

MAINE STATE HARNESS RACING COMMISSION

IN RE:

**LISA WATSON
WALLACE WATSON
CASE NO. 2025 MSHRC 6**

DECISION AND ORDER

INTRODUCTION

On July 15, 2025, the Maine State Harness Racing Commission (Commission) held an adjudicatory hearing on the appeals filed by Lisa Watson (Mrs. Watson), owner/trainer, and Wallace Watson (Mr. Watson), owner/driver (collectively the Licensees). The Licensees' appealed¹ Presiding Judge Greg Kriby's decision that Mr. Wallace violated Commission Rule Chapter 7 § 60, the breaking rule, during the 8thth race at Bangor Raceway on June 22, 2025 (the Race).

The Licensees appeared *pro se* at the hearing. Executive Director Shane Bacon (Commission Staff) presented the Presiding Judge's evidence pursuant to 8 M.R.S. § 263-C(4)(A)(6). Assistant Attorney General Nicole Sawyer advised the Commission during the hearing.² The following Commissioners were present and participated in the hearing: Chair Harry B. Center, II, Patricia Varnum, Don Marean, Barry Norris, and Chandler Woodcock. Chair Center was the Presiding Officer during the hearing.

Commission Staff Exhibits 1 – 12, which included the video of the race, were admitted without objection into evidence. The Licensees submitted Exhibits 1 and 2, which were admitted

¹ The Licensees appealed pursuant to Commission Rule Chapter 19, § 3(1).

² AAG Sawyer had not previously advised the Commission on this matter and did not act in advocacy capacity during the hearing.

without objection.³ Commission Staff called Presiding Judge Kirby as a witness. The Licensees testified on their own behalf.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Based on the evidence heard by the Commission at the adjudicatory hearing held on July 15, 2025, the Commission adopts the following Findings of Fact:

1. Mrs. Watson is a licensed Owner and Trainer, license number 13542.
2. Mr. Watson is licensed as an Owner and Driver, license number 11153.
3. Mrs. Watson was the trainer of record for the horse Katahdin Victor, who raced at Bangor Raceway on June 22, 2025, in the Race.
4. Mr. Watson was the driver of #1 Katahdin Victor in the June 22, 2025, Race.
5. On June 22, 2025, after a judge's inquiry, Presiding Judge Kirby determined that Mr. Watson violated Chapter 7, § 60 for failing to comply with the breaking rule.
6. On the same day, the Watsons requested a judge's hearing. Presiding Judge Kirby did not change his ruling.
7. After receiving the Notice of Judge's decision, the Licensees timely appealed Presiding Judge Kirby's decision.
8. Katahdin Victor went off-gait as it was approaching the wire. After reviewing the race recording, Judge Kirby's opinion was that Mr. Watson did not take Katahdin Victor to the inside or the outside, clearance existed for him to do so, and as a result, he gained ground during part of the race before the finish. For these reasons, he placed Katahdin Victor from 2nd to 4th. Judge Kirby observed Katahdin Victor off its proper gait for 14 strides.

³ The Licensees offered Exhibits 1 and 2 the morning of the hearing, past the deadline established in the June 26, 2025 Scheduling Order. The Licensees acknowledged receipt of the Scheduling Order.

9. Mrs. Watson testified that according to Staff Exhibit 6 and Licensee Exhibit 2, the USTA chart, Katahdin Victor lost at least 3 lengths off the lead horse before the end of the race.
10. Mr. Watson testified that he moved Katahdin Victor to the outside as soon as he safely could. He did not feel it was safe for him to do so. He did not attempt to pull the horse back quicker in order to move him to the outside as Katahdin Victor was unpredictable and he did not think he could get him back on gait before the Race ended. Katahdin Victor had made breaks in the past and he was not easy to stop. Although Mr. Watson attempted to slow Katahdin Victor down, the horse did not slow much.
11. There were less than 25 strides before the wire when Katahdin Victor made a break.
12. The United States Trotting Association defines an extended break “as a horse that is not on its proper gait for 25 consecutive strides or more.” Licensees Exhibit 1.
13. 01-017 C.M.R. Ch. 7, Section 60 is the breaking rule. Section 60 requires that when a horse breaks from its gait during a race, the driver

shall, as soon as clearance exists, take the horse to the outside or inside where the most clearance exists and pull it to its gait and lose ground. Committing an extended break, or failure to take the horse to the outside or inside where clearance exists, or to properly pull the horse its gait, or to lose ground as a result of a break, is a violation of this section.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

14. Based on the findings of fact above, the Commission unanimously concluded as a matter of law that the evidence did not show that Mr. Watson violated Chapter 7, § 60, as he moved Katahdin Victor to the outside as soon as he thought it was safely possible, he attempted to slow Katahdin Victor down, and lost three lengths before the finish.
15. The Licensees’ appeal is granted, and the Race’s natural order of finish shall be restored.

16. This decision, reflected by the Commission's vote during the hearing, was stated in the record pursuant to 5 M.R.S. § 9061.

SO ORDERED,

Dated: August 19, 2025



Harry B. Center, II, Chair
Maine State Harness Racing Commission

APPEAL RIGHTS

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S. §§ 11001-11003, any party that appeals this Decision and Order must file a Petition for Review in the Maine Superior Court within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Order. The petition shall specify the person seeking review, the manner in which they are aggrieved and the final agency action which they wish reviewed. It shall also contain a concise statement as to the nature of the action or inaction to be reviewed, the grounds upon which relief is sought and a demand for relief. Copies of the Petition for Review shall be served by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested upon:

1. the Maine State Harness Racing Commission,
2. all parties to the agency proceeding, and
3. the Attorney General.