Dr Disrespect’s suspension is a big moderation moment for Twitch

Last week, Twitch banned one of its top streamers — Guy Beahm, better known as Dr Disrespect — for broadcasting from a public bathroom at E3. The ban now puts Twitch in a tricky position: Twitch needs to show that violating the company’s guidelines comes with real punishment, but a lengthy suspension means losing one of the platform’s biggest stars to competitors, like YouTube.

Beahm is one of Twitch’s most popular streamers, with more than 3.2 million followers and approximately 20,000 paid subscribers, according to analytics firm SocialBlade. Subscribers pay at least $5 per month, which Twitch typically takes a 50 percent cut of, while non-subscribers are served with ads before the stream kicks in, with Twitch earning the majority of revenue when they play. Losing Beahm means losing viewers and subscription revenue that Twitch can’t easily redirect the way YouTube might just autoplay on a different person’s video.

Beahm’s suspension will show how seriously Twitch takes moderation

At the same time, because Beahm is a high-profile streamer, Twitch’s punishment here may set the tone for how seriously its community takes the platform’s rules. Moderation efforts by other platforms reliant on user-generated content have become an important discussion in recent months, as YouTube battles its own array of problems that came from ignoring festering issues, like hosting content executives know is harmful to society. Despite the monetary blow, Twitch seems to

be taking a stance against its personalities using the platform to perform dangerous, harmful, and potentially illegal stunts.

Beahm was banned last Tuesday after he broadcasted himself in a bathroom at E3 for the fourth time. Streamers are prohibited from "sharing content that violates another's reasonable expectation of privacy, for example streaming from a private space, without permission," according to Twitch's community guidelines.

Twitch's broadcast policies state that account suspensions are usually temporary and can last between one and 30 days. But streamers can be suspended indefinitely for more "severe violations," even if it's their first offense. It's up to Twitch to determine what a severe violation is, though. Earlier this year, a man who was seemingly heard attacking his wife on stream, leading to assault charges against him, was allowed back on Twitch after two weeks. (Twitch later reinstated the ban after community outcry.)

But suspensions, often referred to as "bans," are rarely permanent. When streamers are suspended or take breaks, they often come back to more fanfare and attention than ever.

"Is it a mistake if you do it four times? No."
Beahm hasn't taken the suspension very seriously so far. He posted an edited version of his time at E3 on YouTube that includes a joke about the Twitch suspension. The video has more than 545,000 views. He's also created a series of emotes (a version of emoji that Twitch viewers use in chat) mocking the incident, with the implication being that they'll be available to Twitch viewers upon his return.

Major members of the Twitch community have spoken out both against and in defense of Beahm. Turner "Tfue" Tenney tweeted out a joke in support of Beahm, while Tyler "Ninja" Blevins called it a flagrant violation of Twitch's rules. Top streamer

Michael “Shroud” Grzesiek suggested that Beahm should know better.

“Is it a mistake if you do it four times? No,” Grzesiek said during one stream. “The first time, I can somewhat let it slide. Three times after that, there’s just nothing you can say.”

But Beahm is ultimately too important to Twitch to be kicked off, argued Ethan Klein, host of the popular *H3 Podcast*, which often provides commentary on creator culture. Banning Beahm is a risk for Twitch, as it would mean losing a popular streamer to a competitor. If Twitch were to permanently ban him, Beahm would likely continue on YouTube. It’s not as big of a platform for Beahm as Twitch is (he only has 1 million subscribers, compared to 33 million), but he could try to migrate a number of those 20,000 paid subscribers over to YouTube and charge the same price for channel memberships.

This is Beahm’s first official suspension, despite several incidents that have resulted in the streamer landing in hot water, including mocking a Chinese accent on stream and threatening physical violence against a game developer on Twitter after being banned in-game. Beahm and fans are awaiting his return — continuing his suspension makes a statement, what Twitch has to decide is how serious that statement will be.

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