class 1 Prohibited Substance;
- The levels of cobalt recorded (120 ug/L) and detection of Vitamin B12;
- The impact of a disqualification upon Mr Russo from a personal and financial perspective.

Acting under the provisions of AHRR 195, A PASSION FOR ACES was disqualified from the abovementioned race.

Mr Russo has appealed this decision.

For further information on this matter contact:
HRNSW Integrity Department
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