

8th April 2021

NOTICE OF INTEGRITY HEARINGS PANEL RESULT – Mr Ben Rawlings

PANEL: Mr Timothy McGrath (Chair), Ms Tanya Johnston and Mr Graham Loch.

STEWARDS REPRESENTATION: Mr Derek Kordick, Risk & Compliance Manager and Mr Des Jonas, Chief Steward.



Authorised for public dissemination.

On 8th April 2021 Mr Rawlings appeared before the Integrity Hearings Panel (IHP) in relation to matters arising from:

1. Mr Rawlings' communication(s) (including publications and broadcast via social media; websites; webpages; blogs; and/or, email(s)), either directly or indirectly, in relation to the Twitter account 'SA Greyhound Tips' (@TheDogsSA); and/or, the person Todd Gray, and;
2. Mr Rawlings' communication(s) (including publications and broadcasts via social media; websites; webpages; blogs; and/or, email(s)), either directly or indirectly, about greyhound racing, as they relate to the Controlling Body; Stewards; and/or, any other official(s).

Following consideration of various sources of information, Stewards considered it appropriate to subsequently charge Mr Rawlings with the following charges:

1. Breaching Greyhounds Australasia Rule 86(p) in that Mr Rawlings failed to comply with a lawful order of a Steward or other person or body having official duties in relation to greyhound racing by posting on the Twitter pages of SA Greyhound Tips and Todd John Gray, on 3rd January 2021, in contravention of an explicit order not to do so, and;
2. Breaching Greyhounds Australasia Rule 86(p) in that Mr Rawlings failed to comply with a lawful order of a Steward or other person or body having official duties in relation to greyhound racing by posting on the Twitter pages of SA Greyhound Tips, on 6th January 2021, in contravention of an explicit order not to do so.

Mr Rawlings elected to enter pleas of not guilty to each of the charges.

The IHP took evidence through the provision of a brief of evidence prepared by Mr Kordick, along with evidence from Messrs Kordick and Jonas, and also from Mr Rawlings.

It became apparent very early in the hearing, that the idiosyncrasies of using Twitter was the issue at the core of the matter.

Without seeking to be exhaustive on the issue in any way whatsoever, in posting to Twitter, one can do so in a multitude of ways. For example, one may post a message directly to an individual Twitter user, one may post to a group, a subsection of a group etc. Who will see a Tweet, may on the face of it, seem very straightforward, however, in the view of the IHP, it can be particularly complicated. It may not only be the recipient intended by the person posting the Tweet (very likely not in fact), but very likely also any person/organisation that may be following a person in the exchange of Tweets, any person/organisation that may be "mentioned" (a tweet that contains another account's Twitter username preceded by the @ symbol) or via a "Home timeline" of an account that a person/organisation is following.

Mr Rawlings gave evidence that he did indeed post the Tweets he was alleged to have posted. However, he asserted that those posts were not intended to be sent to those locations that he had been specifically ordered not to direct Tweets to, namely "@TheDogsSA" or the person Todd Gray.

The IHP accepted Mr Rawlings' evidence that it was not readily apparent that the Tweets that he had posted, could reasonably be expected to have appeared on either of the locations he had been ordered not to direct Tweets to.

The IHP accepted his evidence. Furthermore, the Stewards explicitly accepted that Mr Rawlings was honest in the evidence he gave.

Mr Rawlings, it was determined by the IHP, had made an honest and reasonable mistake of fact, namely, that in posting the posts that he accepts he did post, he was honestly and reasonably mistaken as to the fact that they would appear in the locations he was forbidden to post to.

The IHP determined that the allegations could not be supported and found Mr Rawlings not guilty of both charges.

The IHP take this opportunity to caution all participants as to the manner in which they utilise social media. It is clear from many examples in our community, that social media, while providing an unprecedented level of connectedness which offers a material social benefit, it can also inadvertently have consequences that are entirely unforeseen.

The IHP thank Mr Rawlings for his attendance and the manner in which he addressed this matter.



Timothy McGrath
GRSA INTEGRITY HEARINGS PANEL CHAIR

