



NEWS RELEASE

JOHNNY MURTAGH TO CURTAIL HIS RIDING APPEARANCES IN BRITAIN OVER WHIP RULES

THREE times Derby winner Johnny Murtagh is the latest Ireland-based Jockey to announce that he will dramatically reduce his riding appearances in Britain because of the new whip rules.

In a scathing attack on the new restrictions and penalties, he said: "These are bad rules introduced for the wrong reasons.

"I cannot risk these lengths of bans when I come over to Britain. You won't see me in the lead-up to major meetings like Royal Ascot and races like the Derby any more. I'll probably draw the line at Group races only.

"I spoke to my boss John Oxx and he told me not to be going across to Britain for ordinary races. It's just too risky. I can't be picking up five-day bans or worse for committing the most minor of riding offences."

He revealed that he had only ridden at Newbury on Saturday after being persuaded to by trainer William Haggas whose horse Beaten Up won the Group 3 St Simon Stakes. "If William Haggas hadn't called me and persuaded me, I wouldn't have been there," he said.

Johnny Murtagh's decision to restrict his rides in Britain comes hard on the heels of jump Jockey Ruby Walsh dropping out of two meetings this week at Chepstow and Wetherby after being banned for using the whip once more than allowed under the new rules at Aintree on Saturday.

Johnny Murtagh has ridden in just under 200 races in Britain over the last two seasons, but that total will drop significantly in 2012 if the whip rules stay in place.

The Kildare-based Jockey said: "I was in France on Sunday and I have been talking with my friends and colleagues in America and Australia. None of them can believe what is happening.

"Why have the authorities lost faith in the stewards? They can judge whether someone is using the stick too much. They can police it. It's just common sense.

"The owners and the trainers in Britain are going to start to be affected by this. They need to make their voices heard so that there can be a sensible re-think over these new rules."

Professional Jockeys Association Chief Executive Kevin Darley said: "I have huge sympathy for Johnny, Ruby and all the Irish boys. They risk picking up long bans for minor offences in Britain that will stop them riding at home. It's understandable that they are going to restrict themselves to only the top races in this country."

ENDS 415 words

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