

Dave Koenig and I have been friends since the first time we battled over the board, which was way back in 2004. Dave is a very intelligent person and we've had a lot of good conversations over the years about Scrabble, baseball, politics, family, etc. We've hung out both at tournaments and outside of tournaments; he's been to my house several times.

In the name of full disclosure, I'd just like to also state that I consider Evans Clinchy a friend, though Evans and I have never been in any sort of regular contact outside of tournaments. The same is true for Steve Pellinen. I know Jennifer Clinchy a little, and I have enjoyed the minimal interactions we've had. Lola McKissen I don't think I've ever met in person. I'm Facebook friends with all four.

I would like to speak to Dave's character. Dave is a bleeding liberal, and strongly believes in equality and good treatment for all. He regularly posts about causes he believes in, most memorably the anti-gun charity Everytown for Gun Safety. Dave would never own a gun or use one. Over the board, he's both a graceful winner and a courteous loser and he tries hard to continually be an ambassador for the game, particularly for the Collins/international play. His Facebook posts about Scrabble have always been thoughtful and interesting, and the Scrabble world certainly needs more good content.

However, Dave is currently banned from Scrabble in all three North American organizations. NASPA, though, is by far the one that matters most to Dave. I strongly disagree with NASPA's decision, and the way it happened seemed completely unjust. My reasoning:

1. A decision to ban Dave was made by NASPA without letting Dave respond to, or even see, the statements made on September 9th. This feels doubly strange to me—why the secrecy and why the rush? Dave was not trying to play tournaments at that time—he knew he was essentially frozen from signing up until the official verdict happened anyway. So why decree a verdict when the case hadn't been properly heard to its end?
2. NASPA knows it didn't handle the Sam Kantimathi accusations well, and this feels like a large overcorrection for that—when the situations aren't even remotely comparable. Dave was in two completely consensual relationships that ended mutually. In Lola's case, she and Dave stayed in friendly contact afterwards. Whereas Sam forced his way onto many unwilling women during NASPA-sanctioned events. Nothing consensual about that. Don't unfairly punish others because Sam got off too easy.

I beg NASPA to rethink this decision. Look at the documentation Dave provides and give him a proper hearing.

Scott Appel
April 26, 2023