

COURT OF APPEALS

JUDGEMENT OF THE COURT OF APPEALS William Wald vs. SOM COA Ref. No. 25-04-SE March 3, 2025

FACTS IN BRIEF

On Saturday, February 8, 2025, following Race 1 for Groups 1&2 at the Cabin Fever Cure 2025 held at Sebring International Raceway, Assistant Chief Steward Stu Cowitt filed a Request for Action (RFA) seeking investigation of contact between William Wald, driver of Formula S (FS) #03, and Darryl Shoff, driver of Prototype (P) #94, in a waving yellow zone at Turn 6 on the long course.

The Stewards of the Meeting (SOM) Sherri Croyle, Pedro Prado, and Phil Croyle (Chairman) met to hear and rule on the RFA. The SOM determined Mr. Wald violated General Competition Rules GCR 6.11.1.A. (Avoid contact) and 9.3.11.A. (Video camera) and penalized him with disqualification from Race 1 and a reprimand. The ruling incurred four penalty points against his competition license.

Mr. Wald appealed the decision of the SOM.

DATES OF THE COURT

The Court of Appeals (COA), Costa Dunias, Lee Hill, and Laurie Sheppard (Chairman) met on February 27, 2025, to review, hear, and render a decision.

DOCUMENTS AND OTHER EVIDENCE RECEIVED AND REVIEWED

1. Request to Appeal from William Wald, submitted February 11, 2025.
2. Official Observer's Report and related documents, received February 19, 2025.
3. Statement from Chief Steward Leland Miller, received February 24, 2025.
4. Email, photos, and video from Phil Croyle, received February 25, 2025.

FINDINGS

In his appeal, Mr. Wald stated after exiting Turn 5 where a double yellow flag was displayed, he approached Car #94 which was traveling at a normal pace. Car #94 slowed abruptly to avoid a Formula Vee which Mr. Wald could not see. Mr. Wald was unable to slow quickly enough and contacted the rear of Car #94. He acknowledged none of the three cars captured the incident on video. Mr. Wald requests "that [the COA] interview all three drivers involved and come to understand this was unavoidable contact."

GCR 8.4.5.C. states, "At no time shall the Court of Appeals act as a Chief Steward, SOM, or Review Committee." The COA is therefore unable to grant Mr. Wald's request to rehear the RFA by interviewing all parties and reaching a new conclusion. The COA will, however, consider all relevant materials and determine if the GCR and Supplemental Regulations were administered appropriately, fairly, and equitably as per GCR 8.4.3.A.2. (Appeal Procedures) and 8.4.5. (Hearing Appeals).

The SOM reviewed witness statements, race logs, corner reports, and timing data, and used video from other drivers to verify the flag conditions leading up to Turn 6. The incident investigation was hampered by a lack of video of the contact itself. The SOM cited both drivers for failure to have a functioning camera. The SOM did not find corroborating evidence to support Mr. Wald's assertion that Car #94 made an aggressive move into FS #03's path and they found Mr. Wald was responsible for the contact.

The COA reviewed the documentation provided by the SOM, including witness statements and all other evidence. The COA also reviewed statements from the Chief Steward and the Chairman of the SOM. Photos and video provided to the COA did not show the incident but did confirm the yellow flag conditions leading up to Turn 6. The race log indicates a gap of more than five minutes from the first call announcing Turn 6 was waving yellow until the incident. It is clear Turns 4 and 5 were also displaying a yellow flag. Mr. Wald incorrectly stated the incident occurred under double yellow, but it is evident he was aware there were yellow flags controlling the area.

Mr. Wald provided no new evidence or unconsidered information. He did not submit proof of any rule administered inappropriately, unfairly, or inequitably, nor did the COA find evidence of such. Turn 6 was waving yellow at the time of the incident and per GCR 6.1.1.A., drivers are to "slow significantly and be prepared to stop" when a yellow flag is waved. Mr. Wald was unable to stop before he made contact with Car #94.

The COA finds the SOM gave the available evidence due consideration and made a serious effort to uncover additional information. The SOM came to a thoughtful and reasoned conclusion and applied a measured penalty that was within their purview.

DECISION

The COA upholds the SOM decision in its entirety. Mr. Wald's appeal is not well founded, and his entire appeal fee will be retained by SCCA.

