



DETERMINATION OF MERGER NOTIFICATION M/20/026 – ROCKETSPORTS/BENCHWARMERS

Section 21 of the Competition Act 2002

Proposed acquisition by Rocket Sports Internet Limited of sole control of BenchWarmers Limited.

Dated 25 September 2020

1. On 10 September 2020, in accordance with section 18(1)(b) of the Competition Act 2002, as amended (the “Act”), the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (the “Commission”) received a notification of a proposed acquisition whereby Rocket Sports Internet Limited (“Rocketsports”), would acquire sole control of BenchWarmers Limited (“BenchWarmers”) (the “Proposed Transaction”).
2. Given that BenchWarmers carries on a “media business”¹ within the State and Rocketsports carries on a “media business” elsewhere,² the Commission considers that the Proposed Transaction constitutes a “media merger” for the purposes of Part 3A of the Act.
3. The business activities of the undertakings involved are:
 - Rocketsports is a sports media business based in the UK that operates a network of sports news websites and associated social media accounts. Rocketsports is privately owned and Will Muirhead is the only shareholder with a holding of more than 20% of issued share capital. Websites operated by Rocketsports include caughtoffside.com, empireofthekop.com and football-espana.net; and
 - BenchWarmers operates the sports news website www.benchwarmers.ie and the associated social media accounts. BenchWarmers’ current shareholders are

¹ BenchWarmers carries on a “media business”, as defined in section 28A(1) of the Act in the State.

² Rocketsports carries on a “media business”, as defined in section 28A(1) of the Act, in the United Kingdom.



Landmark Digital Limited, which is a member of the Irish Times Group,³ and Neville O'Donoghue, who is the founder of BenchWarmers.

4. The Commission has concluded that the Proposed Transaction falls within the scope of paragraph 2.1 of the Simplified Merger Notification Procedure Guidelines for assessing certain notifiable mergers or acquisitions under section 18(1)(b) of the Act since Rocketsports and BenchWarmers each have a negligible share of any potential product and geographic market in the State and their combined market share is less than 15% of any potential product and geographic market in the State.
5. In light of this, the Commission considers that the Proposed Transaction will not substantially lessen competition in any market for goods or services in the State.

Ancillary Restraints

6. No ancillary restraints were notified.

Determination

7. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, in accordance with section 21(2)(a) of the Competition Act 2002, as amended, has determined that, in its opinion, the result of the proposed acquisition whereby Rocket Sports Internet Limited would acquire sole control of BenchWarmers Limited will not be to substantially lessen competition in any market for goods or services in the State, and, accordingly, that the acquisition may be put into effect subject to the provisions of section 28C(1)⁴ of the Act.

For the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

Brian McHugh
Member
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

³ See merger determination *M/17/017 – Landmark/BenchWarmers*, available at: <https://www.ccp.commerce.ie/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/04/M-17-017-Landmark-BenchWarmers-Public.pdf>

⁴ Section 28C(1) of the Competition Act 2002, as inserted by section 74 of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014.