

# Media Release

## Racing Appeals & Disciplinary Board

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12 March 2019

### **HRV RAD Board Hearing – Steven Matson & Vince Vallelonga**

On 5 March 2019, the Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) Racing Appeals and Disciplinary (RAD) Board heard a matter in regards to charges issued by HRV Stewards against licensed driver Steven Matson and licensed trainer Vince Vallelonga.

Mr Matson and Mr Vallelonga were represented at the hearing by Mr Barry Bunton and Mr Mark Higgins; and Mr Wayne Toohey appeared for the HRV Stewards.

### **Steven Matson**

Mr Matson was issued with five charges under the Australian Harness Racing Rules (AHRR).

Charge 1, under AHRR 241 which states:

*A person shall not in connection with any part of the harness racing industry do anything which is fraudulent or corrupt.*

The particulars of this charge were that Mr Matson engaged in fraudulent conduct in that after HRV Stewards located 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' at Mr Matson's registered address on 28 September 2018, it was confirmed that Mr Matson was training these horses when Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of the horses. 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' were subsequently withdrawn by HRV Stewards from their respective engagements at Shepparton later that evening.

Charge 2, under AHRR 239A which states:

*A person whose conduct or negligence has led or could lead to a breach of the rules is guilty of an offence.*

The particulars of this charge related to Mr Matson's negligence in training 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' when Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of these horses, which led to a breach of AHRR 241 by Mr Vallelonga.

Charges 3 and 4, each under AHRR 216 which states:

*A person whether alone or in association with others shall not fraudulently or improperly nominate or start a horse in a race.*

The particulars of these charges were that Mr Matson, in association with Mr Vallelonga, fraudulently and improperly nominated 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' for races at Shepparton on 28 September 2018, when Mr Matson was training these horses but Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of the horses.

Charge 5, under AHRR 91(1) which states:

*A person shall not carry on an activity regulated by licence –*

*(a) If that person is not the holder of a current licence.*

The particulars of this charge were that Mr Matson carried on activities regulated by a trainer's licence, namely the care, control and supervision of 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily', whilst not being the holder of a current trainer's licence.

HRV RAD Board Decision:

After hearing all of the evidence, Mr Matson was found guilty of Charge 1, and subsequently HRV Stewards withdrew Charge 2. Mr Matson was also found guilty of Charge 3, Charge 4 and Charge 5.

## **Vince Vallelonga**

Mr Vallelonga was issued with four charges under the Australian Harness Racing Rules (AHRR).

Charge 1, under AHRR 241 which states:

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*A person shall not in connection with any part of the harness racing industry do anything which is fraudulent or corrupt.*

The particulars of this charge were that Mr Vallelonga engaged in fraudulent conduct in that after HRV Stewards located 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' at Mr Matson's registered address on 28 September 2018, it was confirmed that Mr Vallelonga had permitted these horses to be trained by Mr Matson when Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of the horses.

Charge 2, under AHRR 239A which states:

*A person whose conduct or negligence has led or could lead to a breach of the rules is guilty of an offence.*

The particulars of this charge related to Mr Vallelonga's negligence in permitting Mr Matson to train 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' when Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of these horses, which led to a breach of AHRR 241 by Mr Matson.

Charges 3 and 4, each under AHRR 216 which states:

*A person whether alone or in association with others shall not fraudulently or improperly nominate or start a horse in a race.*

The particulars of these charges were that Mr Vallelonga, in association with Mr Matson, fraudulently and improperly nominated 'Could Be Woody' and 'Westvillageemily' for races at Shepparton on 28 September 2018, when Mr Matson was training these horses but Mr Vallelonga was the registered trainer of the horses.

HRV RAD Board Decision:

After hearing all of the evidence, Mr Vallelonga was found guilty of Charge 1, and subsequently HRV Stewards withdrew Charge 2. Mr Vallelonga was also found guilty of Charge 3 and Charge 4.

## **Penalty**

In determining penalty, the HRV RAD Board considered Mr Matson's and Mr Vallelonga's not guilty pleas and lack of remorse; the fact that Mr Matson played a greater role in the circumstances; the history and record of both Mr Matson and Mr Vallelonga, and it was noted by the HRV RAD Board the poor history and record of Mr

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Matson; general and specific deterrence; and that integrity is paramount to the harness racing industry.

Taking all of these matters into account, the HRV RAD Board imposed the following penalties:

Steven Matson

Charge 1 – 2 year disqualification

Charge 3 – 14 day disqualification

Charge 4 – 14 day disqualification

Charge 5 – 14 day disqualification

The HRV RAD Board ordered that the disqualifications are to be served concurrently and that they are to commence immediately.

Vince Vallelonga

Charge 1 – 6 month disqualification

Charge 3 – 6 day disqualification

Charge 4 – 6 day disqualification

The HRV RAD Board ordered that the disqualifications are to be served concurrently and that they are to commence immediately.

*HRV RAD Board Panel: Judge Graeme Hicks (Chair), John Kearney.*