

Steve Pellinen's response to Dave Koenig's response. 9 September 2022

Dave's approach to this is disturbing. I say this as someone who is a disinterested party with no axe to grind or friend to defend. My personal interactions with Dave over the years have been mostly stimulating and enjoyable, and include live and virtual Scrabble® and various discussions and debates. My superficial impression of him from these interactions was that he seemed self-absorbed and not very tolerant of differing views, but very knowledgeable on a variety of subjects. I had no knowledge of his relationships within the Scrabble® community until I became aware of his relationships with Jennifer and Evans after he basically told me he was out to get them (in what way wasn't clear). This occurred in a conversation I had with him at a tournament in late 2019, and I was disturbed enough to warn them of what I had heard. They thanked me and said they would handle it. In following up, I became more aware of the history of his interactions with Jennifer and subsequently learned of his relationship with Lola. What I was hearing and learning concerned me greatly, and moved me to get involved. Dave was showing a pattern of behavior towards women that was inappropriate in any situation, but was particularly worrisome in the context of our Scrabble® community where relationships begin and end and begin again with new people. Who would be Dave's next victim? Knowing what we know now, we are obligated to out him so others know what we know. While it is not the responsibility of the organizations to monitor relationships, it is their responsibility to do as much as they can to provide safe and supportive environments to play Scrabble®.

To be very brief and blunt, there should be no place for Dave Koenig within our Scrabble® communities. His pattern of behavior towards women, his inability to control his rage, his inability to see how he affects others, his threats of violence all point to what seems an obvious action on our part as a sanctioning organization. I know some of what makes this difficult is Dave's prominence as a player and friendships he has maintained with a number of players that most of us like and respect. Yes, it is difficult, but if you replace Dave with Player A and Jennifer and Evans and Lola and Darrell with Players B, C, D and E, without knowing anything about any of them except what has been submitted in this case, I don't think any reasonable member of our orgs would have difficulty with suspending Player A. Every person I have shared this information with is appalled and frightened, and would fully support severe sanctions. This includes players and non-players. His continuing presence at tournaments and clubs would lead to much unpleasantness and turmoil. Many players would refuse to attend events that included him. We have experienced this before and should have learned our lessons. This should not be a situation that we turn over to our directors.

Again, objectively, this should be an easy case to adjudicate. Dave, and others like him, should not be allowed to poison our communities. Dave shows no real awareness of how his words and actions have affected these women. He continues to explain and defend without acknowledging their fear of him or how he has traumatized them. For the most part he picks and chooses communications that he thinks show him in a good light without addressing their fear and attempts to get him to leave them alone. Instead of showing remorse or contrition he looks for friends who will defend him or support his bad behavior without giving them the whole story. It is difficult to believe that anyone who reads these women's accounts of their dealings with Dave could have any reaction other than disgust or concern, and hope that he won't do it again with an unsuspecting victim. That is the point of this action - to protect our players from someone who has shown a pattern of behavior that is a threat. We should show no tolerance for this kind of behavior and send a clear message both to Dave and to all of our players that we are serious about creating a safe and supportive environment. There are resources and experiences available to all of us can help much in understanding the dynamics of situations like this. Gavin de Becker's "*The Gift of Fear*" is a book I highly recommend. It is an eye-opener for both men and women and should encourage those that are hesitant to take action.