

## MOTORSPORT NEW ZEALAND (INC) National Court of Appeal

### Appeal by Blake Knowles

Hearing on 21 March 2024  
before  
John Langford (Chair), Paul Te Punga and Aaron Sherriff

### DECISION of the COURT 21 March 2024

#### Background

- 1 This appeal arises out of New Zealand Formula Ford Championship Race 3 at Euromarque Motorsport Park (Ruapuna) on 11 February 2024 (permit 231587).
- 2 During the course of the race, there was contact between car #50 (driven by Blake Knowles) and car #69 (driven by Sebastian Manson) while Mr Knowles was making a pass of Mr Manson on the outside of corner 2. The contact caused damage to the rear axle of Mr Manson's car and Mr Manson did not finish.
- 3 The race director ruled this was a racing incident and no further action would be taken.
- 4 Mr Manson protested the race director's ruling. The stewards subsequently decided Mr Knowles was in breach of Appendix 4, Schedule Z, Article 15.3, and applied a penalty of an additional 5 seconds to his race time.
- 5 Mr Knowles has appealed the stewards' decision to this Court of Appeal.

#### Issues

- 6 The principal issue is: was this a racing incident, or did Mr Knowles cause a collision in breach of Article 15.3 and the Code of Driving Conduct Guidelines. This issue turns on two considerations:
  - 6.1 Was there "reasonable overlap" on approach to corner 2?
  - 6.2 Was appropriate "racing room" given on the exit of corner 2?
- 7 If this was a collision, was the penalty the stewards then applied appropriate?

#### Discussion

- 8 We have reviewed the written statements and videos submitted, heard from Mr Knowles and Mr Manson, and heard and read views from several independent witnesses.
- 9 In reviewing this material, we consider:
  - 9.1 Mr Knowles was making a pass of Mr Manson on the outside and, coming into corner 2, had achieved a reasonable overlap on the outside.
  - 9.2 In attempting to pass, Mr Knowles did not leave the circuit (as defined in Article 13.2).
  - 9.3 On exiting corner 2, Mr Knowles remained within the confines of the track limits.

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- 9.4 The Code of Driving Conduct says the onus is on both drivers to ensure no other driver who has reasonable overlap is forced off the circuit.
- 9.5 Mr Knowles exited the corner with no room to spare on the outside.
- 9.6 Article 15.2 (onus on an overtaking driver to do so safely) must be read in conjunction with the Code of Driving Conduct. Mr Manson failed to leave sufficient racing room (a car width), which is contrary to Principle 4 of that Code. Example 4 of the Code of Driving Conduct describes "forcing another driver off the circuit", which is a good description of this incident.

## Decision

- 10 In the circumstances, the appeal is successful. That is, Mr Knowles did not breach Article 15.3, the stewards' decision is overturned, and the penalty the stewards applied to Mr Knowles is quashed.
- 11 We order the return of the appeal fee to Mr Knowles, and all other costs are to lie where they fall.
- 12 The Court of Appeal wishes to thank all those involved in this hearing for their attendance and assistance.



John Langford



Paul Te Punga



Aaron Sherriff

Signed by the National Court of Appeal Panel on **21 March 2024**