

Decision

That Tunisya continue to be declined a mark.

Background

Tunisya has had three runs. She made her debut in a conditions hurdle for three-year-old fillies unraced over jumps at Pau on 24th December 2025 for Jerome Delaunay. After being patiently ridden, Tunisya challenged at the last, where she was untidy, then picked up well when shaken up to lead in the last 50 metres and win with a bit in hand.

Tunisya then joined Faye Bramley's stable, making her British debut in a fillies junior national hunt hurdle at Wetherby on 26th February. She drifted from 6/4 to a starting price of 5/2 and finished fourth of seven, beaten 12½ lengths. She took a strong hold, tracking the slow pace, and found no extra after being untidy two out.

For her third run, she ran in a novice hurdle at Bangor on 18th April, starting at 40/1. She was beaten over 95 lengths, tenth of 12 finishers, always behind after again taking a keen hold with no cover. Tunisya's performance was subject to a running-and-riding enquiry, the outcome of which was a 14-day suspension for her rider Kevin Brogan for failing to obtain the best possible placing.

After her second run, although she was technically qualified, the BHA Handicapper declined to give Tunisya a handicap mark due to lack of evidence. They carried that decision forward after the run at Bangor, which could not be considered as counting towards a mark under the rules.

Following that decision, and after following steps 1 and 2 in the handicapping appeals process, Tunisya's trainer Faye Bramley submitted an appeal to the Handicapping Ombudsman, on the grounds that the filly should have been given a mark.

Evidence

Faye Bramley, the trainer of Tunisya, reported that when the filly came from France she lacked condition and needed to put on weight. She had the filly in a condition to run at Wetherby, where in her view Tunisya failed to settle and jumped badly.

Because Tunisya had won in France, and as the end of the season (and consequent loss of novice status) was approaching, the trainer felt she was forced to run the filly at Bangor. On the advice of Brian Hughes, who had ridden Tunisya at Bangor, the tactics employed were to try and get the filly to settle in order to try and get her to see the race out.

The trainer said she was now in a position where, unless the horse were given a mark, there were no races in which Tunisya could run, no longer being a novice.

The BHA Handicapper in question, discussed Tunisya's three runs. After the filly came from France, they asked the French handicapper whether they had a mark for the Pau form, but they did not. There was still no mark given for that run after Tunisya had run at Wetherby. In that race, the handicapper recorded the filly as losing ground late on after being quite keen, a view confirmed by the race sectionals.

With regard to the Bangor run, the handicapper pointed out that, under the rules, they are not

allowed to count the run as it was subject to a finding of a breach of the rules by the stewards.

The handicapper had the filly running to 98 at Wetherby. Of those that ran at Pau, only the sixth, at the time of the appeal, had been given a mark in France, one equivalent to 101. Using that figure, a blunt interpretation would give Tunisya a mark of 125+. The handicapper's view was that there was not enough evidence in the runs at Pau and Wetherby on which to provide a mark, even though having twice finished in the frame, Tunisya would qualify for one.

The handicapper cited several similar examples where a horse was qualified for a mark after winning in France on debut and then making the frame in Britain, but was denied a mark through lack of evidence and asked to run a third time.

Of these, Mancero was denied a mark after winning in France last May and then being beaten 29 lengths when second at Hexham in June. Mancero was given a mark of 100 after being pulled up on his next start and is currently able to run off of 83.

Mojito des Mottes, running for the same owner as Tunisya, won at Moulins in March 2025, then was beaten 18 lengths, second of three finishers, at Ludlow in November. He ran again the following month after which he was given a mark of 120. He is currently on a mark of 118, after being beaten a neck off 115 on his second handicap start.

With regard to Tunisya, the handicapper accepted that there was a lack of options for the filly due to her loss of novice status, but until there was more evidence with regard to the form at Pau there was no route to giving her a handicap mark.

Findings

The lack of certainty with regard to what Tunisya's win at Pau was worth clearly made it very difficult for the handicapper to allot a mark with any confidence. On very limited evidence, the form there could be worth as much as 125, yet the Wetherby run was assessed at just 98 and the French handicapper had declined to give an assessment of the Pau form.

The handicapper was able to demonstrate consistency of approach in the way in which they have dealt with similar cases.

As the example of Mancero shows, the handicapper might well have felt able to give a mark, even after a poor third run, but they were unable to consider that option due to Tunisya's Bangor run being subject to the stewards' finding of a rule breach.

Further Comments

The connections of Tunisya are clearly in an unfortunate position, the filly's loss of novice status meaning they have virtually no races in which they can run her until the autumn. Even then, they would probably have to run the filly at a level well above her grade.

[ENDS]