

On Friday, April 20, 2018, 4:38:42 PM EDT, Danny Rensch <[xx@chess.com](mailto:xx@chess.com)> wrote:

Dear Akshat,

Without another way to start writing one of the more difficult emails of my life, I will jump directly to the purpose of this thread: Chess.com has closed your account for violating our fair play policy.

I know this email is going to come as a surprise. I know it's going to be very hard for you to consider the right way forward from here. I have full compassion for your situation, and I promise you that, with your cooperation, I am going to do my best to make this right.

Before reflecting on anything about our decision, please also know that all actions taken regarding the closure of your account have been done privately, with no public statements, descriptions or otherwise "marks" on your profile of any kind. NO public announcements have been made, and in fact, no one other than myself and a few key members of our company are even aware of this situation. Your account remains, to the public eye, in full, good standing, and while I normally allow my Account Reviews team to handle these cases themselves, I have personally taken the lead here out of respect for you and in the hopes of reaching an amicable solution.

Moving forward with my explanation on why we have done this, the best I can offer is that our system is designed to detect patterns of "in-human" approaches to chess games, and effectively determine, beyond reasonable doubt and regardless of a player's "chess strength", that a game or series of games were played using engine assistance. Our systems have been tested thoroughly by numerous leading statisticians in the field (see one such testimonial from Harvard) and we are prepared to stand by them against the interrogation of any parties and in a legal court of law, but we are not required per our terms found at [chess.com/legal](http://chess.com/legal) to disclose any reasons (ever) as to why we are closing someone's account, nor will we be revealing our proprietary systems or advanced cheat detection algorithms.

While I cannot go into all the details of which specific games that were found to be in violation of our rules, nor will I be discussing the full spectrum of why we are so certain, what I can tell you is that we would not be acting here or making this communication if we were not 100% sure that you did indeed use engine assistance at some point in your games on Chess.com. In your case, and because I want to show you that I am sincere in my hopes to move past this towards a bright future where you can continue to enjoy Chess.com, I am going to reveal a \*little\* more than I normally would, and suggest to you that we have been sure of your actions for quite some time. Out of respect for you, we have waited for the most thorough of reviews and scrutiny before acting...

But once something happens, and we are sure of our findings, we must

act. Even if we don't want to. Not to spread shame or to attack anyone for their past mistakes (we all make them), but to stand by our commitment to the global chess community and to all titled players that, should someone ever break the rules, regardless of who they are or why they did it, we will always act and defend the integrity of games played on Chess.com.

So where do we go from here and what are we asking of you? First, the hardest truth is that we cannot allow you back on our site without an acknowledgement that what we are saying is true. We have received confessions from GMs north of 2650+ FIDE, and you would never know it because we work with them to protect their reputation, allow them back on our site, and, after honoring our requests and "serving their time", they have all gone back to enjoying Chess.com, knowing they are playing on their second, and only "last chance" account.

Second, should you agree, there must be steps taken to create a new account. This process (of creating a new profile for you) will also be handled with great discretion, but indeed it is a requirement that you start fresh with a clean history of games.

Finally, you must serve a small ban on competing in our Titled Tuesday and other cash/prize events. Our normal restriction for players is a 1-year minimum promise not to enter or compete in our Titled Tuesday or other cash events, but in your case, I am offering a short, 3-month ban (again, this will remain private and only between us) from Titled Tuesdays only (meaning if you chose to play in other events with cash prizes, like Arena Kings which has prizes for streaming, not placing), this would still be OK during your probation period of 3-months.

All of the above is being give to you with an understanding that will likely also want to move on from this, an appreciation by us of how much you love our site (we see it everyday!) and because we believe nobody deserves to be judged harshly or forever, if they choose to acknowledge their shortcomings. Everyone should be given a chance to make things right for their future, and we hope you will choose to have a future on Chess.com.

Of course, you have my word that everything discussed here will remain confidential.

Thank you for your time in reading this email, and for considering our position, and I look forward to your response.