COURT OF APPEALS

JUDGEMENT OF THE COURT OF APPEALS Michael Loughran vs. SOM COA Ref. No. 25-05-SE March 12, 2025

FACTS IN BRIEF

On Sunday, February 9, 2025, following Race 2 for Group 6 at the Cabin Fever Cure 2025 held at Sebring International Raceway, Assistant Chief Steward Herb Shipp filed a Request for Action (RFA) seeking investigation of contact between Brian Eiroa, driver of Spec Miata (SM) #31, and Connor Thomas, driver of SM #125, and a possible third unidentified car in Turn 17 on the long course.

The Stewards of the Meeting (SOM) Sherri Croyle, Shelly Pritchett, and Phil Croyle (Chairman) met to hear and rule on the RFA. The SOM determined the unidentified car was SM #3, driven by Michael Loughran, which initiated the incident by having contact with Car #31. The SOM found Mr. Loughran violated General Competition Rules (GCR) 6.11.1.A. (Avoidable contact), 6.11.1.B. (Racing room), and 6.11.1.D. (Unsafe pass attempt) and penalized him with loss of finishing position (moved to last in class) and three race weekends probation. The penalty incurred three penalty points against his competition license.

Mr. Loughran appealed the decision of the SOM.

DATES OF THE COURT

The Court of Appeals (COA), Bev Heilicher, Jack Kish, and Lee Hill (Chairman) met on March 6, 2025, to review, hear, and render a decision.

DOCUMENTS AND OTHER EVIDENCE RECEIVED AND REVIEWED

1. Request to Appeal from Michael Loughran, submitted February 19, 2025.
2. Official Observer's Report and related documents and video, received February 25, 2025.
3. Additional unsolicited YouTube video, received February 25, 2025.
4. Email, statement, and photos from Phil Croyle, received February 28, 2025.

FINDINGS

In his appeal, Mr. Loughran stated he was fully alongside Car #31 mid-corner of Turn 17 establishing his right to racing room. He asserted that Car #31 failed to track out in a two-wide situation, instead turning across his nose, making contact unavoidable despite his controlled inputs.

The SOM reviewed video from the cars involved, witness statements, race logs, corner reports, and used video from other drivers to determine the contact between Car #31 and Car #125 was the result of a spin by Car #31 which was caused by contact between Car #31 and Car #3. The SOM found while Car #3 provided racing room to Car #31, Mr. Loughran failed to control his car on the exit of Turn 17. His left front contacted Car #31 in the right rear causing Car #31 to spin 90 degrees clockwise with the rear of car #31 heading towards the outside wall, where it was hit by Car #125.

The COA reviewed the videos and documentation provided by the SOM, including witness statements and all other evidence. The COA concluded the incident occurred in Turn 17 on the first lap of the race in the middle of the Spec Miata field. Car #31 (Eiroa) entered Turn 17 about a car length ahead of Car #3 (Loughran). Car #31 braked early, taking a wider line into the corner while Car #3 took a slightly quicker approach on an inside line that resulted in the two cars reaching the bridge with some overlap. Car #31's video shows the nose of Car #3 briefly even with Car #31's right side passenger door before quickly receding from view as the two cars passed under the bridge. Car #31 followed a consistent trajectory out of the corner and made no apparent effort to tighten his line or to impede Car #3. Car #3 attempted to match the speed of Car #31, while it became apparent his line needed to tighten further. Car #3's tighter (and bumpier) line left him unable to maintain position relative to Car #31 and his attempt to do so led directly to the contact between the left front of Car #3 and the right rear of Car #31 just past Flag Station 17-A.

The COA finds Car #3 was not sufficiently alongside Car #31 to have established the right to racing room – or to be reasonably certain the driver of Car #31 was aware of his proximity. Therefore, Mr. Loughran is responsible for initiating contact and depriving Mr. Eiroa of racing room. GCR 6.11.1.D. states, “the overtaking driver is responsible for the decision to pass another car and to accomplish it safely.”

The COA finds the SOM made a thoughtful and reasoned decision based on the testimony and video evidence available and applied a measured penalty that was within their purview.

DECISION

The COA upholds the SOM decision in its entirety. Mr. Loughran's appeal is well founded, and his appeal fee, less the amount retained by SCCA, will be returned.