

**BEFORE THE LICENSING COMMITTEE  
OF THE BRITISH HORSERACING AUTHORITY**

**SUZANNAH BEST**

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**APPLICATION REGARDING CONDITIONS**

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Introduction

1. On 12 September 2017 the Licensing Committee granted the Applicant, Mrs Suzannah Best (Mr Jim Best's wife), a Licence subject to ten conditions.
2. Previously, on 12 December 2016, Mr Jim Best was suspended for six months from British horseracing for breach of Rule (C)45, for not giving his jockey proper instructions on two occasions, and breach of (A)30.1, for failing in his general supervisory and advisory responsibilities towards a Conditional Jockey.
3. In October 2018 the Applicant's Licence was renewed. The Applicant agreed to the conditions on renewal in full. Subsequently:
  - 3.1 On 5 December 2018 the Applicant made an application to remove the conditions on her Licence. The BHA agreed to revise condition (ii) however opposed the removal of the remaining conditions.
  - 3.2 On 9 January 2019 the Licensing Committee amended Licence condition (ii) to allow Mr Best general admission to the racecourse however restricted him from secure or official areas.
  - 3.3 In October 2019 the Applicant's Licence was renewed with the conditions in place, including the revised condition. The Applicant accepted the conditions.
  - 3.4 In October 2020 the Applicant's Licence was renewed with the conditions in place. The Applicant accepted the conditions. Condition (ii) erroneously reverted back to the pre-January 2019 condition.
4. The Applicant now, through the National Trainers Federation ('NTF'), requests that conditions imposed on her Licence to Train (the 'Licence') by the Licensing Committee on 12 September 2017 (and revised on 9 January 2019) be removed in their entirety.

## The BHA's Position

5. The BHA has in mind condition (x) *'That the BHA and/or Mrs Best may apply to the Licencing Committee for the addition, revision, and/or amendment to these condition during the currency of the licence, if good cause be shown'*
6. The Applicant, it is said, does not provide justification or *good cause* for the removal of the remaining Licence conditions beyond the fact that three and a half years has elapsed since Mr Best's suspension expired and the BHA's concerns *'cannot reasonably still be considered to exist now in November 2020'*. The BHA, however, still has firm concerns including public perception has not altered in three and a half years, Mr. Best's intentions are not known and that a suspicion remains that the real motive is to allow Mr Best to become involved again in directing training operations
7. The BHA opposes the complete removal of all conditions. Following review the BHA agree to the removal of conditions (i) and (iv) on the basis that the Applicant is considered to be sufficiently experienced to conduct her training operation without such safeguards. The conditions are no longer necessary. The BHA agree that condition (ii) has erroneously reverted back to its pre-2019 wording and should immediately be amended.
8. The BHA maintains its initial stance in regard to the remaining conditions namely:
  - (a) a concern that Mrs Best has provided inaccurate information to the BHA in relation to Mr Best's true ambitions to work back in the racing industry;
  - (b) concerns in relation to the unusual circumstances regarding Mr Best and how integral his role will be in yard operations; and
  - (c) the potential consequences for the perception and integrity of horseracing.

Further that the conditions have clearly not precluded the Applicant from fulfilling her training ambitions. The conditions it is submitted are considered a necessary, reasonable and proportionate measure in order to protect racing's integrity and reputation.

## The Application:

9. Mrs. Best's application is based broadly on a perception that she is being treated as if Mr Best's six-month suspension is still in place, she has proved her worth and that as a result the day-to-day family operation of the yard is being unnecessarily shackled.

Further:

- (a) She did not appreciate that a discussion at a satisfactory yard inspection and an apparent acceptance of the conditions in force was an implied acceptance that they should all continue.
- (b) Her husband's whole working life has been in racing and working with horses but while there were/are no plans for him to have a direct input or to make decisions the retention of the restrictions were the cause of intense family frustration.
- (c) She has the capacity and hoped to expand from having 22 horses in training and having another knowledgeable and capable rider and horseman would be

of great advantage to her particularly given the well documented staffing shortage in racing.

- (d) She was concerned about her wellbeing and wished to go back 'to living a normal life'.

Decision:

10. Careful consideration was given to the 2017 application and noted were the observations that the conditions imposed were with an eye for her benefit and protection, were in order to provide a proper balance between her lifelong ambition to be a trainer and the need for the racing public to know that adequate safeguards are in place.
11. Time, however, has moved on and conditions in the sport in the last year self-evidently have become increasingly difficult. I take into account the concern of the BHA that there might be opportunity for inappropriate pressure on Mrs Best in decision making with the removal of conditions or that this is some sort of back-door re-entry to training by Mr Best, but that must be balanced against the ability for the licence holder to offer her services and take decisions as unencumbered as possible.
12. The reality is that although the yard is the family home, Mrs Best has the responsibility and must face the consequences should there be any transgressions. Mr Best knows full well the spotlight he is under. Without there being any evidence of any ongoing ambitions, the balance should now be in favour of Mrs Best in relation to direction in the everyday running of the business, and 'good cause' must be read in relation to the particular circumstances of this unusual case.
13. For these reasons the balance between integrity being upheld and seen to be upheld, and the freedom to train under the rules can be maintained by the elimination of existing conditions:
  - (iii) public contact/representation
  - (v) function no more than ad hoc riding work
  - (viii) horses linked to Mr Best not to be accepted in the yard
  - (ix) Mrs Best not apply for licence for an individual to be apprentice or conditional jockey
14. Conditions (i) and (iv) go by agreement.
15. The following however, must remain:
  - (ii) general access to a course where Mrs Best has a runner but not to secure or official areas
  - (vi) no registration of an Authority to Act for Mr Best
  - (vii) Mr Best not to be officer/shareholder in SBRL
  - (x) application facility for revision by either side.

His Hon. Brian Barker CBE, QC  
Chairman Licensing Committee  
5 February 2021