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Danny Rensch  
CCO, Chess.com LLC

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On 4/20/2018 7:40 PM, Akshat Chandra wrote:

Hi Danny,

I couldn't help but smile when reading this email.

The accusation of cheating is certainly shocking, but what is even more so is Chess.com's holier than thou explanation.

A player is essentially given no voice. No due process. The verdict is final.

I understand you have a system in which you place implicit trust. Great.

But the data you accumulate can never provide a conclusive judgment.

The testimonial itself states high probability.

*"...if we were not 100% sure.."*

Danny, your system is not 100% accurate. It's not possible. I don't cheat.

In a way, being flagged by your system for my strong and computer-like moves is the highest badge of honor I can wear.

Also, the promises of confidentiality come off as extremely condescending, for you're forcing the person to admit to your predetermined conclusion.

An amusing irony is that I have been setting up an account to begin streaming on for the last couple of weeks and spent much of the day working on another platform to setup things.

Of course, I was planning to stream on chess.com as well in the future. In fact, I recorded myself playing during one of the games in last month's Titled Tuesday as a trial.

It's now up to you.

If you feel this is the road you wish to go down, then that's your call.

But your conclusions are totally incorrect and goes to show how placing complete trust in a system which can never be 100% accurate leaves you exposed to making poor judgments and eventually embarrassment.

Regards,  
Akshat

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On Monday, April 23, 2018, 2:45:06 PM EDT, Danny Rensch <[xx@chess.com](mailto:xx@chess.com)> wrote:

Dear Akshat,

First, my apologies for the delay in getting back to you on such a critical issue - but family times were busy over the weekend.

I know this is a difficult topic, and I'm sorry. These conversations are by far the hardest part of my job and are even more difficult for the people I am communicating to.

You have made your perspective clear, and I respect how hard this is for you. However, in an effort to share my perspective on the big

picture in regards to your relationship with Chess.com, your potential participation in any/all of our events, series or leagues, I am going to say the following in the hopes you will take some time to consider your options:

1) I'm not saying you're "a cheater". I don't operate that way. The number of good people and Grandmasters (including American titled players you know) who have broken these rules would shock you. But perhaps what would surprise you even more is the number of initial upset emails I've received (naturally), only to later be approached with a different tone. This experience has certainly changed my perspective, and it's why, regardless of your response to my first email, I am not going to stop having compassion for your situation, nor am I going to close the door (unless you close it yourself) on an opportunity see this differently. I believe good people make mistakes and have every right to be treated respectfully and given the opportunity to make things right. That's not a pie in the sky or "holier than thou" explanation, but a true fact of how I've come to see these things in my experience with Chess.com.

2) I agree with you that you should consider most of your performances as a "badge of honor" for you chess games! You're a strong chess player who often does matchup with engines (like other GMs) on a regular basis. That said, our system goes well beyond the way most people think of this kind of analysis. We've put 7+years of significant financial investment into our data and statistical model and are fully confident in its findings.

3) To clarify the semantics again, I want to note that I was never calling any particular performances outside of the \*single set of games from 2015\* into question. Letting you know specifically where we caught the anomaly in your play is more than I have ever told any other players. I do it, as I promised, because I am hopeful you'll see that I'm not calling you a "consistent cheater"... but you we believe you did access outside assistance during this set of games from 2015. We believe this beyond any reasonable doubt and will stand by it. Again, I'm very sorry about this, and it pains me to say this position will not change.

Finally, I'd like to invite you to take a second to consider your position and what you may lose in regards to your relationship with Chess.com. It may make you pause and wonder why we are holding you accountable for something so long ago? The honest truth is we are constantly reviewing the past and present of all the top players on our site. We will never stop doing that. As a GM who previously planned to participate in our prize events, this should give you confidence that someone in this chess community has your back, and that we have the back of all honest chess players, which I believe, for the most part, you have been.

I wish you the best in chess and in life. Your participation will be missed on our site as well as in the PRO Chess League next year. If

you would like to discuss further, please remember that all of our discussions are completely confidential.

