

PRESS RELEASE

PJA REACTS TO JASON WATSON'S FAILED APPEAL

Paul Struthers, PJA Chief Executive, said:

“We are bitterly disappointed to have lost Jason’s appeal and struggle to understand the decision.

“What does the BHA and the Panel say Jason should have done? Did he need to ride hands and heels for half a furlong? A furlong? All the way to the line? Did he need to ride more vigorously than hands and heels? We are concerned that the BHA and the Judicial Panel are applying the Rules with their focus on integrity, in circumstances where in Jason’s case everyone agreed he acted in good faith. This was not a ride where integrity was an issue. T

“They are also ignoring the myriad shades of grey that exist within racing. Jason’s chance had gone before the race had begun and he then acted in the best interests of the horse. After today’s ruling, how does the Judicial Panel and BHA say a jockey may act in the best interests of the horse? A reduction of a suspension from seven to five days still represents a working week where Jason will be deprived of the chance to earn his living.

“We referred the Panel to a race that had taken place at Newbury three days before the race at Nottingham. Jason rode a two year old in that race who caused problems immediately after the start and was subsequently ridden in an almost identical manner. The Stewards at Newbury did not find him in breach, yet the Nottingham Stewards did, even though he was beaten almost twice as far. What are jockeys supposed to make of that?

“In any given year there can be up to 800 individual suspensions handed to jockeys, and the PJA would be asked to review approximately 150 of those with a view to appealing. Since 2016 the PJA has sanctioned an average of 12 appeals per year. When sanctioning such a small percentage of possible appeals from Stewards’ decisions, we would expect to have a high success rate and the figures have borne that out - from 1st January 2016 to the start of August 2020, we won 86% of appeals we sanctioned, including 69% in full.

“Since August 2020, our success rate has decreased to 50% and we have only won 11% of appeals in full despite the process and rigour behind identifying appealable cases remaining the same. We are left to wonder what has changed and readily believe this is an appeal we’d have rightly won 12 months ago.”

Thursday 27th May 202



Notes for Editors:

Between 1st January 2016 and the 6th August 2020:

51 appeals sanctioned by the PJA

44 appeals successful – 86%

35 appeals successful outright – 69%

Between 7th August 2020 and 27th May 2021:

16 appeals sanctioned by the PJA

8 appeals successful – 50%

2 appeals successful in full – 11%