



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PJA STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF ROBBIE DUNNE'S DISCIPLINARY HEARING**

Following the conclusion of disciplinary proceedings heard by the BHA Disciplinary Panel, Robbie Dunne has been found in breach of all charges and has been suspended for 18 months, three months of which are suspended.

Before the PJA responds to the Disciplinary Panel's findings, we want to make it clear that the PJA has great sympathy with Bryony Frost and takes no issue with the fact that a complaint was taken to the BHA. Whilst the PJA was not involved nor was its support or advice sought before a complaint was taken to the BHA, the PJA has itself taken a separate complaint to the BHA on behalf of another jockey and supported that jockey throughout, so most certainly does not criticise Bryony for doing the same.

Bryony felt bullied, it certainly took courage to go through the process she has and we do not doubt the isolation she has felt. The PJA entirely accepts that Robbie Dunne's conduct as found by the Disciplinary Panel fell well short of the standard the PJA expects.

All that said, the PJA does not accept the Disciplinary Panel's findings in relation to the culture within and collective behaviour of the jump jockeys weighing room. It is a grossly inaccurate and wholly unfair representation of the weighing-room and a conclusion we believe is at odds with the evidence presented.

On October 25<sup>th</sup> of this year, in response to the leak of confidential case papers and the resulting coverage in the media, the PJA stated that in our view a fair hearing was impossible and called for the BHA to bring the matter to a close. Our fears have been realised and we do not believe Robbie Dunne has been subjected to a remotely fair process.

We did not call for the matter to be brought to a close to try and sweep the matter under the carpet. We did so because we were aware of the significant failings of the investigation, one that was woefully inadequate, lacked the necessary independence and allowed outside interference. We were aware of significant inconsistencies in the evidence. We were aware that the BHA had enhanced the charges that were issued in April shortly before the hearing with no new evidence. We were aware there was a still to be concluded investigation into a serious data breach. Most importantly, the PJA and its Board had for some months lost confidence in the Disciplinary Panel due to a number of serious concerns including the long and striking track record of the Disciplinary Panel's failure to ever criticise the BHA, its case management and its processes. The BHA and Disciplinary Panel have been aware of those concerns for some time.

Furthermore, the PJA and its members are appalled by the BHA's characterisation of the weighing room culture as "rancid", made via their advocate and therefore presumably under instruction. This and the BHA's conduct throughout this process is incredibly damaging.



The BHA's stance is made worse by the fact that for years the PJA and its female members have been raising concerns with the BHA about the inadequate facilities for female riders and for years the BHA did nothing. We say it is no coincidence that the BHA has only shown an interest in driving change over the last few months in light of this case.

The PJA does not condone bullying or the use of the type of language the Disciplinary Panel has concluded was used. Bullying and the use of such entirely inappropriate language cannot and will not be tolerated. This is clear from the Code of Conduct we introduced earlier this year and our members can be in no doubt that we expect them to behave in line with our Code of Conduct and to ensure their colleagues do too. We will be working with the RCA to ensure that this Code of Conduct is displayed prominently in every weighing room and changing room in the country.

Whilst we reject the wholesale criticism of the culture within the weighing room, everything is not perfect. There are lessons to be learnt for the PJA and its members and we recognise change is needed. This starts with creating facilities that do not require female jockeys to be in the male jockeys changing room in order to do their job but doesn't stop there.

The life of a jockey is unrelentingly tough for the many reasons which are widely recognised. It is a particularly dangerous occupation where the risk of a fall and serious injury is ever present and safety is of the utmost importance. The PJA therefore accepts that the language used in the weighing room will not always be the language you would expect in an office. This is no different to what happens in the pressure cooker of any professional sport. However, it is vital all jockeys adhere to our Code of Conduct and are respectful of their colleagues, whether male or female.

We are continuing to implement our restructure of earlier this year, whereby we streamlined and brought new expertise to our Board, and created a Jockeys Advisory Group, for which individuals are still being recruited. These individuals will have enhanced responsibility and become our equivalent of team leaders in the weighing room. It is also vital that we develop a more formal relationship between Jockey Coaches and senior jockeys to ensure concerns or issues about an individual's riding are dealt with in a timely but professional manner. We have already started conversations with the British Racing School, the managers of the Jockey Coaching programme, with a view to implementing this.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

#### **Notes for Editors:**

1. For more information or for media requests, please contact Paul Struthers, PJA Chief Executive, on 07966 590105 or Jon Holmes, PJA Chairman, on 07802 461706.
2. The PJA's Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).
3. **Questions and Answers**



### **Did the PJA support Bryony Frost?**

Cases that involve one rider against another, or others, are challenging and the PJA tries to navigate the difficult balance of supporting both or all riders.

In this case, the PJA was unaware of any issues and only became aware of an investigation in December 2020. Bryony is a valued member of the PJA. Like many successful, high-profile riders Bryony has a significant support team around her but the PJA has ensured it has not treated or communicated with Bryony any differently than it did before and has offered support at various and numerous times through different representatives.

### **Did you side with Robbie Dunne?**

No. In cases like these the PJA's role is to try to support both riders, as we have done in the other complaint that was brought to the BHA by the PJA. When Robbie Dunne was charged in April of this year, we assisted him with certain preliminary elements of the case because there were significant challengers in appointing legal representation.

The PJA will continue to offer the necessary support to Robbie as it has done throughout.

### **Did the weighing room ostracise Bryony Frost?**

Whilst we do not doubt that Bryony felt isolated, there is a significant and important difference between feeling isolated and being ostracised.

The PJA has not spoken to a single member who has taken issue with the matter being referred to the BHA. What they have taken issue with is the conduct of the BHA, the leaking of things to the media and what they believe to be the misrepresentation of certain elements of the case, particularly that they were collectively being accused of turning a blind eye to bullying.

### **Is there a culture of silence in the weighing room?**

Whilst the PJA accepts there is a general, natural and wholly understandable culture of resolving differences internally and not wanting to throw colleagues and friends "under the bus", the PJA does not accept there is a culture of silence.

As part of reviewing suspensions with a view to appealing, which happens around 150 times per year, the PJA requests audio files of Stewards Enquiries. It is clear from listening to these enquiries that jockeys give honest evidence.

Jockeys regularly report matters to both the PJA and BHA and the PJA will regularly share reports it receives with the BHA.

### **Why does your Code of Conduct suggest reporting breaches/behaviour that falls short to the PJA?**

It is the PJA's Code of Conduct and therefore it is only right and proper that we advise that initial reports are made to the PJA. The Code is very clear about what alternative options there are.