Best of luck to you, Akshat, regardless of where this goes from here...

Danny Rensch  
CCO, Chess.com LLC

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On 4/26/2018 1:40 PM, Akshat Chandra wrote:

Hi Danny,

This is descending into absurdity, wouldn't you say?

*"...I want to note that I was never calling any particular performances outside of the \*single set of games from 2015\* into question."*

I can't remember the games I played on Chess.com during 2015 when I was around age 15, but what I can unequivocally recall is that I never used any "outside assistance" then, now, and ever.

If you're so convinced of something I did 3 years ago, why was this not mentioned sooner? Surely an ace system that you swear by could not have taken 3 years to verify something which you believe is beyond any reasonable doubt.

I appreciate your clarification, but saying I was considered "only" as a one-time user of outside assistance, instead of a "consistent cheater," doesn't really make me feel any better or change my position.

This all seems like a vindictive witchhunt set in motion to find anything to ban me from the site, and that has led you year-by-year all the way back to 2015.

Chess.com is an essential part of my life, because of its strong player base. But it doesn't mean I'm going to be coerced into admitting to cheating back in 2015. Unfortunately, with this approach of forcing people to admit they cheated without providing evidence or being open to the possibility of being wrong, chess.com will only keep losing that strong base over time to platforms that still respect due process and skilled chess players.

I don't know how many other players feel they were silenced by Chess.com's heavy-handedness, and "confessed" even when they didn't cheat. Perhaps they felt they didn't have a voice and grudgingly accepted. That's the price we pay for making Chess.com so popular and powerful that it now practices, *my way or highway*.

Missing the PCL will surely hurt too.

But it's not right to engage in such arm-twisting, that I'll be banned from the league.

Your statement reflects poorly on Commissioner Greg Shahade.

Surely, Greg makes his own decisions and does not blindly follow what Chess.com tells him to do.

And your 2015 allegation has nothing to do with ProChess League games.

It is inaccurate to refer to your system as being 100% correct. Such 100% accurate predictive systems in Chess don't exist; only high probability ones do. No one will issue a 100% testimonial, and even the Harvard one you sent can only talk about a high probability. I am part of the group which represents the low probability event that will always keep yours or any other chess system from being perfect.

If you wish to send your "clinching evidence" to me then I can try to comment further. Otherwise, it still remains a holier than thou argument which gives me no voice but only the directive, we know you are wrong and so accept it and do what we say; otherwise, we ban you.

There was an instance when your brand ambassador accused me of cheating, and Chess.com players created a [Reddit discussion](#) and dismissed the accusation. Relying on your system or perhaps even on someone's complaints is pushing you into making an error. Don't let the system take over your personal judgment.

I'm a 2800 level player now on Chess.com, and you found your "evidence" running back thousands of games ago in 2015.

I've more to lose from cheating in a game I love so much then you probably even realize.

Just think about it.

Would someone who is a National High School Champion, US Junior Champion, National High School Blitz Champion, the highest rated USCF Rapid junior player in the country, who documented his journey on his blog for years and assisted so many folks, who is taking a huge risk by not enrolling in College for the past 2 years so he can pursue chess, who is actively looking for chess sponsorship, who moved to St. Louis to further his chess career, jeopardize all that effort by using unfair means to succeed in meaningless online play?

Offering to keep things confidential is irrelevant to me for I've done nothing wrong. You're more than welcome to make the public aware of your decision, as I will be forced to now as people have already started asking about my absence on Chess.com.

I appreciate your kind words about my future, as ironic as they may appear considering the situation we find ourselves in.

Best to you as well.

Regards,  
Akshat

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On Thursday, April 26, 2018 at 04:55:23 PM EDT, Danny Rensch <xx@chess.com> wrote:

I'm really sorry about this situation Akshat.

Unfortunately, Chess.com stands by its decision regarding your

account. Please get back to me should you ever have a change in your perspective.

Wishing you the best in chess and life.

Danny Rensch  
CCO, Chess.com LLC